

THE New Era

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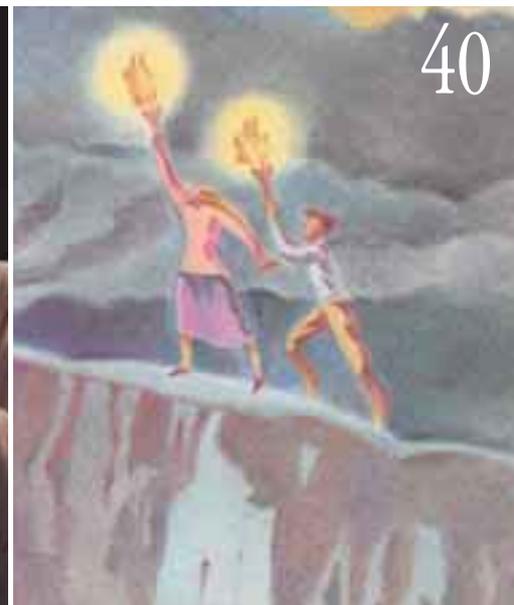
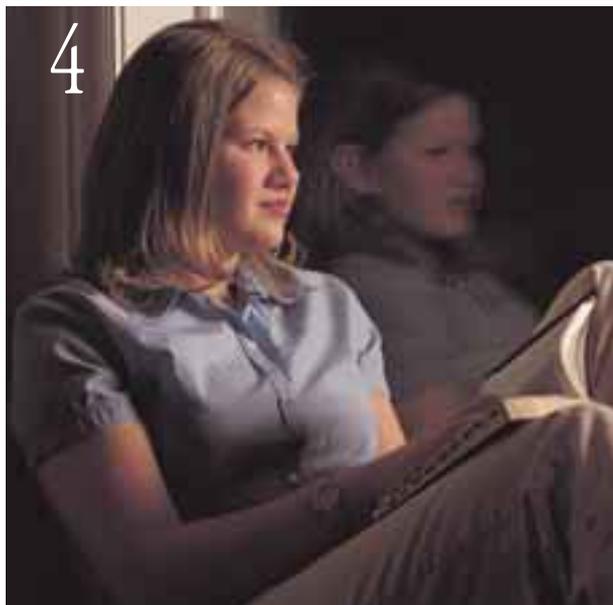
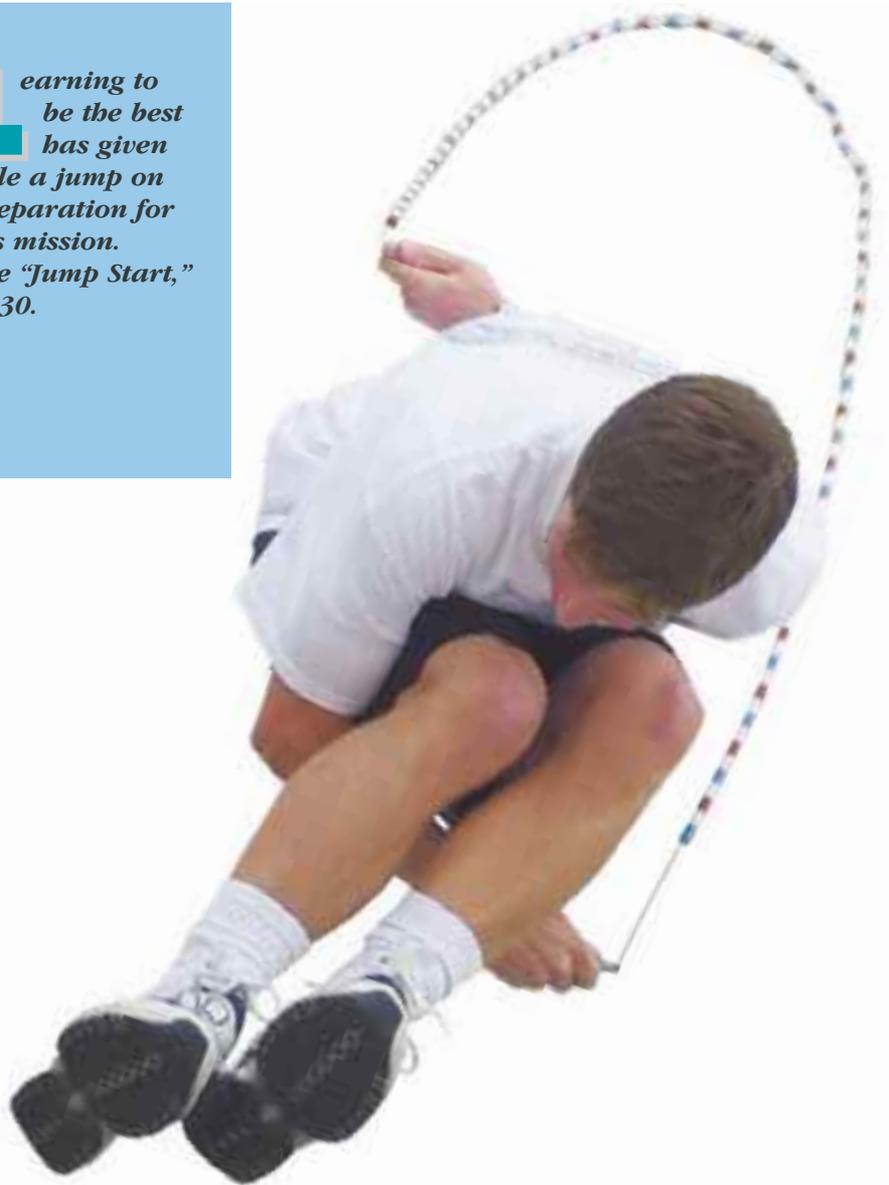
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Cover: *Kyle Hair from
Bellevue, Washington, is
the best at his sport. See
"Jump Start," p. 30.*

*Cover photography:
Mark Philbrick (front and
back)*

Learning to
be the best
has given
Kyle a jump on
preparation for
his mission.
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WHO DO
YOU
 THINK YOU
ARE
?

You'll be happier when the person you think you are is the person you really are.

salute you young people as chosen, special spirits who have been reserved to come forth in this generation. You are beginning the struggle to discover who you are and to find your place in life. You have new, strong feelings. You have great challenges. I hope you are beginning to achieve and excel in some special way. Perhaps it is your smile, your personality, or your ability to lift others. Perhaps you are discovering your talent as an athlete, scholar, computer specialist, musician, builder, artist, or in a hundred different areas. This might give you some personal recognition. These accomplishments may cause you to think about who you really are.

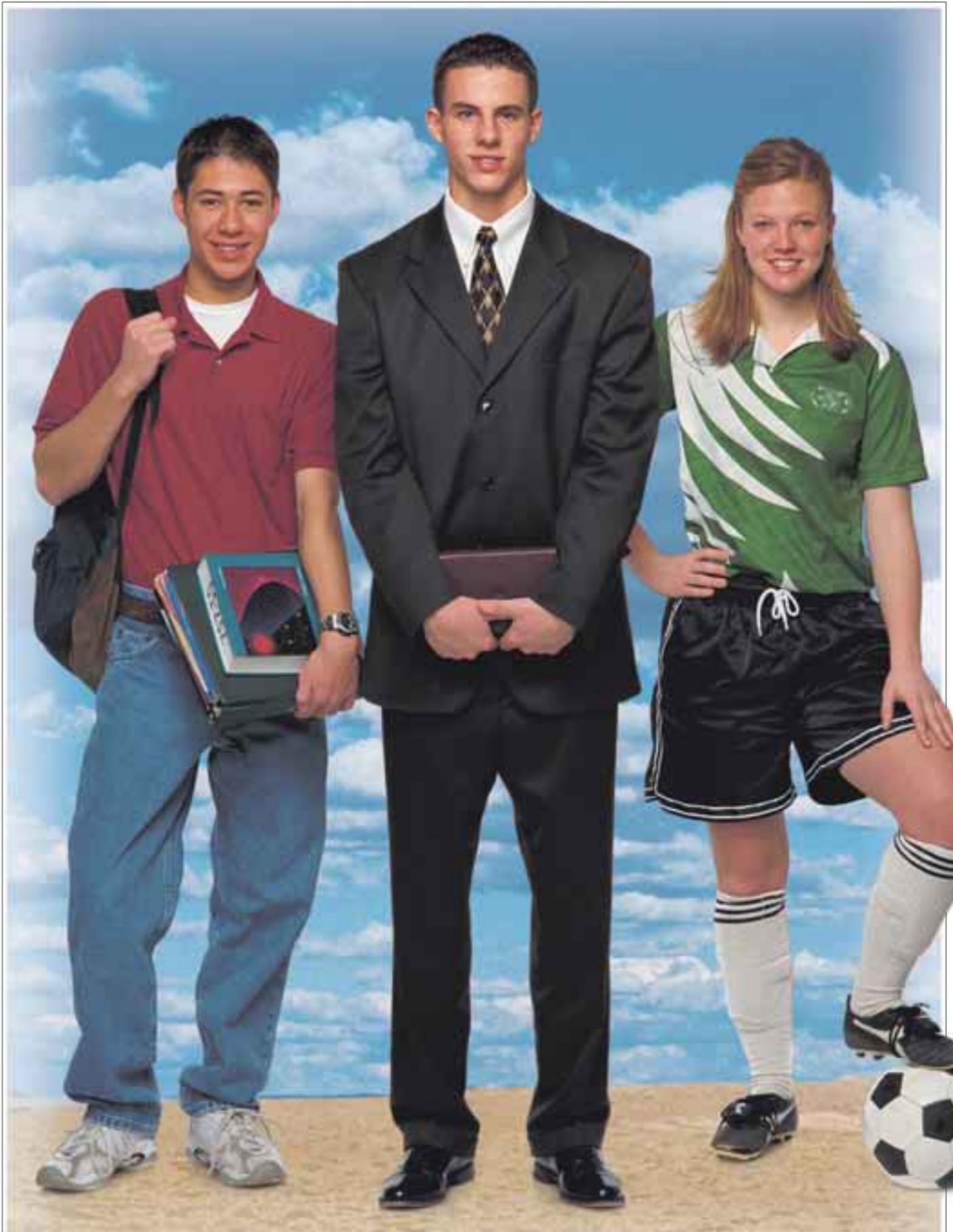
Dr. Fred Riley, a prominent social worker, has treated many athletes who identify themselves as athletes rather than as children of God. He relates: "What happens when they can't play basketball? Their identity is shot."¹ Their self-worth is related to their physical skills rather than their character. Many who achieve world-class recognition may not like themselves. Some of the rich and famous, even though they have great talent and ability, are insecure and succumb to drugs, alcohol, or immorality, and their lives become shattered. Instead of being happy with who they are, they become dissatisfied and discontent. They measure their self-worth solely in terms of their talent and accomplishments instead of who they really are inside. It is not always true that the more you achieve, the happier you will be or that you will like yourself more.

As sons and daughters of God, we are obligated to develop as many of our divinely given talents as we can. All of us should work to achieve worthwhile



If you want to be happier and to like yourself more, here are five suggestions that may help.

by President
James E. Faust
 Second Counselor in the
 First Presidency



Feeling “just right” about ourselves contributes to our happiness and our sense of identity. As we change our bad behavior and turn to the Lord, we qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which has a profound effect upon our well-being.



objectives. We should learn skills and get an education. You will be happier if you know who you are and feel good about yourself.

So who do you think you are? Who you *think* you are and who you *really* are can be two different versions of yourself. From an eternal perspective, these two versions need to come together. God knows you and what you can become because He has known you from the beginning when you were His spirit sons and daughters. What you become will depend in large measure upon how you follow righteous principles and do good works.

You may ask, “How do I learn to like myself?” I suggest five ideas that may be helpful.

1. Change bad behavior.

We need to change our bad behavior. We need to repent. As Alma said to his son Corianton, “Wickedness never was happiness.”² It’s hard to like ourselves if we are doing things that we know to be

wrong. Most of you have been taught about good behavior by your parents and youth leaders. You also have the scriptures and the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* to guide you.

In your quest to define yourselves, do not get caught up in comparisons with role models or body types that may seem to be macho or chic but in reality are not becoming to you as sons and daughters of our loving Heavenly Father. One 17-year-old girl became so obsessed about her figure that she began to skip meals and ended up with an eating disorder. When it became apparent to her father, he insisted that she eat a substantial meal. This confrontation ultimately brought her to her senses, and she wrote:

“All my life I had done things for everyone else. The grades, the manners, the awards—everything for them, nothing for me. This eating thing, this losing weight had become *mine*. It represented me and *my* choices, and now my dad was trying to

take that away from me, too!

"As I lay in bed that night crying and feeling fat, I knew I needed help. I knew I was hurting people I loved.

"After staying up all night, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't my dad I hated. I hated ME! I realized that I wasn't in control. For the first time in my life, I understood that this was *my* problem. I needed to take control of my life—not let the disease control it.

"Things didn't change overnight. In fact, it was one long road to recovery. But slowly, with the help of friends and family, I began to heal. Now that I'm at my ideal weight, I have stopped weighing myself altogether. I no longer peruse fashion magazines, either—I may not be 'in style,' but I feel just right!"³

Feeling "just right" about ourselves contributes to our happiness and our sense of identity.

As we change our bad behavior and turn to the Lord, we qualify for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which has a profound effect upon our well-being. This great gift comes through righteous living, obedience to the commandments of God, and service to others. Parley P. Pratt had this insight concerning the gift of the Holy Ghost:

"It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections. . . . It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. . . . It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man."⁴

2. Forgive ourselves and others.

Forgiveness is an important part of putting bad behavior behind us. As we make the necessary changes, we need to forgive ourselves. But we may also need to forgive others who have been traveling with us on the wrong path. Forgiveness will help us to let go of the bad behavior we are forsaking. The Book of Mormon tells us how we can know that we have made the turn from bad to good. After King Benjamin had delivered his masterful discourse about Christ, the Nephites all cried with one voice:

"The Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent . . . has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more

disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. . . .

"And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy."⁵

Feeling joy and peace, we will know who we are and act accordingly.

3. Gain confidence by making good choices.

You are now beginning to make important choices. Choices have consequences. In some measure these choices will affect not only the rest of your life but all eternity. Remember, my young friends, fame and fortune do not necessarily mean happiness. It is far better to have confidence in yourself and to be comfortable in your own skin. This depends upon your ability to choose what is right. It is also important to be able to excel in some field.

Last summer, the Olympic Games were held in Sydney, Australia. Certain rules and disciplines were attached to the various Olympic events: runners and swimmers had to stay in their lanes, shot-putters had to stay within the circle marked on the playing field, wrestlers had to stay on the mat—or the athletes would be disqualified. In addition, the use of performance-enhancing drugs was forbidden.

One young man from Denver, Colorado, who won an Olympic silver medal later was awarded the gold because the gold-medalist in his event was disqualified for using a banned steroid. In his response, he referred to his unfortunate competitor's loss of the medal:

"I do feel sorry for him. But we all have choices. . . . He made his choice, and I made my choice. . . .

"I believe God was watching out for me. I believe he watches out for all of us. I've learned so many lessons from how this has taken place. I experienced the agony of defeat before the thrill of victory. That made me so much more of a stronger person, mentally and spiritually."⁶

We grow and develop by making good choices. Confidence comes as we decide to pray daily, attend sacrament meetings, keep the Word of Wisdom, obey our



Forgiveness is an important part of putting bad behavior behind us. As we make the necessary changes, we need to forgive ourselves. But we may also need to forgive others who have been traveling with us on the wrong path.

If we really want to feel better about ourselves, we should do deeds of kindness. Kindness shapes our character and makes us more like our Father in Heaven.



parents and priesthood leaders, read the scriptures, and control our bodily appetites.

4. Give service.

If we really want to feel better about ourselves, we should do deeds of kindness. Kindness shapes our character and makes us more like our Father in Heaven. The Savior taught us, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁷ As we demonstrate our love for others, in turn we will understand better the love our Savior has for each of us and that we are children of a loving Heavenly Father. Occasionally we should look for public service opportunities. Indeed, as a prominent psychiatrist once wrote: “We feel pleasure when we are involved with other people, and they are involved with us, but we feel pain when we are uninvolved and lonely. The path to an acceptable identity in any society is involvement.”⁸ Great satisfaction can

come in helping the poor, the sick, the elderly, or others who have special needs. Look around you; there are all kinds of opportunities.

5. Choose happiness.

The most fundamental of all human searches is for happiness. We each choose our own happiness. As President Harold B. Lee once said: “Happiness does not depend on what happens outside of you but on what happens inside of you. It is measured by the spirit with which you meet the problems of life.”⁹ It will often be necessary for all of us to choose between having a good time and leading a good life.

Each of us is born with natural “happiness” hormones. When stimulated, they secrete powerful chemical substances into our bodies. There are many kinds. Some are called endorphins. Generally when we are in pain or distress, endorphins give us a sense of well-being. Medical science has long

known that our mental outlook and well-being affect our physical health. A sign in a large hospital says, "Laughter is the best medicine." Smiling is good for the soul.

Smiling brings a glow to our countenances that radiates to others. Being friendly to our neighbors, to people at school, at church, or at work is a great way to show the Lord that we want to keep the covenant we made at baptism "to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."¹⁰ I recommend friendliness because so many people are shy or lonely and need a kind word or smile. Lifting others expands our inner selves. It is also the way of the Master.¹¹ Like Anna in *The King and I*, I find whistling "a happy tune" and singing (especially when I am alone!) can also lighten my spirits.

Many years ago my father told us about going for a walk through the woods with an old friend, Judge Bringhurst. The judge sang so loudly along the way that he frightened all the wildlife. But my father said he enjoyed the judge's singing so much that he didn't mind not seeing any animals or birds. So when we laugh, smile, sing, whistle, or exercise, we seem to feel better. We either forget our concerns or they are put in better perspective. As we reach out to others, our happiness hormones are stimulated and we find our true selves.

I recall a study some years ago that was made to determine what influences keep young people moving on the straight and narrow track. Of course there were several critical influences. All were important. They included the influence of parents, priesthood advisers, Young Women advisers, Scoutmasters, and peer association. But I was surprised to find that one golden thread of singular importance ran through this study. It was the belief that one day each of us would have to account for our actions to the Lord. Many believed that "the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name."¹² Those who had an eternal perspective had an extra amount of spiritual strength and resolve. Feeling a personal accountability to the Savior for our actions and stewardships and

responding to it provide a profound spiritual protection.

Ralph Waldo Emerson gave a yardstick by which to measure our personal success. He wrote:

What is success?

*To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by
a healthy child, a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life has breathed
easier because you have lived;
This is to have succeeded.¹³*

So who do you think you are? The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves."¹⁴ Knowing who you are—who you *really* are—is closely tied to knowing God, for you are His children. Following the simple suggestions I have outlined will help you know God and hence yourself. I believe in you, that you will be obedient and valiant and that you will receive the blessings of the Lord in your quest to establish your identity as His choice sons and daughters. **NE**

NOTES

1. Quoted in Sarah Jane Weaver, "Developing a Healthy Self-Regard," *Church News*, 10 Feb. 1996, 2.
2. Alma 41:10.
3. Gabriella Tortes, "'Gabby, You're Sooo Skinny,'" in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul: 101 Stories of Life, Love and Learning*, comp. Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Kimberly Kirberger (1997), 234–35; emphasis in original.
4. *Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. (1965), 101.
5. Mosiah 5:2, 4.
6. Brandon Slay, quoted in "U.S. Wrestler Savors Gold, Even Though It Came Late," *Deseret News*, 24 Oct. 2000, D3.
7. Matt. 22:39.
8. Quoted in *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 477.
9. "A Sure Trumpet Sound: Quotations from President Lee," *Ensign*, Feb. 1974, 78.
10. Mosiah 18:8.
11. See Luke 6:31.
12. 2 Ne. 9:41.
13. Quoted in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*, 248.
14. *History of the Church*, 6:303.



We each choose our own happiness. As President Harold B. Lee once said: "Happiness does not depend on what happens outside of you but on what happens inside of you. It is measured by the spirit with which you meet the problems of life."



DRESS

The dress was beautiful. Modesty was important to me, but so was my friend's opinion. So I decided to do what made me happy.

by Meagan Nelson

“Come on, Meagan, just try it on. You might change your mind,” Sarah said, shoving the dress into my arms.

Hesitantly, I took the dress back to my changing room. It was a beautiful, black satin gown, studded with sequins. I studied it as it hung on the hook in the dressing room. Sarah was right; trying it on wouldn't hurt. Trying it on didn't mean I wanted to buy it; it just meant I wanted to see what it looked like on me.

“Well?” Sarah asked impatiently.

“I like it. It's really nice,” I forced myself to say, as I saw myself in the mirror.

My mom would hate it! The spaghetti straps would never pass my father's approval, and the low cut back was definitely not modest.

“So what's the problem?” Sarah could tell by the tone in my voice that I was not crazy about it.

I tried to think of a million excuses that I could tell Sarah to let her know how important modesty was to me, without sounding too stuffy.

“Well, it's . . . just not me.”

“You're afraid your parents wouldn't approve,” Sarah quickly responded.

It wasn't just that my parents would not approve; it was more that I didn't feel right wearing it.

“Listen, Meagan,” Sarah said. “Prom

is only once a year. God won't care if you look fashionable just this once.”

Straightening the slinky gown, I looked down and saw my CTR ring. *Choose the right*, I reminded myself, and let the consequences follow. I had to tell Sarah the truth. It wasn't just what other people thought of me; it was what I thought of myself. Even though Sarah wasn't a member of the Church, I knew if I was honest with her and explained why modesty was important to me, she would understand. Prom was a big deal, but it was not worth sacrificing my integrity.

I looked at my CTR ring again and replied, “You're right, Sarah.” Changing back into my clothes, I continued, “I should do what makes me happy.” Sarah smiled since she assumed I meant to buy the dress. “And that is why I can't buy it. It wouldn't make me happy.”

I ended up wearing a maroon dress with a modest neckline and cap sleeves that my mom and Sister Wright sewed on for me. More important than what I wore on the outside was how I felt on the inside. I knew I had made the right decision by dressing modestly. What we wear to dances may not seem like a big deal, but the little decisions we make now are what help us choose the right when we are presented with big choices later. **NE**



STRESS

THEY ALSO SERVE

Unable to serve full-time missions, these young elders aid the missionary effort in a unique, valuable way.

From his earliest days of singing “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission,” Jared Cassity planned on serving as a full-time missionary. He had read the scriptures and was familiar with all the missionary discussions. Most importantly, he was worthy and desired to go on a mission.

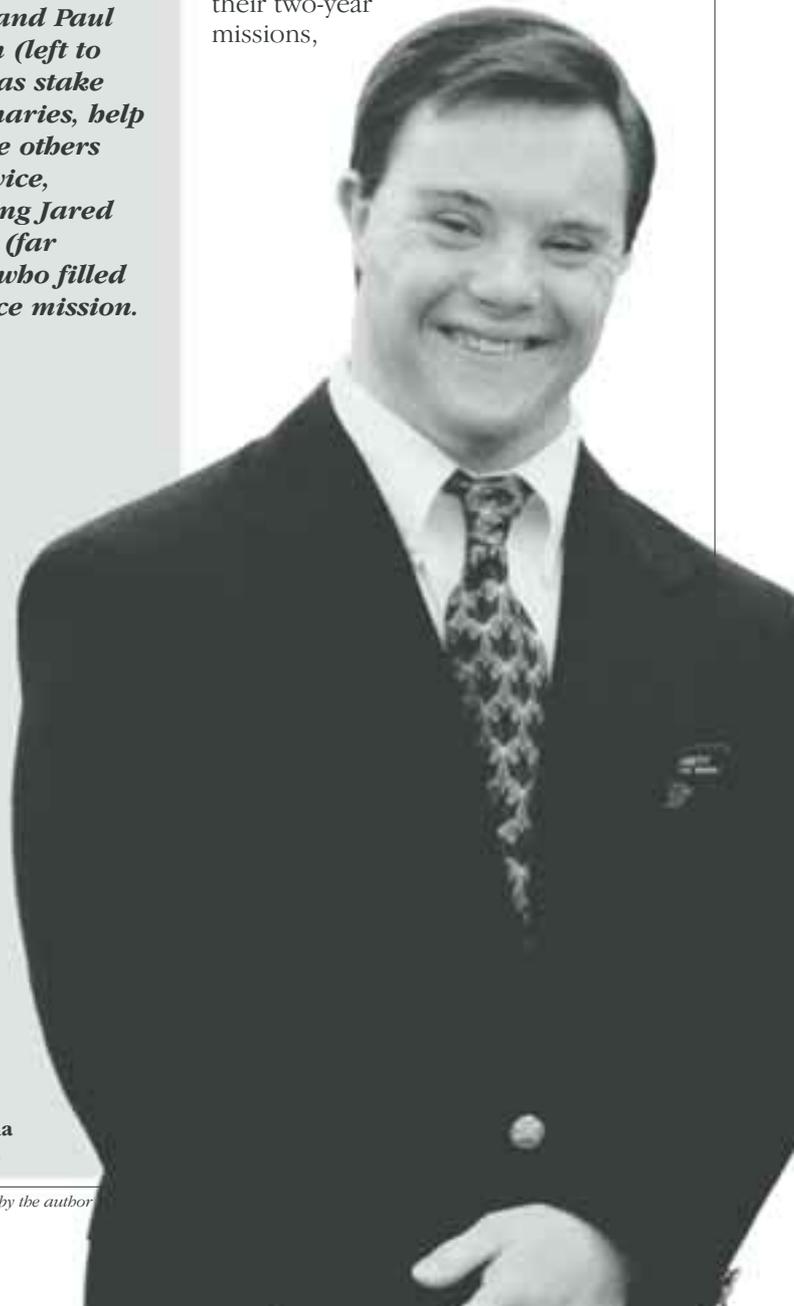
But he couldn’t go. Jared’s mental disabilities and some physical problems meant he could not serve a proselyting mission. “It took courage for me to accept that,” he says.

That was more than three years ago. Now, Elder Jared Cassity—that’s right, *Elder*—has been serving for three years. Elder Cassity was called on a stake mission. He is an assistant in the North Ogden Utah Stake’s missionary preparation class, helping other young men who are planning to go on missions become more prepared. “It took a lot of praying, but I know this is the right thing for me to be doing,” he says.

Elder Cassity shares his responsibilities in the class with Elder Paul Hansen, who has also been serving for three years. Elder Hansen also has mental and physical disabilities, but he manages to make it to class to set up chairs and distribute hymnbooks long before anyone else gets there. His mom, Janeen, says, “He felt really bad, because

Elders Jared Cassity and Paul Hansen (left to right), as stake missionaries, help prepare others for service, including Jared Stabeli (far right), who filled a service mission.

he’s always wanted to go on a mission, but it wasn’t right, and this was right.” Alma Harris, who teaches the class, says that as the time approached for Elders Cassity and Hansen to be released from their two-year missions,



by Shanna Ghaznavi

Photography by the author

they wanted to remain in their callings, and he still needed their help.

"Members who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities that would prevent them from serving effectively are not called to full-time missionary service" (*Church Handbook of Instructions*, 1: 81).

"Paul and Jared might not be full-time elders, but they are serving real missions," says Vance Child, a returned missionary serving in the class, who also took the class before his mission. "I think it's all just serving the Lord. They do a tremendous job. They really do bring the



Spirit into the classroom."

Another classmate agrees: "They have a knowledge even though they haven't gone out," says Micah Rodenbough. "It kind of humbles me."

Elders Hansen and Cassity have various responsibilities each week in the class, including bringing refreshments, setting up chairs, and giving an occasional talk. But their most important duty is preparing their stake's future missionaries.

"I love the change that comes upon these wonderful boys when they serve missions," Elder Cassity says, nearly crying. "I love seeing what the



Spirit can do. . . . Sometimes I cry when I hear their wonderful testimonies, because I feel like I was one who helped that person.”

One of the young men Elder Cassity helped was Jared Staheli. Jared was called on a service mission to the bishops’ storehouse in Lindon, Utah. He recently returned to his old missionary class to give his mission report: “Going on a mission is helpful to you and your spirit. It helped me most going on my mission

Working with local priesthood leaders, Elders Hansen and Cassity have seen their labors bless many lives.

to help my testimony grow and to know the Church is true, and the gospel is true,” Jared says, as he stands in front of the class of young men ready to go out and serve their own missions.

According to Elder Hansen’s mother, it’s a real blessing for her son to be able to say, “I’ve gone on my mission. I think that’s important to every boy. It doesn’t matter what kind of mission you go on. What matters is that you’re serving the Lord.” **NE**



FULL-TIME MISSION ALTERNATIVES

Young men or women who are unable to go on full-time proselyting missions for health reasons may have the alternative of giving Church service if they so desire:

- ☛ With your parents’ permission, talk with your bishop or branch president about your desire to serve a mission.
- ☛ Your priesthood leader will search for opportunities to use your specific skills; for example, you might serve in Church Welfare Services or in a community



service organization.

- ☛ To be eligible, you must live at home and be able to function independently.
- ☛ Your stake president will determine the length of your mission.
- ☛ Young men must be at least 19, and women must be at least 21.
- ☛ You will receive a mission call from the First Presidency before your mission and a release certificate at the end of your service.
- ☛ All the same mission rules apply to Church service missions as apply to full-time missions and, where possible, you may go team teaching with the full-time missionaries.

SCRIPTURE STUDY SUGGESTIONS

Studying the scriptures will bring you closer to Heavenly Father and help you become more like Him. President Ezra Taft Benson said the Book of Mormon brings great strength to the lives of those who diligently study it. “You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

If you struggle with finding time to study the scriptures, understanding when you do read, or you just don’t know what you’re getting out of them, here are some ideas from *New Era* readers on how you can make your personal scripture study more meaningful:

- 💡 Make studying your scriptures a priority. You might not think you have the time, but if you make time to read, the other things you need to do will fall into place.
- 💡 Read every day for a set amount of time, preferably when you’re alert.
- 💡 Pray before you read for understanding and guidance and to invite the Holy Ghost to be with you.
- 💡 When you have finished reading, take a few minutes to ponder and pray about what you have read. Ask yourself if you really understood what you were reading.
- 💡 Keep a journal. Write down what the Spirit teaches you about the scriptures.
- 💡 Share what you learn with someone else. Teaching a concept or bearing your testimony is a good way to remember what you have learned.
- 💡 If possible, set aside a place where you can read quietly. Always try to read in a place free of distractions.
- 💡 Choose a topic that’s relevant to your life at the moment and search for scripture references on that topic in the Index, Bible Dictionary, or Topical Guide.
- 💡 Consider the teachings offered in the scriptures and how they apply to your life. Decide how you will live the principles you have learned.
- 💡 If your mind wanders, go back and read what you missed. Remember, it’s not how much you read each day but the quality of your studying that counts.

GOT ANY BRIGHT IDEAS?



When school has started and the homework is piling up, what are some good ways to manage your time and keep your life well balanced? Send your ideas to Idea List, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. Or e-mail us at cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please send your ideas by May 1, 2001.

Q & A

“I know we’re not supposed to take the Lord’s name in vain, but what about other kinds of swearing? Is it really that bad?”

NEW ERA

Swearing offends the Spirit and those around you. Vulgar words dull our senses, making us insensitive to promptings of the Spirit. Swearing tarnishes reputations and repels good friends. Learning to control our speech is an important part of developing the self-control we need to become Christlike.

We will be judged for our language as well as our thoughts and actions. “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36).

Many readers who wrote to answer this question said swearing shows weakness of character. People who can’t control their words may not be able to control their thoughts and actions. Bruce Weaver from Reynoldsburg, Ohio, wrote, “If we choose to be righteous and not swear, then there is a greater chance we will not be led into greater sins.”

One of the worst things about swearing is that, just like other sins, it is addictive. As we become calloused, the habit becomes more difficult to escape. Some people say it’s okay to swear if you

Learning to control our speech is part of developing the self-control we need to become Christlike.

Our language reveals who we are, what we think, and what we believe.

We will be judged for our language as well as our thoughts and actions.

Swearing offends the Spirit and those around you.

Like other sins, swearing is addictive.

Breaking the habit of swearing is difficult, but it can be done.

READERS

Addictive language will constrain our spiritual growth just as much as any other addictive substance. If we allow any words to become a habit, we are losing some aspect of self-mastery and becoming ever closer to the dreaded natural man.

**Andrew T. Curtis, 18
Clarkston, Michigan**



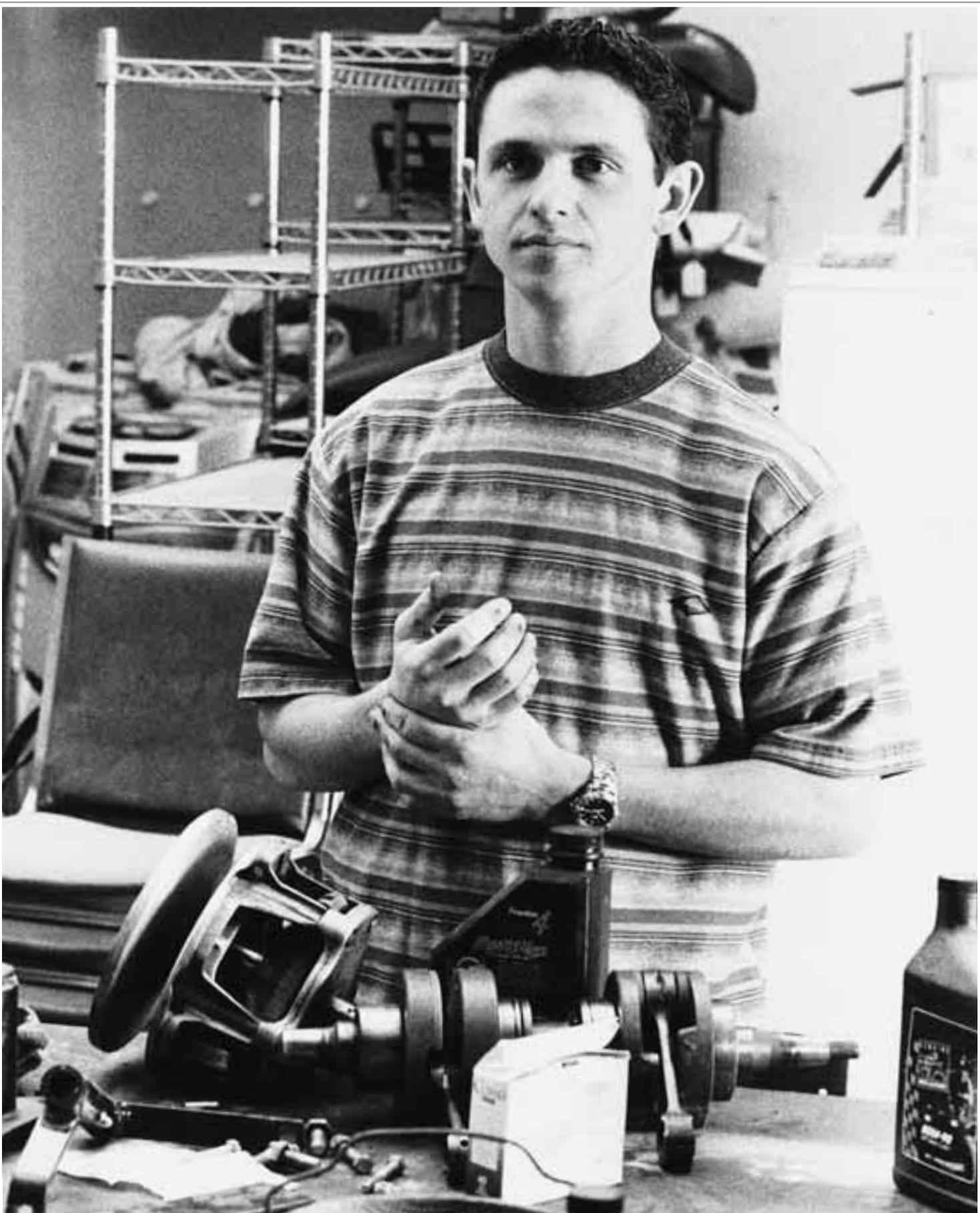
The language you use portrays the type of person you are.

**Scott Murdoch, 18
Idaho Falls, Idaho**

Imagine that Christ were in the room. Would you feel good and comfortable letting a few inappropriate words slip out here and there?

**Angelina Smith, 19
Arlington, Washington**





do it when you really mean it, such as when you get hurt. But swearing in anger or pain never solved a problem or made the pain go away. Swearing only makes problems worse.

It can be hard not to pick up the habit of swearing if you are bombarded by vulgar language in movies, music, and from friends. Avoiding these words may mean changing who you spend time with, the music you listen to, and the movies you watch.

“A person is known as much by his language as he is by the company he keeps,” said President Joseph Fielding Smith. “Filthiness in any form is degrading and soul-destroying and should be avoided as a deadly poison by every member of the Church” (*New Era*, July 1972, 23).

The habit of swearing can be difficult to quit. But it can be done. Many people try to substitute other words for swear words, but Elder L. Tom Perry warns that so many times those substitute words are so similar to the swear words or vulgar phrases that everyone knows what you meant to say and your vocabulary hasn't really changed. Elder Perry suggests a simple activity to break the habit:

“First, make the commitment to erase such words from your vocabulary. Next, if you slip and say a swear word or a substitute word, mentally reconstruct the sentence without the vulgarity or substitute word and repeat the new sentence aloud. Eventually you will develop a nonvulgar speech habit” (*New Era*, Aug. 1986, 7).

Our language reveals who we are, what we think, and what we believe. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have taken upon ourselves the name of Christ. If profanity flows from our lips, we don't represent what we say we believe, and people are left to assume that what comes out of our mouths is what can be found in our minds and hearts.

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



“**W**hen you open your mouth to speak, you reveal a great deal. The words you use and the way you speak are like a blueprint of who you are deep inside” (*New Era*, May 1992, 47).

—Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy

Our ultimate goal is to become like God, and swearing draws us away from Him. Although there are worse things that we see in this world, little things can draw us away from our Heavenly Father.

BreeAnna Holdaway, 17
Bothwell, Utah



After you swear a lot, you will start to feel just like the words you are saying. When you do any kind of swearing, you hurt the Lord, yourself, and sometimes others.

Justin LeSuehr, 15
Mesa, Arizona



If you start swearing, it will become second nature to you. Then you will start to do other things wrong and will find yourself far off the path.

Bobby Sheline, 13
Sparks, Nevada



HELP Q&A BE OF HELP

You can help make Q&A helpful by answering the question below. Please mail your answers before May 1, 2001, to Q&A, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. Print or type your name, age, city, and state with each answer. Also, please include a snapshot of yourself. This will not be returned. If your answer is of a sensitive nature, your name may be withheld from publication.

QUESTION

I try my best to be happy, but no matter what I do, I feel overwhelmingly sad all the time. Is there anything I can do to feel better?

BE YOUR BEST



*Be Grateful · Be True
Be Smart · Be Humble
Be Clean · Be Prayerful*

President Gordon B. Hinckley



Collecting KINDNESS

It's contagious—and Marjon thinks everyone should be a carrier.

Some are written on scraps of paper, and some are typed. Some are in pencil by children who are just learning to write, and some are from high school students. The sheets of paper that Marjon Brady collects all have one thing in common: each lists a good deed.

One day when I was walking in the Arizona heat, someone stopped me on the side of the road and handed me half a gallon of water. At first I told those who offered it that I was fine, but they insisted so I consented. —Geoff

*My dad and I mowed the lawn for someone who was hurt in a crash.
—Brad*

There are literally hundreds of short stories in Marjon's scrapbook telling of good deeds. She gladly shows her collection to anybody interested in looking. But the collection begs the question: Why?

Marjon was Miss Rodeo USA for 2000. Her reign ended at the beginning of this year. For the competition, one thing she

needed was a platform she could implement that would help improve society. After much thought, she decided on something she called Kickin' up Kindness. Marjon wanted to illustrate how good people can be to each other and to encourage them to look for opportunities to serve others.

"This platform is very special to me because of what it represents. It's about charity and the pure love of Christ," she says. "That's what Christ demonstrated in His life. I then thought if I broadened charity into kindness, I could go from there."

That's how it started in January 2000. A year later, her scrapbooks are stuffed. During the opportunities she had to speak at schools, Marjon asked children and teenagers wherever she went to write and talk about good deeds—whether they had done them, seen them done, or had them done to them.

"These kids were huge examples to me because of the stories I heard," she says.

As Miss Rodeo USA, Marjon, a member of the Valley View Ward in the Citrus Heights (Arizona) Stake, traveled throughout the United States talking about and attending various rodeos and horse-related events. While much of what she did revolved around rodeo, her real joy came from speaking and encouraging kids to do nice things for others.

Marjon Brady took advantage of her position as Miss Rodeo USA to discover and reinforce the nice things kids are doing for others.

by Laury Livsey







“That’s why I like Kickin’ up Kindness,” says Marjon. “We need to incorporate kindness into our lives. I’m a firm believer that kindness is contagious, and it starts in the home. I always encouraged the kids to do something nice for someone in their home. That will put the family member in a better mood, and then they’ll do something nice for someone else. We all know about the ripple effect.”

Watch the ripples.

A good deed I did was when my brother was in the hospital with diabetes. I would stay up at night and make him laugh! —Heather

I usually help my little brother with his homework. He is in the second grade. I also help my mom around the house and my sister with her chores.

—Unsigned

When Marjon was younger, she watched her older sister, Shanda, compete for the crown Marjon later won. Shanda finished as second runner-up. “Shanda was a huge example to me,” explains Marjon. “When I first saw Miss Rodeo USA, I thought it was really neat. But I didn’t think, How can I do that? But when my sister went through it I thought, What a good goal to have.”

A good goal, mainly because horses have been a major part of Marjon’s life for as long as she can remember. Marjon’s family would go camping and fishing with their horses. They played tag on their horses, picked oranges from nearby trees while on horseback, and rode horses whenever they could. “Everything we could do incorporated horses,” she adds.

Running for Miss Rodeo USA was a natural. “It involved my horse, it involved improving myself, and it involved charity. Those are the three things that really hooked me onto this,” she says.

Marjon developed Kickin’ up Kindness as an extension of all three.

There is a boy in school and no one likes him. They all make fun of him. But I talk to him. I tell him hi. I am nice to him. I hang around with him. I even tell people to leave him alone. —Leia

One time I called my grandmother just to say “I love you.” —Whitney



Marjon has always been interested in horses, so she viewed Miss Rodeo USA as a natural extension of what she enjoys. “It involved improving myself, and it involved charity.”



When I'm in a school assembly, I ask the children to show me their smiles because, to me, one of the best ways you can show kindness is to smile at people," Marjon says.

Marjon had some definite things she wanted to accomplish as queen, and not long after she was crowned, Kickin' up Kindness made its debut. She had 20 minutes to speak in front of a group of elementary school students.

"I needed to keep them really involved because I could easily lose their attention," she says, remembering the day. After she spent some time explaining Kickin' up Kindness, she handed each child a pencil and paper. "The more I could have them doing things, the better. So I asked them to write about kind deeds."

The results were both heartwarming and fascinating.

I have helped my dad when he needed money. I have given him my money to help him keep up with bills, food, and other things for our family. —Kim

One day my mom was sick, so I took care of my two sisters so my mom could rest. —Amanda

My best friend's parents were going through a divorce. She needed comfort. I helped her through that. —Kelly

Marjon continues, "Looking back, I see the positive changes Kickin' up Kindness has had on me and on other people. When I'm in a school assembly, I ask the children to show me their very best smiles because, to me, one of the best ways you can show kindness is to smile at people. A smile is contagious. Everyone understands what a smile means."

Marjon then reads some more of the notes she's received.

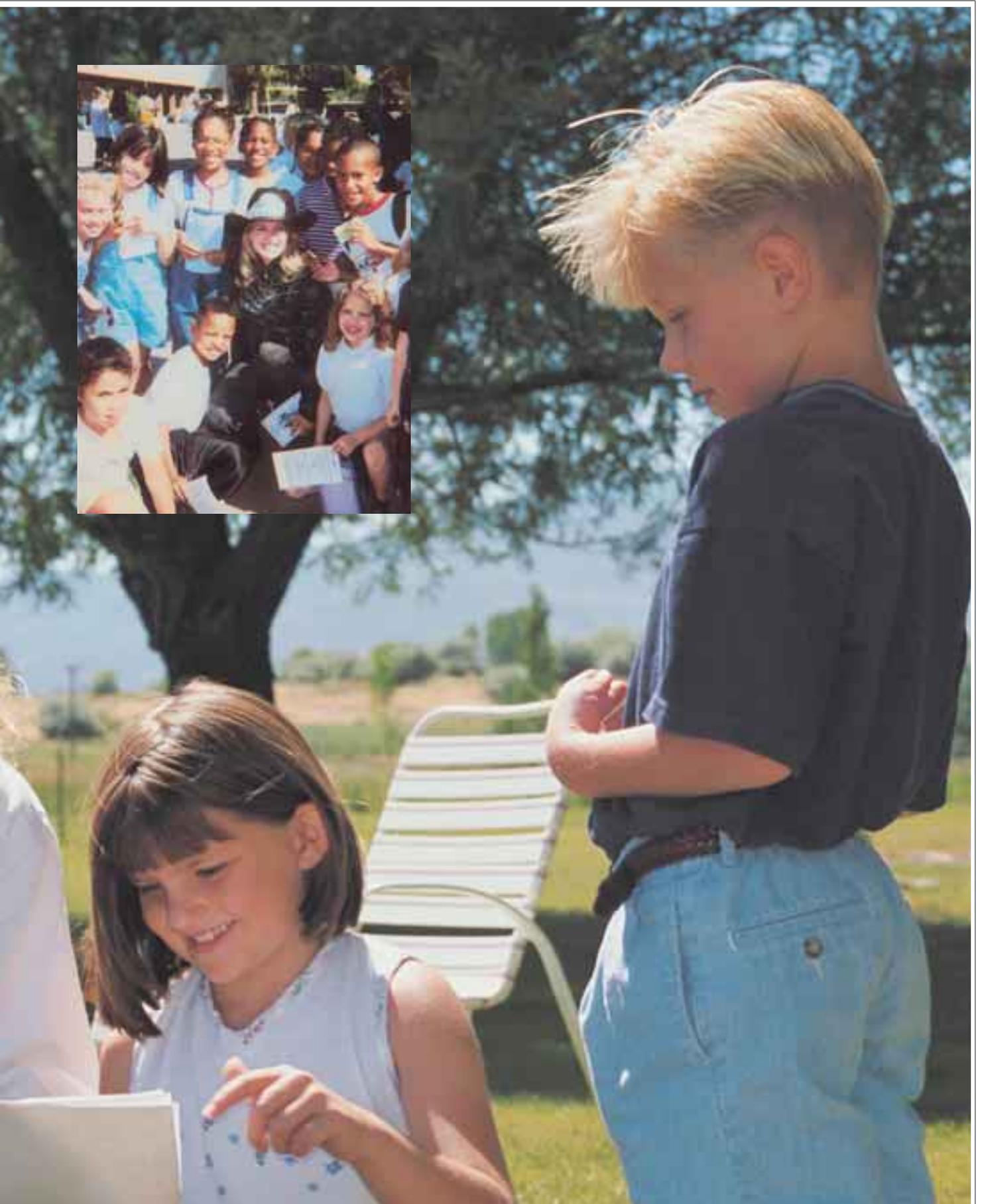
I typed my friend's paper because she's not very good at typing things up. —Jenny

One thing I did was help my friend find his lost dog. —Joe

I am nice to people. —Freddy

She could go on and on. There is page after page of similar good-deed notes. Instead Marjon puts her scrapbook down. Each one she reads brings a smile to her face. And she's right. A smile is contagious. **NE**





GUILT RIDDEN

I had done some damage to the mower, but it was nothing like the damage I did to myself as I hid that secret all summer long.

I rode the mower, and my conscience rode me. We both needed repairs.

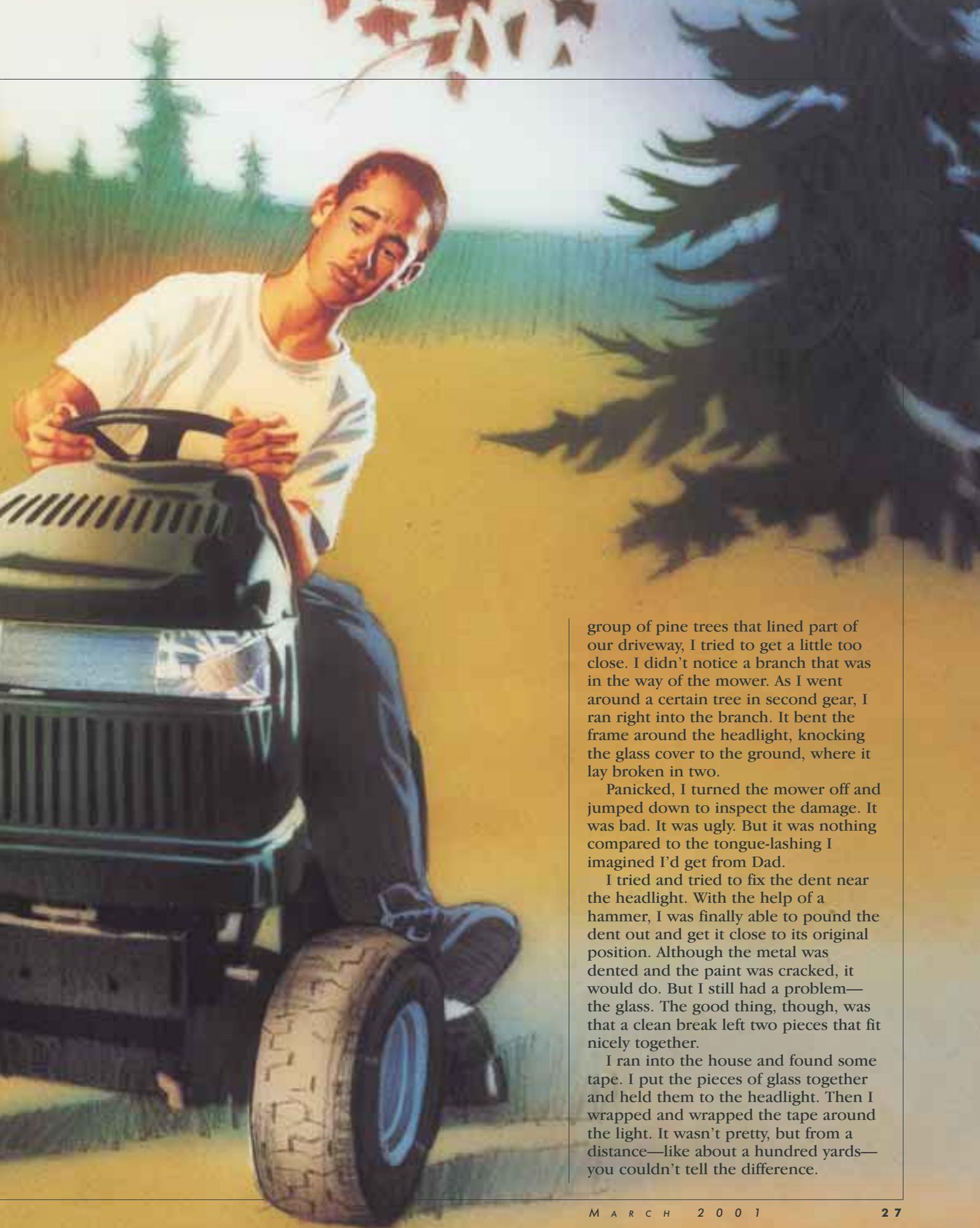
I was 13 years old, and Dad had just bought a new lawn mower. This wasn't your typical push-from-behind lawn mower. It was one of those riding, three-forward-gears-and-two-backward-gears kind. It had electronic ignition and cut a swath about three feet wide. And it had headlights.

That was the problem. I wasn't used to cutting our four-and-a-half-acre Pennsylvania lawn with a fancy riding mower. I'd been using an old, beat-up rider that Dad bought from one of our neighbors when we moved into our new house. It had only one forward speed and one backward speed. And *no* headlights. The headlights on our new mower jutted out a bit on either side. And that spelled trouble.

After I'd cut the lawn a couple of times, I was feeling quite confident with the new mower. I was amazed at how I could finish the job in only four hours. But as I was cutting around a



by Michael D. Call



group of pine trees that lined part of our driveway, I tried to get a little too close. I didn't notice a branch that was in the way of the mower. As I went around a certain tree in second gear, I ran right into the branch. It bent the frame around the headlight, knocking the glass cover to the ground, where it lay broken in two.

Panicked, I turned the mower off and jumped down to inspect the damage. It was bad. It was ugly. But it was nothing compared to the tongue-lashing I imagined I'd get from Dad.

I tried and tried to fix the dent near the headlight. With the help of a hammer, I was finally able to pound the dent out and get it close to its original position. Although the metal was dented and the paint was cracked, it would do. But I still had a problem—the glass. The good thing, though, was that a clean break left two pieces that fit nicely together.

I ran into the house and found some tape. I put the pieces of glass together and held them to the headlight. Then I wrapped and wrapped the tape around the light. It wasn't pretty, but from a distance—like about a hundred yards—you couldn't tell the difference.

t was so hard to tell Dad I had broken the headlight, but once I confessed, my mind, my spirit, and even my knotted stomach were relieved.

By this time it was getting dark outside, so I went into the house and tried my best to act like nothing had happened.

Weeks passed. And each week as I saw the broken headlight, guilt rode me like I rode the lawn mower. I tried to put the incident out of my mind, but I couldn't. And because I didn't dare tell my dad what had happened, the accident left an ugly scar on both the mower and my soul.

Near the end of the summer, the mower had to be serviced. Dad backed up the pickup and put some planks in place for a ramp. He asked me to drive the mower into the back of the pickup. I knew I had to confess. If I didn't tell Dad what happened soon, he would see it for himself. But I couldn't get up the nerve. Dad watched me drive the mower up. He said nothing.

All the way to the service center my stomach felt like twisted knots. We dropped off the mower and went home. I thought then that Dad hadn't noticed

the headlight. But I know now that he had.

A week later we went to pick up the mower. I had literally made myself sick over this headlight. The man at the service center drove the lawn mower onto the bed of Dad's pickup. Dad still didn't say a thing about the headlight. On the way home, I thought I was going to get sick right then and there. My face felt hot. My palms were sweaty. My mouth was dry. I had to confess.

But all I could get out was "Dad." Then the tears came. Boy, did they come. I think Dad must have thought I was having an appendicitis attack. It sure felt like I was. He quickly pulled over as he exclaimed, "What's wrong?"

I cried and cried. I tried to speak, but I couldn't. Dad put his hand on my shoulder and asked if I was okay.

"Dad," I finally said through my tears and sniffles, "I broke the light on the lawn mower. I'm sorry."

Dad put the parking brake on, slid next to me, and wrapped his arms around me. He just held me for a minute or two. Then the words I had hoped for—even prayed for—came.

"It's okay," he said. "It's okay."

A wonderful peace came over me as I felt his arms around me and heard his voice say those words. I sobbed some more.

"I didn't mean to do it. It happened a long time ago. I'm sorry!"

"I know," he said. "It's okay."

A few minutes later, we were sipping strawberry shakes. Dad didn't have to say anything more. His countenance said it all.

I've never forgotten the peace that came over me once I admitted everything. It was so hard to tell Dad I had broken the headlight. But once I confessed, my mind, my spirit, and even my knotted stomach were relieved. I was at peace with myself.

It's hard to confess our sins to those we've offended. But once we get the words out, peace can come in.

There have been times since then that I've had to humble myself and confess to the Lord of far more serious wrecks I've caused in my life. It's at these times that I think of a broken headlight, a loving earthly father, and a merciful Heavenly Father. **NE**

T H E E X T R A S M I L E



“Wow. That was a big speed bump!”

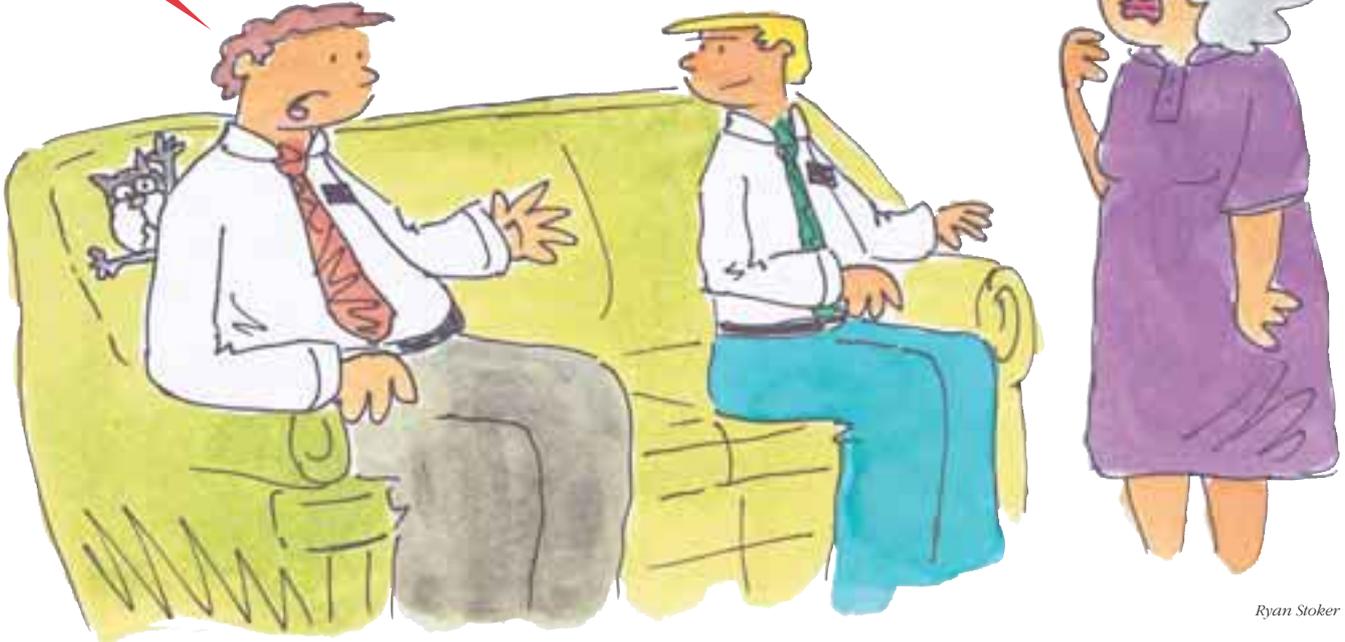
Ryan Stoker

“You do realize this is just an overnight camp-out?”



Adam Koford

“Well, of course we’ll help you find your cat, Sister Walters. Where is the last place you saw him?”



Ryan Stoker

JUMP



This world-class rope jumper loves the competition—in fact, if they ask, he even helps to train them.

Kyle's red, white, and blue rope whizzes through the air, hitting the ground rhythmically. Up, over, up, over, crisscross, and bam! He's handstanding after an amazing display of jump rope finesse.

Even though he has more awards than any other male jumper in the world, you'll never hear Kyle Hair broadcasting his accomplishments to anyone. In fact, you practically have to drag his impressive resumé out of him. His friends and family, however, are always more than willing to tell you about all the

Kyle Hair, from Bellevue, Washington, began his jump rope career when he was only in kindergarten.

by Shanna Ghaznavi





START



great things Kyle does.

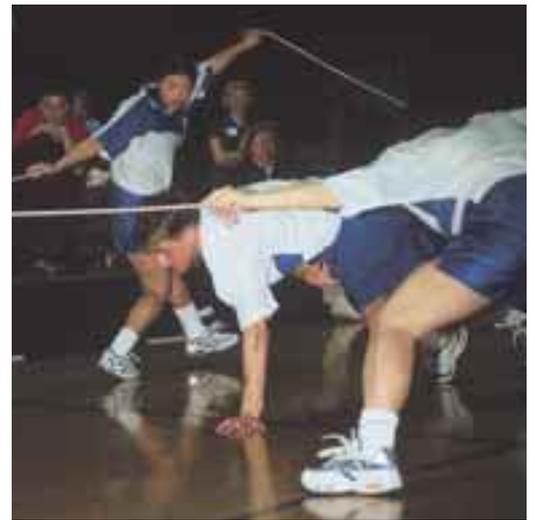
Now 18, Kyle sprang into action at a very early age. It all started when he was in kindergarten and a U.S. jump rope team performed at his school in Bellevue, Washington.

“He came home with his eyes as big as saucers and said, ‘Mom, can we buy a rope?’” says Kyle’s mom, Chandra. He practiced and practiced and made it when he tried out for the team.

After winning his first international title when he was in second grade, Kyle and his team, Hot Dog USA, have gone on to win five grand-national titles, and they have won the world championships three times. Kyle was also named the most valuable player for the United States in his sport.

Despite all the first-place ribbons and trophies, Kyle says, “Probably one of the awards I’m most proud of isn’t one of my first-place ones. It’s the Joel Farrell Award.” Only one athlete of all the participants in all the sports is chosen

Since he won his first international title in the second grade, Kyle and his team have gone on to win many more. But the award he prizes most was not given for his athletic ability.



Kyle and his team, Hot Dog USA, ran a club after school for children who want to learn how to jump like the pros.

each year to receive this award for overall good sportsmanship and athleticism at the Junior Olympics.

When Kyle and his team aren't competing, they do demonstrations for "Jump Rope for Heart." The team members try to raise awareness about heart disease and how exercise can combat some health problems. "Over the years we've helped to raise money for schools and millions of dollars for heart research," Kyle says.

"We get a lot of chances to travel and teach," he says. "Jumping is great for you, and it's just a lot of fun." Along with touring school assemblies and doing demonstrations, the team also runs a Hot Dog club after school for children who want to learn how to jump like the pros. About 50 kids come each day.

But Kyle not only coaches children—and this might sound a little crazy—he also trains his team's competitors! "We have a standing offer to teach. Any team who wants us just calls us." He says part of the reason they teach is to

promote rope jumping, a relatively new professional sport. It's also just fun to teach, Kyle says. "Each year we notice the level of competition getting harder. It's more fun that way—to get to go and have a challenge." Kyle says he doesn't need to keep what he does a secret; he just needs to do what he does the best.

And so far, he is the best. Kyle is not only in great physical shape, but he has a lot of bounce in his step where his spirituality is concerned, too. "I've had a lot of positive experiences being in the Church. We have good standards, and people notice that," he says. "I've had lots of people talk to me just to say, 'Oh, that's really cool that you have chosen to be that way.'"

His dad, Roger, says, "It's been very interesting to watch the influence Kyle has had on his friends at school and also on his teammates. They say they can count on him and on his standards, and they know exactly what his morals are."

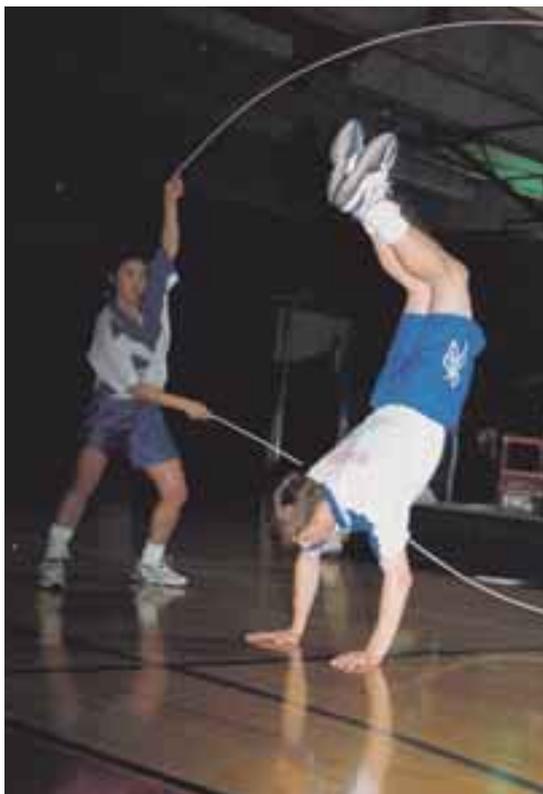
His teammates can also count on Kyle



not to jump ship when things get hard. Both Kyle's dad and his team say he is one of the most dedicated people they know. His love of the sport is one of his main drives, but he counts on prayer and the Spirit to help him do his best. "You don't pray to win, obviously," he says. "But it's good to have comfort and to be able to go out there and feel calm."

Kyle doesn't admit to having a lot of hard times, even counting the times he falls. "I can't be disappointed because I have to get up and do it again the next day. You've just got to put it behind you and take it with a smile."

Since he's going to Brigham Young University this year and then on a mission when he's 19, Kyle's high-flying days on the Hot Dog USA team will be coming to an end. But he says he's going to find a way to keep jumping. And knowing how dedicated and driven he is, Kyle's family and friends are sure he will keep hitting new highs, both physically and spiritually. **NE**



Although Kyle has had to leave his team since he's now attending Brigham Young University, he plans to keep hitting greater heights, starting with serving a mission at age 19.

WORDS OF WISDOM

You might think only your parents and health fanatics worry about their cholesterol levels and eating right. But that shouldn't be the case. Some recent studies have shown that the risk of heart disease starts building in the teen years, especially for boys. High cholesterol at any age has harmful physical effects.

The Word of Wisdom forbids taking certain harmful substances into our bodies, but it also encourages eating well and living a healthy lifestyle. Eating excess amounts of saturated fat and not including enough grain, fruit, and vegetables in your diet can increase your cholesterol level, and that means you'll be at a greater risk for heart disease or stroke when you are older.

Form healthy eating and exercise habits now, and it will be easier to stay healthy later on in your life. Remember, we are promised that we will enjoy good health and find wisdom if we obey the Lord's rules for our spiritual and physical health (see D&C 89:18–21).



CONFERENCE 101

General conference is fast approaching, so now would be a good time to start a conference notebook. Have a good long ponder about problems that worry you and what would help you solve those problems. Pray about those things you want to understand better, and listen to the conference talks for answers. Write your questions and concerns in your notebook as they come to you and, when conference comes around, listen carefully and write down the answers to your questions. If you can't write that fast, at least record the name of the speaker so you can find the talk later in the *Ensign* or on the Internet. It would be a good idea to take notes about the things that interest you or inspiration you get while you listen, too.





Painting He Is Risen by Del Parson

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

“**W**e are living in our ‘once upon a time.’ . . .

“The story of our search for happiness is written in such a way that if we continue to trust in God and follow His commandments through the challenging times, even those times will bring us closer to the happiness we are seeking. The Savior said, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world’ (John 16:33). . . .

“We can fail to see and enjoy the unique happiness and beauty in each day if we are so focused on our desire for what we want instead of what the Lord has designed for us.

“Happiness is knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . .

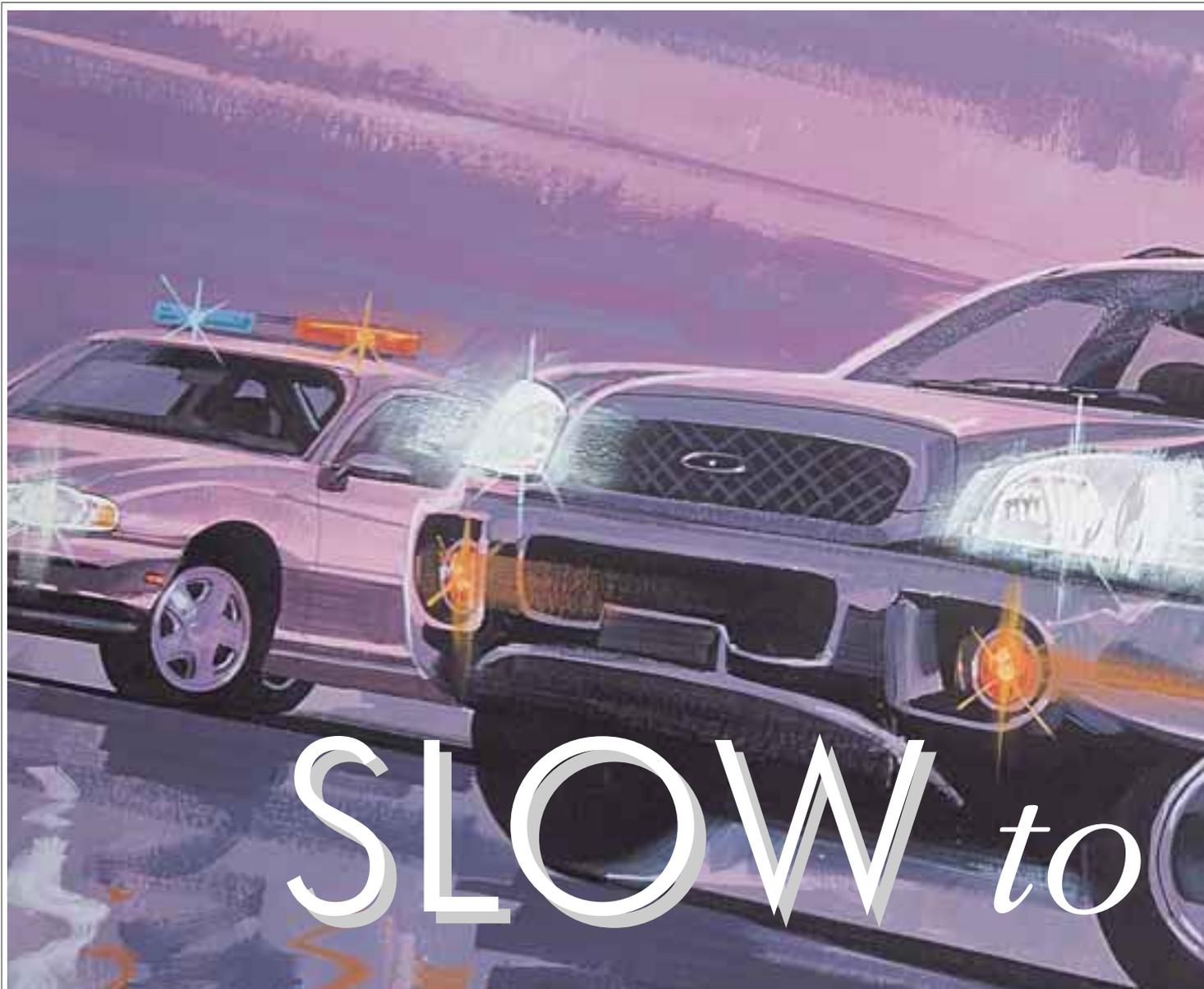
“It is knowing and feeling the pure love of Christ that brings exquisite joy to our souls” (Coleen K. Menlove, *Ensign*, May 2000, 12–13).



SHARING THEIR LIGHT

The Young Women of the Vladivostok Russia District had to work around tight school schedules to have their first-ever Young Women conference. The girls learned some crafts at the conference, but more importantly, they learned how to let their light shine and of the power of gratitude and prayer.

When the girls had some free time during the conference, they didn’t use it to finish their cross-stitching or other projects; they wrote a song about how much they enjoyed the conference and about what they had learned there. They performed the song for their leaders at the end of the conference. The Vladivostok Young Women are looking forward to sharing more time and strength in the future and to sharing their light with others.



SLOW to

When we hit the black ice and slid toward the cement divider, the only thing that went through my mind was, “This is really going to hurt!”

by Chad Morris

Our lives had been spared. But then I began to develop a dangerous kind of amnesia.

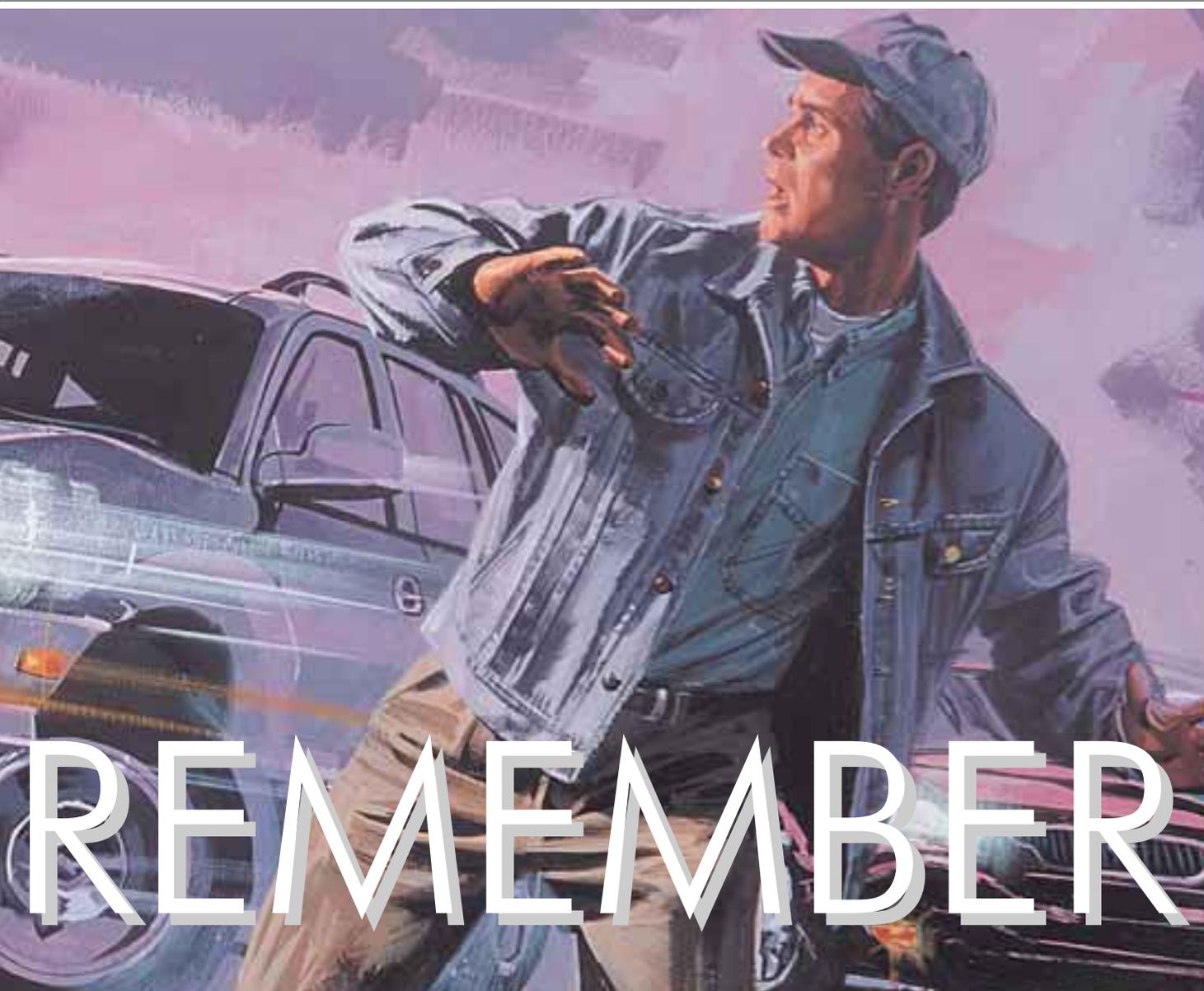
I had never been in Colorado before. It laid out the black ice for me. People say that in near-death situations, your life flashes before your eyes. I don't believe it after my experience. Maria and I were in a blue Tracker going 65 miles per hour down the highway to Golden. We were on our way to visit her family and attend a wedding rehearsal. Maria was back in her hometown, back where

she was a gymnast, a basketball player, and a choir girl. She was driving.

We hit black ice. I heard her gasp, and a scream got caught somewhere in her throat. We skidded across three lanes. I didn't see my life flashing. In fact, I don't think I saw anything except the large cement divider getting closer. I didn't think to do any last-minute repenting. I didn't think any great memorable thoughts. I think “this is going to really hurt” was the only thing going through my mind.

We hit the cement median, demolishing the front end of the car. It felt like a roller coaster to my midsection and a shot to the head. Fortunately, we were both wearing our seat belts.

I looked back over at Maria. “Are



REMEMBER

you all right?"

Her eyes were wide, and she was breathing heavily. "Yeah. My leg hurts a little though, and my chest." I undid my seat belt and checked her leg. I couldn't see anything wrong from where I was. I wanted to check the other side. I got out of the car and circled to her door. Everything looked all right.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Maria repeated, half to herself and half to me.

"Don't worry about it." I hugged her. "I'm sure you set up the ice to show me how exciting Colorado could be." Sarcastic humor. I guess that was my way of dealing with the trauma.

"I'm sorry."

A policeman was already up the road from an earlier accident. He threw his

car in reverse and backed down the cement space to the side of the highway. By now a very slow lane of traffic started passing between me and him.

He tried to say something, but I couldn't hear him over the sound of traffic. I started to walk up the street a little where I thought I could cross.

SMACK! The sound came from behind me. I whirled around. Two cars were spinning out of control toward me. I jumped against the cement median. The cars passed by. I felt one brush the back of my shirt. I was terrified.

That was the closest I had ever come to death. I stood in the same place, not thinking, not moving, just scared. It took me a few seconds before I realized that the car I had left Maria in was now spun

The police were already on the scene when I heard a noise and saw two more cars hurtling towards us.



In less than a week I had begun to forget the miracle of being spared. Then I happened to read about Laman and Lemuel. How could they be so stupid? I thought. And that's when I realized I had been just as quick to forget.

around. One of the out-of-control cars must have hit it. I didn't see Maria in the driver's seat where I had left her.

I ran down the road and yanked the door open. Nothing. "Maria!" I was screaming. I couldn't find her. If there was anything scaring me more than almost dying, it was losing my friend. My eyes and mind raced everywhere. She wasn't in the other seat. Not in the back. Not on the ground in front of me. Nowhere.

I heard a muffled cry. It sounded like it was coming from beneath the car. I checked. Nothing. I ran around the car. Maria was lying on the road with her head up against the median. One of the cars had run into the Tracker and knocked Maria through the side window and onto the road.

The paramedics strapped Maria to a stretcher, and we both went in the ambulance. I called her parents when we got to the emergency room. They hurried to the hospital. After Maria had a few X rays and spent a few hours in the emergency room, the doctors said that despite the whiplash and the large bruise

from the seat belt, she was fine. I escaped with a sore neck and a scar on my leg.

It's a great thing to be alive. I thanked the Lord for the chance to live, the chance to try a little more, a chance to go to college, a chance to get married, a chance at my dreams, a chance at playing the guitar, a chance to hang out with my brothers, a chance to write a story, a chance for everything.

The next week was crazy. It told me about myself. I had a test on Monday. I had a teaching presentation Tuesday, another test Wednesday, and a 10-page paper due Thursday. I quickly got lost in the hectic pace of everyday life. There was so much to worry about, I forgot about Colorado. I forgot how happy I was to be alive.

That Saturday I picked up my scriptures and started reading. "And after the angel had departed, Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying: How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty; then why not us?" (1 Ne. 3: 31).

Laman and Lemuel had always seemed so stupid to me. They saw an angel and started complaining immediately afterward. They forgot so quickly.

It then occurred to me that I was just as quick to forget. An amazing feeling of gratitude and unworthiness came over me. I hadn't seen an angel, but I had learned how much I loved life and the opportunity the Lord had given me to live it. Like Laman and Lemuel, soon after I had forgotten.

So much of the gospel is remembering, remembering what the Lord has already taught. I have so much to learn, yet I know what I need. I have a Heavenly Father who loves and protects me. I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. He gave His life for me so I can gain happiness and learn to be like Him. I know that through His Atonement, I can repent of my sins and of my forgetfulness and can appreciate and learn more. I can become more like my Heavenly Father. I know I have to continue to repent, using the Atonement in my life. I just have to remember it for the rest of my life. **NE**

Wherever YOU GO

As I sat on a chartered bus in front of the Chicago Illinois Temple, the fact that my family and I were about to move across the country finally hit home. Realizing that this was the last time I'd come to this temple to do baptisms for the dead with our stake youth did more to make reality sink in than the "For Sale" sign at my house, all the piles of packing boxes, and even my empty closet.

As I looked out the bus window at the beautiful building, I thought to myself, This is the last time I can come here like this with these people, hear their testimonies, and feel this kind of spirit. I am leaving for real.

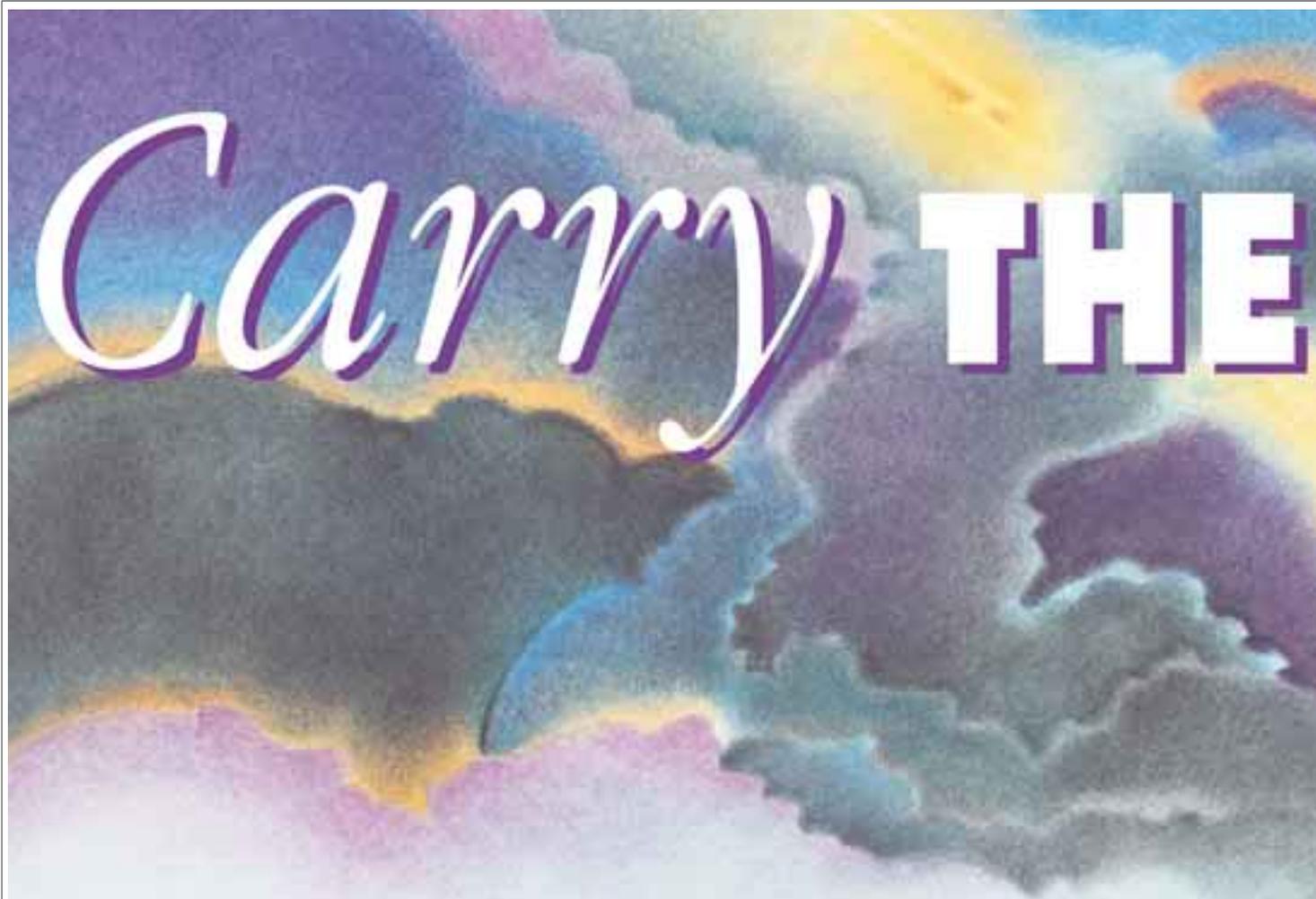
Just as I was thinking this, a comforting thought came clearly to my mind: The Spirit is the same wherever you go. Take what you feel here and share it where you are going. At that point, I knew that the gospel really is the same wherever you go, that the same Heavenly Father is always there, and that He will help us get through everything.

Do not be afraid of moving. It's not the end of the world to leave friends and places behind. I have learned that. No matter where you go, you can always have the comfort the gospel can bring into your life. It really is the same gospel no matter what place in the world you are in. The packaging might be a little different, but the contents are always wonderfully the same. **NE**

Packing up to move was hard until I realized my testimony would make the trip unbarmed.



by Ariana Lobo



by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone
of the Seventy

As the world moves deeper into spiritual darkness, be grateful for the light we have, and be ready to carry it forward.

When I was a boy, my mother had to go to work at Garfield Smelter to help support her seven children. She worked the graveyard shift as much as she could, I'm sure, to be with us during the day. I don't know when the poor woman slept. One Saturday morning, she got off work about 7:00 or 8:00 A.M. She went to bed for a couple of hours and then got up. She had invited all her relatives to dinner. There must have been 35 or 40. She decorated the tables and arranged the chairs and put all the dishes and

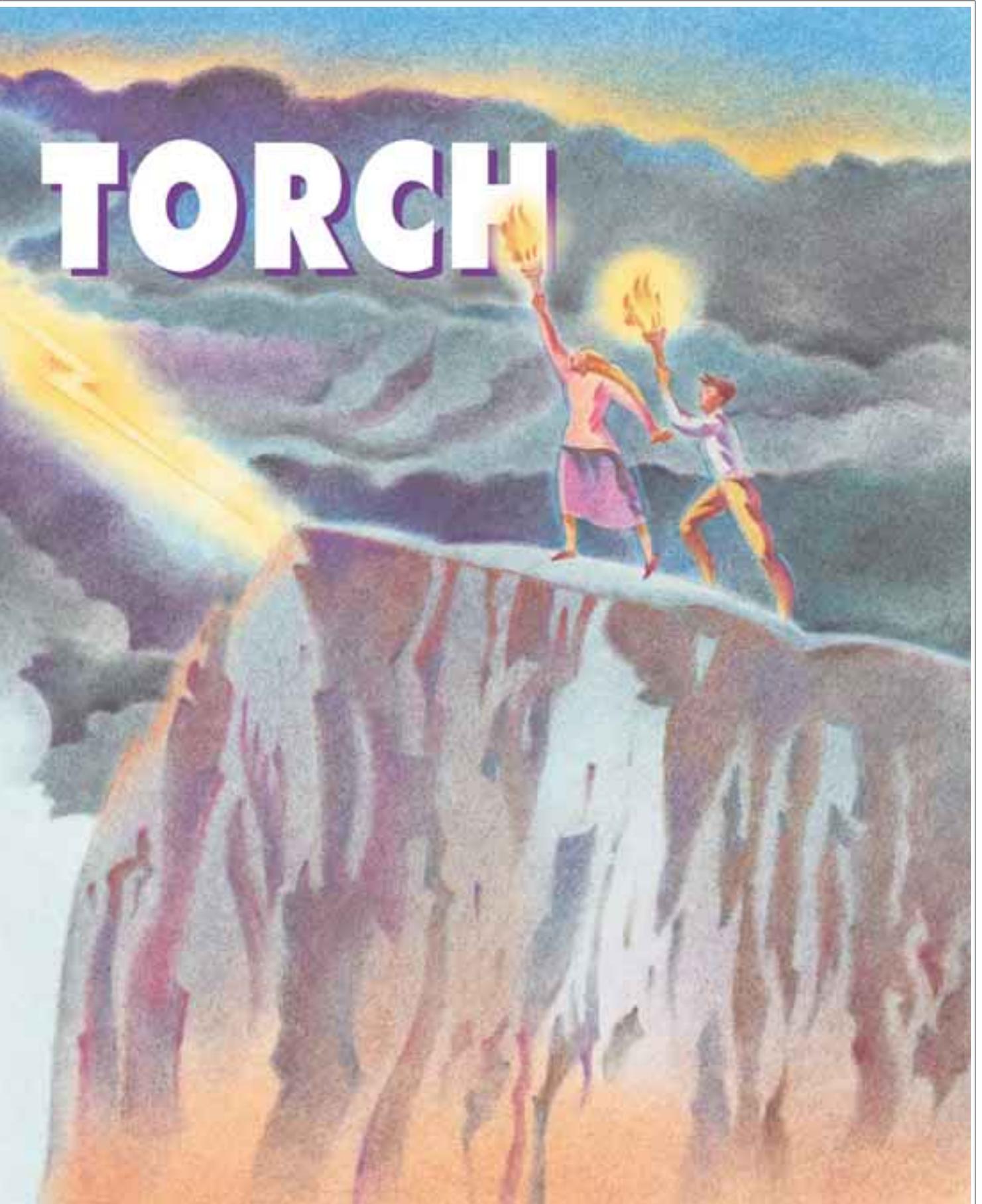
silverware out. She cooked and baked all day long. The dirty pots and pans and dishes stacked up.

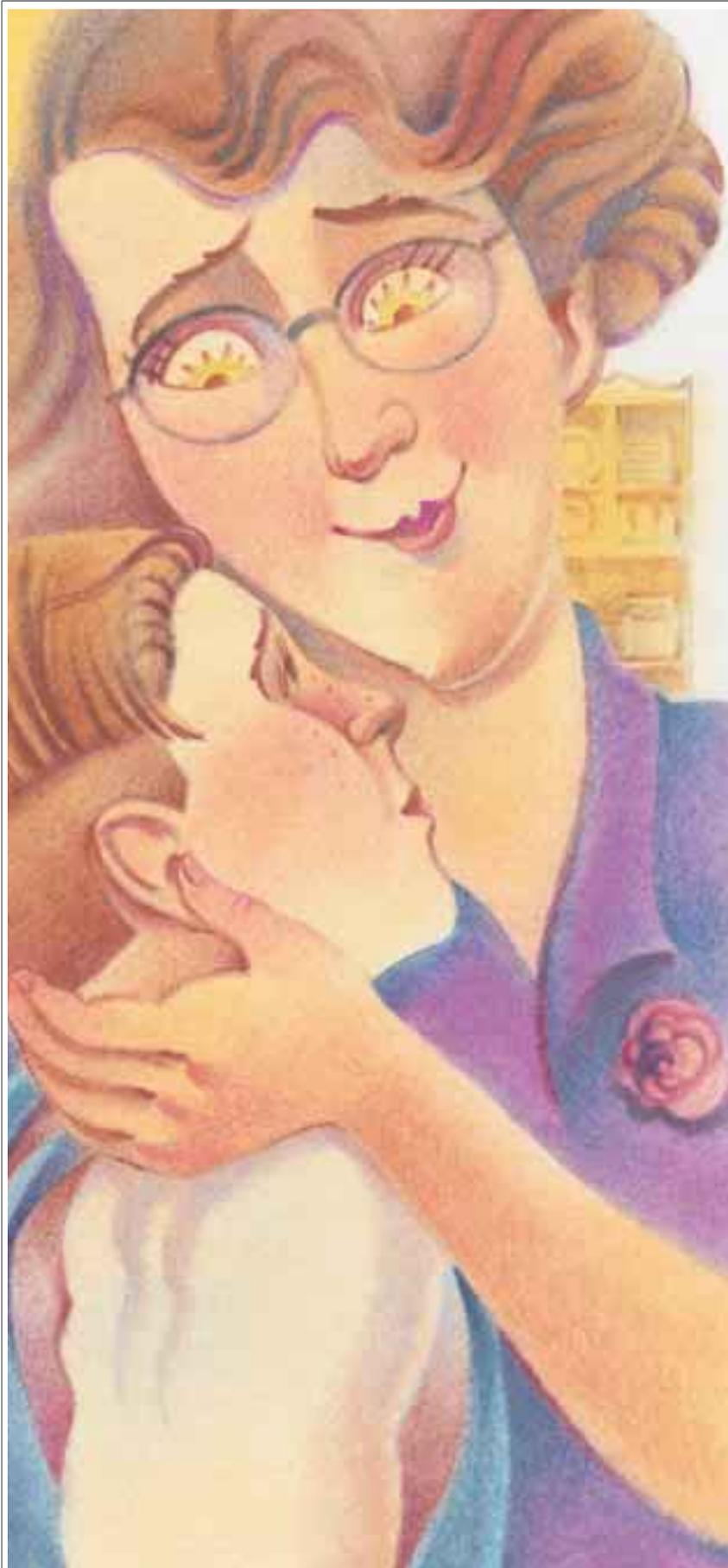
Everyone came to dinner, and after dinner all the dirty dishes were brought into the kitchen. The food was cleared and stacked on the table and cupboards; then the kitchen door was closed, and the family began to visit. It was about 8:00 P.M.

I remember standing all alone in the kitchen. In my young mind, I thought, Mother worked all night; she has worked all day to get this dinner. When everyone leaves, she will have to do the dishes and put the food away. It will take two or three hours, and that's not fair. Then I thought, I will do them.

I washed the dishes. We didn't have an electric dishwasher; ours was a manual dishwasher, and that night I was manual. I used a half-dozen dish towels. I was drenched from head to foot. I put the food away, cleaned off the table and drainboards; then I got down on my hands and knees and scrubbed the floor.

TORCH





It took about three hours.

Then I heard the chairs shuffling, and everyone left. The front door closed, and I heard my mother coming to the kitchen. I was pleased and thought she would be. The door swung open, and even at the age of 11, I recognized that she was startled. She looked around the kitchen, looked at me, and then there was a look I didn't recognize at the time. I do now. It was something like "Thanks. I am tired. I think you understand, and I love you." And she came over and hugged me. There was a light in her eye and a warmth in my heart. I learned it is a wonderful feeling to turn on the lights in our parents' eyes.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Another time—it was the Sunday before Thanksgiving, about 1943—I went to priesthood meeting where a member of the bishopric said: "This Thursday is Thanksgiving. We ought to all have family prayer in our homes." Then he said, "Let's put on the blackboard the things we are grateful for." We did, and he said, "Include these things in your Thanksgiving prayer." I got sick to my stomach, as we never had a prayer or blessing.

That night at 6:30 we went to sacrament meeting. At the end of the meeting, the bishop stood up and was very tender. He told about the young men from our ward who had been killed and wounded in World War II. He talked about our liberty, our freedom, our flag, and this great country, and our blessings. Then he said, "I'd hope every single family would kneel and have family prayer on Thanksgiving Day and thank God for His blessings."

My heart ached. I thought, How can we have family prayer? I wanted to be obedient. I wanted to have a prayer for Thanksgiving. I even thought I would say it if someone asked me, but I was too shy to volunteer. I worried all day Monday, and all day Tuesday, and Wednesday at school.

Thursday we all got up. There were five boys and two sisters. We skipped

breakfast so we would have a real appetite for Thanksgiving dinner. I kept thinking, Please, Heavenly Father, let us have a prayer.

Finally at 2:30, my mother called us to come and eat. We cleaned up and sat at the table. Somehow Mom had managed to have a turkey with all the trimmings. She put all the food on the table, including the turkey. I thought my heart would burst. Time was running out. I looked at my father, then my mother. I thought, Please, now, someone, anyone, please can't we have a prayer? I was almost panicky; then all of a sudden everyone started to eat. I had worked hard all morning and afternoon to work up an appetite, but I wasn't hungry. I didn't want to eat. I wanted to pray more than anything else in this world, and it was too late.

Beloved youth, be grateful for parents who have prayer and read the scriptures. Prize family home evening. Be grateful for those who teach and train you.

Lighting the way

Doesn't it make you deeply grateful to belong to a church with apostles and prophets at the head—knowing that one link will always hold, one light will never go out? As the world moves deeper and deeper into sin, this wonderful Church stands like a giant granite boulder.

Aren't you proud that the Church teaches us the truth? We don't have to wonder about earrings for boys and men, tattoos, spiked hair, the four-letter words, and obscene gestures. We have prophets who model the standards. They teach that the Ten Commandments are not outdated. The word of the Lord has thundered down through the generations: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Ex. 20:7). Profaning God's name is a great offense to the Spirit, and to do so is Satan's great ploy to mock our God.

Jehovah also declared, "Thou shalt not steal" (v. 15). Stealing is an affront to God. This commandment is only one of ten. Cheating, lying, bearing false witness are all types of stealing.

Aren't you thankful to God that the apostles and prophets never waver on sin? No matter how strong the winds of public opinion may blow, the Church is immovable. "God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Those who espouse perverse principles and deviant behavior are living in sin. Consenting adults that teach contrary to the gospel are wrong even if the majority accepts them. Sin is sin, and that is God's truth.

Pornography is evil. It has companions it travels with: drinking, smoking, and drugs. It uses some types of music, dancing, the Internet, and television. Those who produce it are godless and have no conscience. They know the consequences, but they don't care. Like those who peddle drugs, they will never be around to pick up the pieces when you're all broken up. But we will—your parents, bishops, and leaders.

Do not feel oppressed by obedience. Obedience is a wonderful and great privilege. Abraham 4:18 states, "And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed." What if the elements had not obeyed? They would have been damned or held back. So it is with us. Obedience to God is truly the only way to really be free and exercise our agency. Satan teaches the opposite and, with each wrong choice we make, he binds us with chains. I promise you, obedience is a wonderful privilege.

Young men and young women, raise the standard; carry the torch for your generation. We have absolute confidence you will.

I thank God for the one link that still holds, the one light that will not go out. Remember how blessed you are to have prayer in your homes. And always try to put lights in your mothers' eyes. That's the least we can all do for them. **NE**

Adapted from an October 1999 general conference address.

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CHAPTER & VERSE

What do you do when there's a serious question about your church and your beliefs and you don't know the answer?

The stadium lights illuminated the morning fog like specters from some 1960s horror movie. Under them, Emma marched robotlike and fingered the keys of her clarinet, missing notes repeatedly until the student conductor shouted her name. She wanted to cry. How could one conversation have turned her world so completely upside down?

That conversation had happened only moments before in the band room when Skylar, a senior and awesome flutist, had plopped her instrument case on the counter beside Emma. Although each girl played in the varsity band, they were two grades apart and seldom spoke to one another. But the room was unusually quiet this foggy morning, and the hand-drawn “What would Jesus do?” design taped on Skylar’s case begged Emma’s comment. “Did you draw that? It’s nice.”

“Thanks,” Skylar said, unsnapping her case.

“I don’t suppose you have a copy. I’d love to scan it.”

Skylar shook her head, obviously embarrassed at the flattery. Then she fell quiet and looked intently at Emma until Emma felt embarrassed. “What’s wrong?”

Emma asked.

“Nothing. It’s just that, well, I heard you’re a Mormon.”

Emma sighed and nodded, wondering what was to come next. She opened a new reed.

Skylar said, “Can I show you something?”

Emma shrugged. “Sure.”

Skylar surprised Emma by pulling a Bible from her backpack. “My youth group meets tonight,” Skylar said. “I’m assigned the reading but haven’t decided on a verse yet. That’s why I have this.” She held up the Bible. “Anyway, one Sunday my youth minister showed this passage to me. I’ve wanted to share it with you, but it’s weird talking about religion at school.”

Emma chuckled. “Yeah, I go to a seminary class at six in the morning. I don’t mention it much here either.”

Skylar nodded and opened her Bible. “You ever read Revelation 22:18–19? Most people haven’t because it’s at the end of the Bible.” She shrugged. “Guess they don’t get that far.”

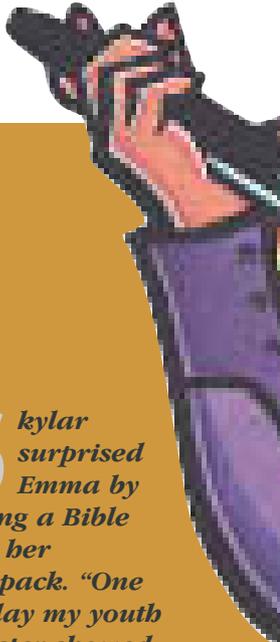
Emma chuckled as she received the book.

“Will you read it out loud?”

Emma glanced around, but no one seemed to be paying attention, so she began reading:

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

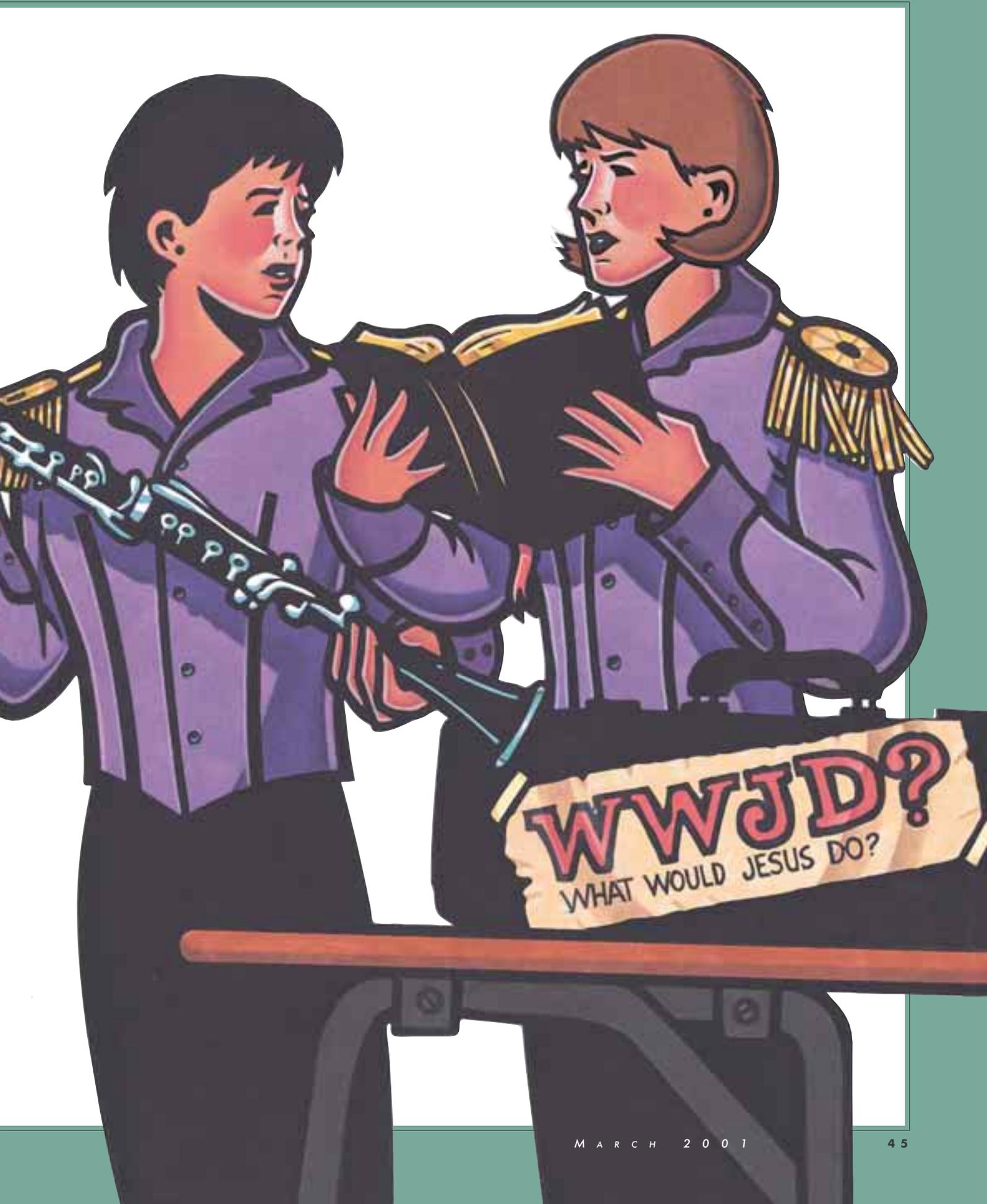
“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy,



Skylar surprised Emma by pulling a Bible from her backpack. “One Sunday my youth minister showed this passage to me. I’ve wanted to share it with you.” After reading it, Emma was confused—half ashamed for doubting and half afraid her doubts were correct.

by Lisa C. Downing

Illustrated by Scott Greer



She dreaded seeing her family, dreaded going to Mutual later that night. She didn't want to be around any Latter-day Saints. What would they think of her if they knew her doubts? They'd all try to talk to her, tell her to have faith. But faith in what? In the Book of Mormon? How could she have faith in something she wasn't sure was true?

God shall take away his part out of the book of life.”

As she read, Emma's forehead creased hard. Why was Skylar sharing this particular passage with her?

“Do you know what it means?” Skylar asked, breathing deeply. “My youth minister says it means that anyone who adds anything to or takes anything away from the Bible will be condemned.” Skylar's voice was shaking. “It's so important that the Apostle John concluded the Bible with it.”

Emma said cautiously, “That makes sense.” She put her reed in her mouth.

Skylar gulped. “Your Joseph Smith added to the Bible, didn't he? Isn't that what your church teaches? That the Book of Mormon is additional scripture?”

Emma said nothing; she felt confused. She closed her instrument case. Mr. Bets shouted for everyone to move outside, now! Emma hurriedly fastened the reed to her clarinet.

“I don't mean to offend you, really, but my youth minister says that, as a Christian, it's my duty to warn you,” Skylar said. “If you don't forsake Mormonism, you'll be damned.”

Emma's face flushed.

“Hurry!” Mr. Bets called.

Emma may have walked away from Skylar, out into the morning fog, but she couldn't walk away from the questions Skylar had planted in her mind. As she lined up, she wondered, Was Skylar right? Hadn't Joseph Smith added to the Bible? On cue, she'd marched 20 steps to the right. What if he'd made up the Book of Mormon? What if it was all a lie? These and similar questions had scorched her mind throughout drills, and when the conductor finally ended practice, Emma rushed toward the band room, hoping to get away from Skylar. She felt half ashamed for doubting and half filled with fear that her doubts were correct.

Skylar joined Emma in the crowded band room though Emma tried to ignore her. Skylar said, “My youth group is meeting at our minister's tonight. We'll shoot pool and listen to CDs. He'd like to meet you.”

Emma threw away her reed. It was Wednesday. The Mia Maids would be collecting used children's videos from ward members for a local shelter.

“I can pick you up.”

Emma snapped her instrument case. “Thanks, but I've got something at my own church,” Emma turned. “My parents make me go.” She blushed. Why did I add that? she thought.

Skylar hummed sympathetically. “My youth minister's got a book about Mormonism that I think you should read. I'll bring it tomorrow, okay?”

Emma gazed at Skylar. Revelation 22:18–19 had seemed so plain. No one should add to the Bible, and there was no denying that the Church teaches that the Book of Mormon is additional scripture. Emma hurt, thinking of the implication. All she wanted was to know the truth. Maybe the minister's book had it.

“Okay,” she said. But agreeing to read the minister's book didn't calm Emma's worries. Throughout the day, troubling questions buzzed in her brain. The day dragged, but finally the seventh period bell rang. She turned in her French test but was in no hurry to leave. She waited until the other students had filed out. She dreaded seeing her family, dreaded going to Mutual later that night. She didn't want to be around any Latter-day Saints. What would they think of her if they knew her doubts? They'd all try to talk to her, tell her to have faith. But faith in what? In the Book of Mormon? How could she have faith in something she wasn't sure was true? Emma's head ached and her stomach felt empty. It was a long walk home.

She entered the kitchen and found her mother baking. “Mindy sent another letter,” she announced, but Emma ignored her and headed toward the staircase. “She included a paragraph in French just for you and . . .”

“I'm busy, Mom. I've got homework, you know.” Emma hurried toward the stairs. She wanted time to think.

Her mother stared silently at her.

Emma trudged upstairs, closed the door, then threw herself onto her bed and stared

at the ceiling. Why should she read what her missionary sister had written? It was always the same: her testimony of this, her testimony of that. What did Mindy know about anything anyway? She always did exactly what Mom and Dad wanted.

Emma shook her head and rolled to her side. Why does everyone think they have all the answers? Mindy, Mom, Dad, all are sure the Church is true. She looked at her scriptures on the nightstand. Skylar and her youth minister swear it isn't. She snatched up the Bible and opened to Revelation 22. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues . . ." Her head fell against the wall.

I should talk to Mom, she told herself, ask her about this passage. I should walk right downstairs and say, "Mom, what about this?" But she couldn't. She lowered the Bible onto the mattress and pulled a pillow over her face. She already knew what her mom would say: "Pray, dear, trust the Lord, and He'll answer you." But I've been praying all my life, and I still don't have a testimony! she thought. Maybe God hasn't given me a testimony because the Book of Mormon isn't true.

Suddenly her brother Brady's nasal voice shouted, "Mom, Emma's crying again!"

Emma threw the pillow toward the closed door, but it was too late. Her mother was in her room in no time. She eased herself down beside Emma. "Want to talk?"

Emma shook her head. She was afraid.

Her mother stroked her hair. "If you don't talk to me, I can't . . ." She stopped. Emma saw her glance at the open Bible, pick it up, and read. She pointed to the last verses. "Is this what's bothering you?"

Emma's shoulders tightened.

Her mother said thoughtfully, "When I was investigating the Church, my minister showed this passage to me. He thought it would convince me not to believe in the Book of Mormon." She paused. "Did someone show this to you?"



Emma hesitated; then words spilled from her mouth. "Mom, it plainly says that man shouldn't add anything to the Bible. Joseph Smith did!"

Her mother leaned back thoughtfully, then said, "Many people interpret it that way. When the minister showed it to me, my first reaction was that Mormonism had to be wrong. I told the missionaries to forget about baptizing me." She chuckled. "But they showed me something."

Emma's mother pointed to a footnote, "This reference." She flipped to the Old Testament.

Emma sat upright, a vein of hope rising within her. Her mother began to

She knew she should go down and talk to her mom about this. But somehow she couldn't. She thought she already knew what her mom would say. But Emma was wrong.



Having doubts is a normal part of the testimony-building process. Share your questions because you never know how Heavenly Father will send His answers. Sometimes He even uses mothers.”

read Deuteronomy 4:2: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.”

Emma burst out, “It says the same thing! Skylar’s right.”

“No, Emma, think. Who wrote Deuteronomy?”

“I don’t know!”

“Moses. And he wrote long before John wrote Revelation. Just like John wrote long before Joseph Smith.”

“So?”

“So if you use your friend’s logic, every scripture recorded after Moses wrote Deuteronomy would have to be false because in Deuteronomy God said no one should add to His word.”

Emma blinked.

“But we have the rest of the Bible because other prophets understood that Moses only meant people shouldn’t add to this book, to Deuteronomy. And John only meant that nothing should be added to the book of Revelation.”

Emma stared. Her mother was actually making sense. She wiped away a tear.

“This may say that man shouldn’t add to scripture, but, Emma, where does it say that God won’t?”

Her mother’s words sent a tingling sensation through Emma as they sank into her soul. She reread the passage and looked up in wonder. “It doesn’t say God won’t give any more revelation, does it?”

Her mother shook her head. “And it says not to reject *any* of God’s words.”

“Including the Book of Mormon!”

“Right.” Her mother hugged her.

“Having doubts is a normal part of the testimony-building process. It’s natural to question before you understand. Share your questions because you never know how Heavenly Father will send His answers. Sometimes He even uses mothers.”

Emma grinned.

Her mother rose. “Now, that homework, young lady.”

Emma reached for her backpack, then grimaced. “I forgot. Skylar’s bringing me a book about Mormonism tomorrow.”

Her mother paused at the door. “It won’t be kind, and it will probably use the same kind of logic that led them to misunderstand that scripture in Revelation.”

Emma nodded. “I won’t take it. I don’t need to seek doubts.”

“I agree that would be the best. Dinner will be early.” Her mother pulled Mindy’s letter from her pocket and left it on the dresser.

After the door shut, Emma retrieved the letter. Out fell a snapshot of her missionary sister standing before the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Emma’s gaze traveled to the Book of Mormon on her nightstand. A grin blossomed. “I wonder if Skylar would like to read a book that really explains Mormonism!” **NE**

Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Family Home Evening Ideas

□ Read the Idea List “Scripture Study” on page 15 with your family. Talk about your family’s scripture study time. Could it use some improvement? Choose two or three suggestions from the list and try them, or make up a few of your own ideas.

□ Read the account of Laman and Lemuel and the brass plates in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Ne. 3). Briefly summarize “Slow to Remember” on page 36 and talk about ways to remember the spiritual experiences that boost our testimonies.

Personal Improvement

□ Read Q&A and choose one or two ways you can improve your language. If swearing isn’t a problem, consider finding ways to be kinder in your speech or to improve your vocabulary.

□ Keep track of the kindnesses done for you or others. Read “Collecting Kindness” on page 20 to see how one young woman did it. Review your list and write in your journal about the gratitude you feel for others.

□ Read “Chapter and Verse” on page 44 and look up the scriptures mentioned. Think about the tough questions your friends have asked you about the Church or your standards. Did you find answers and discuss them with your friends, or did you simply try to avoid the topic? Write down one or two of the toughest questions and enlist the help of your parents,

seminary teacher, and youth advisers to find the answers. The search will help your own testimony grow.

Young Men and Young Women Activity Ideas

□ Organize a clothing swap. Bring clothes you’ve outgrown (only with your parents’ permission, of course), and swap them with other youth for clothes they don’t use anymore. Ask one of your leaders to talk about appropriate clothing choices and modesty. Make photocopies of the story “Dress Stress” on page 10 for everyone to take home. Give any leftover clothing to a local charity.

□ Borrow several jump ropes or buy some inexpensive rope and have a jump rope night. Have a speed contest or a double-dutch competition. See who can jump the longest. Read “Jump Start” on page 30 for inspiration.

Seminary Devotional Idea

□ Pass a mirror around the room and ask people to look at themselves. Tell them to think about what they see and describe their reflection. Briefly summarize the main points from President Faust’s article “Who Do You Think You Are?” on page 4. Remind class members that their most important traits aren’t visible in a mirror but are the talents they are developing and the service they give. Sing “I Am a Child of God” (*Hymns*, no. 301).

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So cool

The *New Era* is so awesome. I especially liked the July 2000 issue. “Search Light” was so cool and so inspirational. I can read that over and over. I also liked the Message, “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” because I think everybody needs to forget themselves and go to work.

*Emily Luckau
Idaho Falls, Idaho (via e-mail)*

Helping to choose

I am so happy that my parents finally renewed my subscription to the Church magazines. I love the *New Era*. For a while I had an early school class that interfered with seminary, and it wasn’t easy to choose the right without that certain spirit seminary leaves on my day. So I kept a few issues of the *New Era* with me, and they helped me make it through.

*Krysta Biggs
Scappoose, Oregon (via e-mail)*

The perfect time

I’d like to thank you for the June 2000 issue. It had so many beneficial things in it. I’m preparing to go on a mission, and it has helped me realize what I need to do to prepare for the most memorable and exciting time of my life. I guess the Lord blessed me with good timing because the magazine came to my mailbox at the perfect time.

*Danny Matthews
Prescott, Arizona*

Culturally biased?

Even though I look forward to the *New Era* arriving each month and love all the spiritual guidance and stories, I have always had a problem trying to understand the culture and the wording used. American English is totally different to English, and the culture is totally different too. I have tried to understand the *New Era*, even though understanding the American culture is hard and often confusing. When reading the May 2000 issue, I came across an article called “Knowing Where to Look.” As I started to read, I was glad to find a story about someone in England. But halfway

“I can’t play the piano worth beans, but I really love the messages the songs give.”



through the story, the boy says he is “kicking a football against our caravan.” But the editors placed in brackets by *football* and *caravan* the American equivalent to the words. I am very annoyed at this. If people in England have to try to figure out the different cultural language of America and the meanings, why do you have to place the meanings of our language and culture in for the people in America? As much as I love the *New Era*, when you do this type of thing it is unfair.

*Emma Rowley
Kent, England (via e-mail)*

Quite awesome

I love the *New Era*, and I read it practically cover to cover when it comes in the mail. The article “.net/results” (May 2000) is wonderful. I never knew anyone had made a Web site to promote cleaner movies. After I read the article, it took me only a moment to realize I wanted to show my support by signing the online petition, so I did. The article “Behold the Man” by Bishop Richard C. Edgley in the same issue was quite awesome, and I appreciate it. I believe young men of today need to hear what a real man is and realize that it is different from what most people would like to believe. I urge young men to read it and act on it. It is true.

*Kassandra Kerr
Kent, Washington (via e-mail)*

Bean there, played that

I just want to thank you for “In Tune” in the *New Era*. It is what I look for first (after the Mormonisms and Mormonad, of course). I can’t play the piano worth beans, but I really love the messages the songs give. Thanks again. I love the *New Era*.

*Joan Jay
Springville, Utah (via e-mail)*

The New Era welcomes your letters. Send them to We’ve Got Mail, New Era Magazine, 50 E. North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150 or via e-mail at:

*cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org
Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.*





by Mary Knapp

Driving home

by Jennifer Rossiter

The sky is white as clay with no sun.
All is dusty gray.
Fragile
like porcelain, the scene could crack.
I sit cold in my car.
The drive is serene.

Soon a lazy sun peaks around
the west mountain,
dripping honey into Utah Lake.
Golden.
My eyes glory in the juxtaposition
until distance leaves it a
smoldering glow above the horizon,
like the tip of a match
when first blown out.

At dusk, a translucent mauve
dusts the chalk-painted valley.
Peace.
Gray smoke from quaint chimneys
blends with the settling fog.
All is calm.
All is bright.
Still and content.



“I’ve had a lot of positive experiences being in the Church. We have good standards, and people notice that.”

See “Jump Start,” p. 30.