

THE New Era

MARCH

2003

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Editorial Offices:
New Era, Room 2420
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220

E-mail address:
cur-editorial-newera
@ldschurch.org

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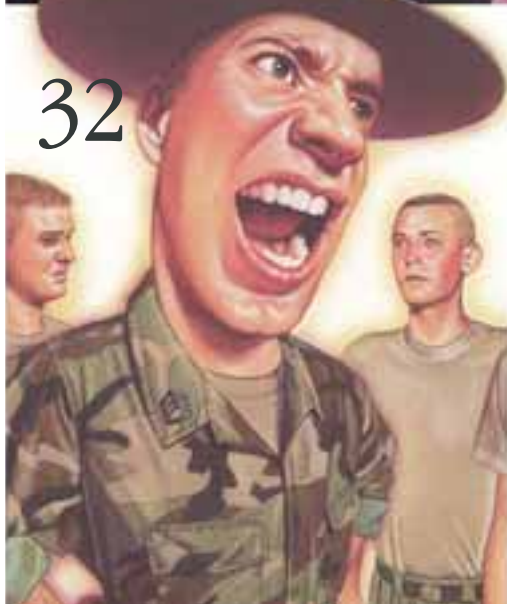
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Cover: Janna Halcomb
is dressed and ready to
play her part in the
Arizona temple pageant.
See "Mesa Pageant"
on
p. 20.

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Richard K. Webb (front),
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Celebrating
the life of
our Savior
at Easter. See
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| Lane V. Erickson <i>Everything in the New Era may be copied for incidental, noncommercial Church or home use unless otherwise indicated. Other uses require permission of the copyright owner.</i> | |

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THE ENEMY



To be a winner in life, you must gain victory over self.

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

In 1919, the University of Pennsylvania track team was invited to compete in the annual Intercollegiate Association track meet. Creed Haymond, a member of the Church, was the team's captain.

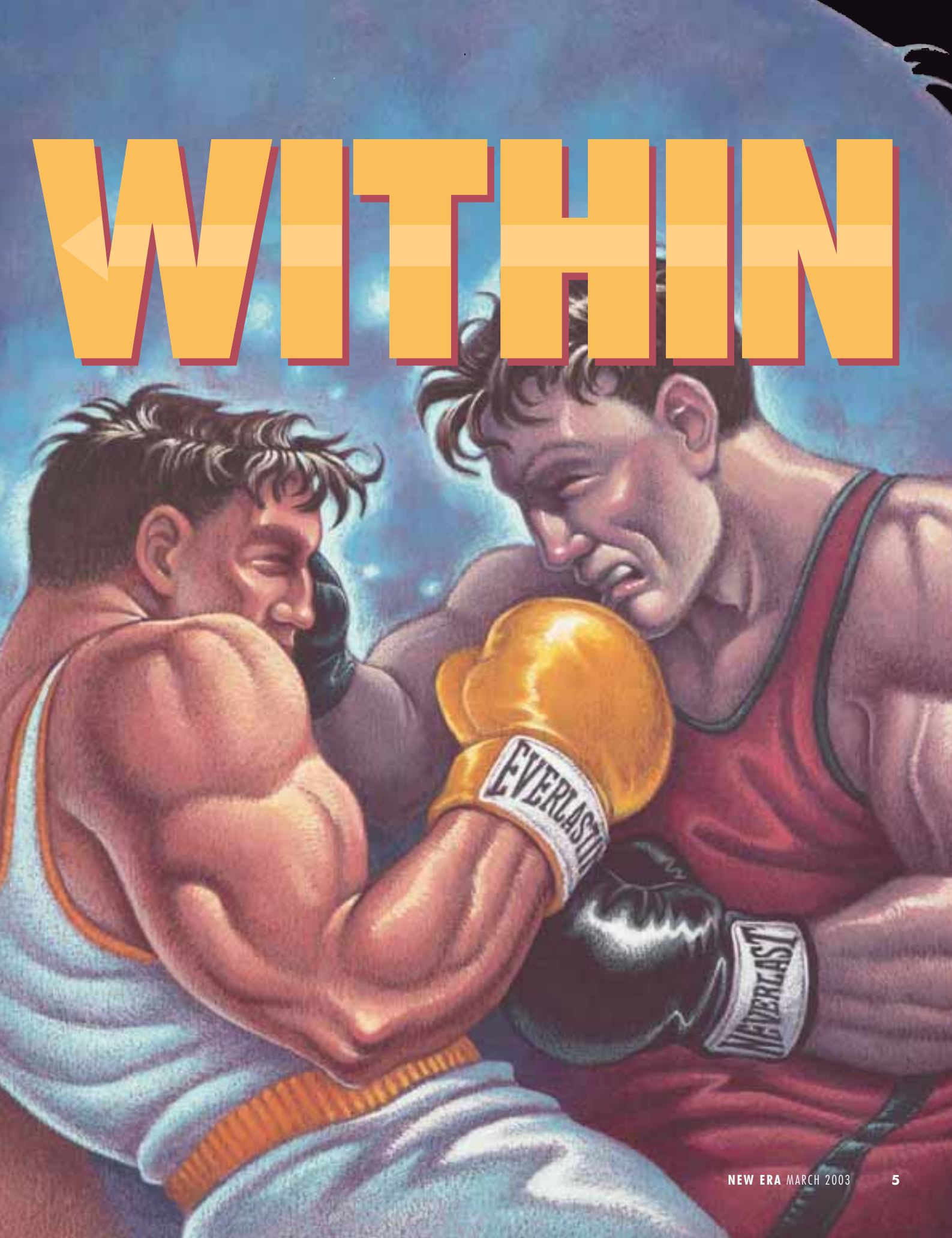
The night before the track meet the team's coach, Lawson Robertson, who coached several Olympic teams, instructed his team members to drink some sherry wine. In those days, coaches wrongly felt that wine was a tonic for muscles hardened through rigorous training. All the other team members took the sherry, but Brother Haymond refused because his parents had taught him the Word of Wisdom. Brother Haymond became very anxious because he did not like to be disobedient to his coach. He was to compete against the fastest men in the world. What if he made a poor showing the next day? How could he face his coach?

The next day at the track meet the rest of the team members were very ill and performed poorly or were even too sick to run. Brother Haymond, however, felt well and won the 100- and 220-yard dashes. His coach told him, "You just ran the 220 yards in the fastest time it has ever been run by any human being." That night and for the rest of his life, Creed Haymond was grateful for his simple faith in keeping the Word of Wisdom.¹

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught us: "Our first enemy we will find within ourselves. It is a good thing to overcome that enemy first and bring ourselves into subjection to the will of the Father, and into strict obedience to the principles of life and salvation which he has given to the world for the salvation of men."² In simple terms, this means that we need to strengthen the good within us and to overcome the temptations of Satan.

We can shield ourselves against the enemy within each of us by using the protective mantle of the priesthood of God.


WITHIN





If you cross to the devil's side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter's power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord."
—President George Albert Smith (1870-1951)





The direction finder is sure. Alma tells us, "Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil" (Alma 5:40).

Robert Louis Stevenson captured this constant struggle between good and evil in the classic novel about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The story tells us that in the beginning "Dr. Jekyll is a highly respected London physician, a good and kindly man, who in his youth had showed inclinations toward evil which, however, he succeeded in suppressing. Interested in drugs, the doctor now chances upon one which enables him to change his external form to that of a repulsive dwarf, the very embodiment of evil, whom he calls Mr. Hyde.

"A similar dose permits him to return to the form and personality of the benevolent doctor.

Many times the doctor becomes Mr. Hyde, thereby giving this side of his nature more and more power. Jekyll finds it increasingly difficult to regain his virtuous entity and also finds himself occasionally becoming Hyde without the use of the drug."³

In the character of Mr. Hyde, he commits murder, and when the drug will no longer restore him to the kindly Dr. Jekyll, the truth is discovered and Hyde kills himself. The misuse of drugs destroyed his life. So it can be in real life.

Now the key to never turning into an evil, wicked Mr. Hyde is to determine not to yield to destroying temptations. Never, never experiment with any addictive substance. Do not ever use tobacco in any form or take any other enslaving substances. Stay away from intoxicating liquor. Addictions bring tragic consequences that are hard to overcome.

In the military service during World War II, I associated with some fine young men of great promise. But little by little, I saw some of them turn from the decent, God-fearing qualities of Dr. Jekyll and revert to the baseness of a Mr. Hyde. For some, it began by drinking coffee because the water was foul, and the water

decontamination pills had such an unpleasant taste. The coffee led some to take an occasional drink of beer. Every soldier serving overseas was allocated a ration of cigarettes and an occasional bottle of whiskey, which were worth considerable money.

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) once gave this advice: "If you cross to the devil's side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter's power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord."⁴ Some soldiers stayed on the safe side of the line and never experimented with nor trafficked in these addicting substances, even though they were given to us free. But others would sample the cigarettes or alcohol as a diversion to the challenges of the war. A few were even drawn away into immorality, believing that the stress of war justified lowering their standards and letting the Mr. Hyde side of their personalities take over.

After the war, those who had become addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and immorality found that they could not readily shake off these bad habits. The young men who had started out with such potential crossed that line inch by inch, robbing themselves and their families of the promised happiness and experiencing instead divorce, broken families, and heartaches.

Those who never lowered their standards did not succumb to these addictions. They came through that stressful period of their lives stronger and more prepared to lead productive, exemplary, and happy lives as faithful fathers and grandfathers of righteous families. They have also served as honored and respected leaders in the Church and in the community.

Another false philosophy that appeals to the Mr. Hyde side of our natures is that peeking into pornography is harmless. This is a terrible deception. Pornography is as addictive as cocaine or any illegal drug. I recently received a heartbreaking letter from an excommunicated man whose soul is filled with sorrow and regret. With his permission, I quote the following from his letter: "I hope that this letter will confirm to any who have doubt that



We need to strengthen the good within us to overcome the temptations of Satan. The direction finder is sure. “Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil” (Alma 5:40).

the path of destruction only reaps sorrow and grief and no sin is worth this price.”

He goes on to state: “I have brought grief and sorrow upon myself. Only now do I fully realize the great destruction that I have brought upon myself. No selfish or lustful desire is worth losing your Church membership for. I have brought terrible grief to my wife and two wonderful children. I am grateful for my wife’s great efforts to help me overcome my sins. My wife has been a victim of my sins and had to endure great sorrow and suffering. I long for the day that I can again be a member of the Lord’s Church and for our family to be an eternal family.”

The letter goes on to admit: “My sins are a direct result of my early childhood addiction to pornography. Without a doubt, pornography is addictive and is poison. Had I learned early in my life to apply the power of self-mastery, I would be a member of the Church today.”

One of Mr. Hyde’s deceptions is what some erroneously call “premeditated repentance.” There is no such doctrine in this Church. This may sound subtly appealing, but it is in fact pernicious and a false concept. Its objective is to persuade us that we can consciously and deliberately transgress with the forethought that quick repentance will permit us to enjoy the full blessings of the gospel, such as temple blessings or a mission. True repentance can be a long, painful process.

Some people wear masks of decency and outward righteousness but live lives of deception, believing that, like Dr. Jekyll, they can live a double life and never be found out. James said, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). In the Book of

Mormon we read the account of Corianton, who went on a mission to the Zoramites with his father and brother. His double life caused him to forsake his ministry and his father to lament, “O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words” (Alma 39:11).

The truth about who we are and what we do will ultimately become known. The Lord has given us this sober reminder: “For their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed” (D&C 1:3).

We can shield ourselves against the enemy within each of us by using the protective mantle of the priesthood of God. Individually, we need to put the great powers of the holy priesthood to work in our lives.

Collectively, we have the mission to bring the message of salvation to the world, which mission we carry out under the direction of our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, who holds all of the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time. But we cannot fulfill this mission unless each of us wins the battle within ourselves.

Exaltation in the Father’s kingdom includes kingdoms, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers which increase forever.⁵ I pray that we may all strive to overcome the enemy within so that we can receive these blessings. **NE**

Adapted from an October 2000 general conference address.

NOTES

1. See *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1928, 1001–7.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, 371–72.
3. *Thesaurus of Book Digests*, 206.
4. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, 43.
5. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, 72.

True Beauty

From one simple encounter, I realized what it means to be my own kind of beautiful.

BY ROSALYN COLLINGS

One of my favorite posters printed in the Church magazines shows a beautiful vase of roses with a single daisy in the center. The caption reads, “Be Your Own Kind of Beautiful” (*New Era*, July 1986, 7). I often feel like that daisy, a relatively normal-looking person lost amid a sea of more stunning beauty. But I am slowly learning that there are different kinds of beautiful

and that the most important is not an outward beauty but an inward one.

One day at school as I ate lunch and studied for my next class, I noticed a group sitting near me, talking and laughing. One young woman particularly caught my attention. She was tall, with beautiful black hair, dark skin, and high cheekbones. Her appearance was as unlike my pale, freckled face and red hair as anything I could imagine. She was one of the most beautiful people I had ever seen.

After a few minutes, the group rose to leave. But the young woman I had been watching stopped. I was somewhat embarrassed; I thought she must have seen me staring at them. Then something extraordinary happened.

“I’m sorry to disturb you,” she said, “but I want to tell you how beautiful you are.”

After a shocked pause, I started to laugh. “I was thinking the same thing about *you!*”

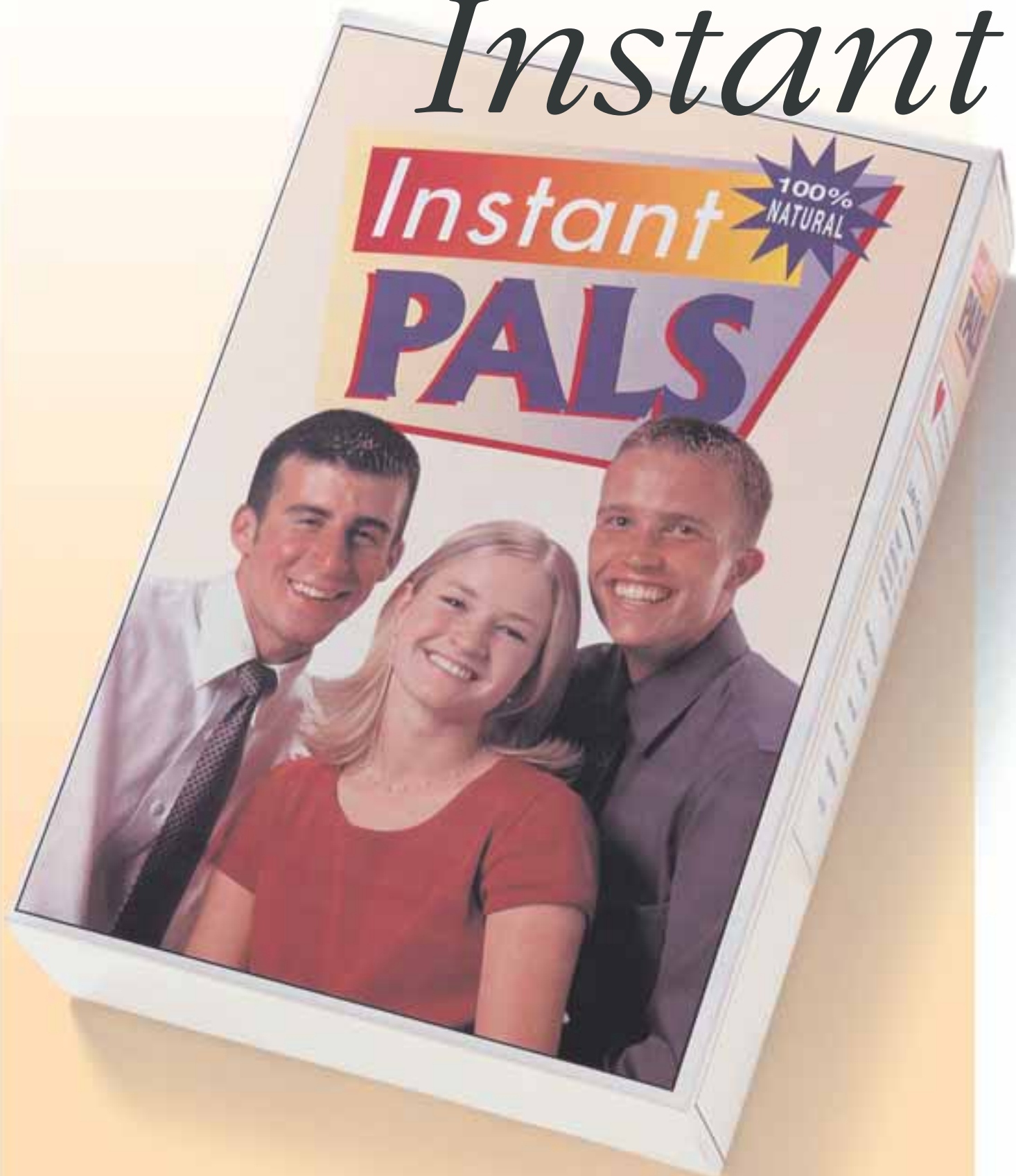
After she left, I continued to think about what had happened. We found our differences beautiful. At that moment I realized there is no single standard of beauty.

I have since thought about how our Heavenly Father sees us. I think we must be beautiful to Him because we are His children. And that divine birthright is much more important than any physical beauty.

Heavenly Father doesn’t care about the beauty of our hair or skin—but He does care about our hearts. When we strive to experience a “mighty change in [our] hearts,” then we can be blessed to receive “his image in [our] countenances” (Alma 5:14). This inner radiance makes us truly beautiful. **NE**

Rosalyn Collings is a member of the State College Ward, Altoona Pennsylvania Stake.

Instant



FRIENDS

In ten minutes of Sunday School I went from having one best friend to ten. Naturally I was there again next week.

BY STEPHEN RUCKER

I sat next to my dad in a strange new place. This church lacked crucifixes and gilded paint. There was no altar. The walls were simple, and the stand was a wooden podium that could not be considered ornate in any way. The “minister” wore a business suit instead of the robes I was used to. No statues, no candles, no procession.

I was an outsider in this church and, as my dad insisted, we were going to stay the entire three hours. This was the first time I had been to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

My dad was Catholic too, but he had been attending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for a year. At first I felt alone and out of place sitting in the simple meeting hall, but things quickly changed. Despite the fact that my presence had not been announced, many people welcomed me and introduced themselves.

I stayed with my dad during sacrament meeting. When Sunday School began, I went to the adult class because I wasn’t sure how I would fit in with the youth. The stake president, who had become friends with my dad, was also my allergy doctor, and he had a son who was about my age. He wanted me to go with his son to Sunday School, but I was content staying with Dad the entire three hours.

Ten minutes after Sunday School began, Brent Williams, a good friend of mine who started Catholic school with me that year, walked in and recruited me to go to the youth Sunday School class. I was shocked. I just kept thinking, “No, Brent’s not a Mormon. That’s impossible.”

I guess I had assumed I would never meet a Mormon outside of a church building. It’s as if I thought they couldn’t go to public schools or Catholic schools with other kids.

Now I had a best friend who was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Brent introduced me to everyone in Sunday School and, within 10 minutes, I had 10 best friends.

The Sunday School teacher introduced herself and then began to teach about the gold plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s First Vision. I was fascinated and listened intently.

In priesthood meeting I met the Young Men president, his counselors, and members of the bishopric. Our discussion was about Adam and Eve. I knew by the Spirit that what they taught me was true. In one day I was convinced that these were the most fun and the most spiritual people on earth. By the end of church, I felt so welcome that I came back Sunday after Sunday.

These people provided the fertile soil that helped nourish the gospel seed in my heart. I began to look forward to Sundays, and I enjoyed going to church.

I marveled at the amazing things I was learning about the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Restoration, the premortal existence, the three degrees of glory, the temple, eternal marriage, and the Atonement. My testimony grew, and I found that I knew the Book of Mormon was true and that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I knew that God lived, and I knew He was literally my Father.

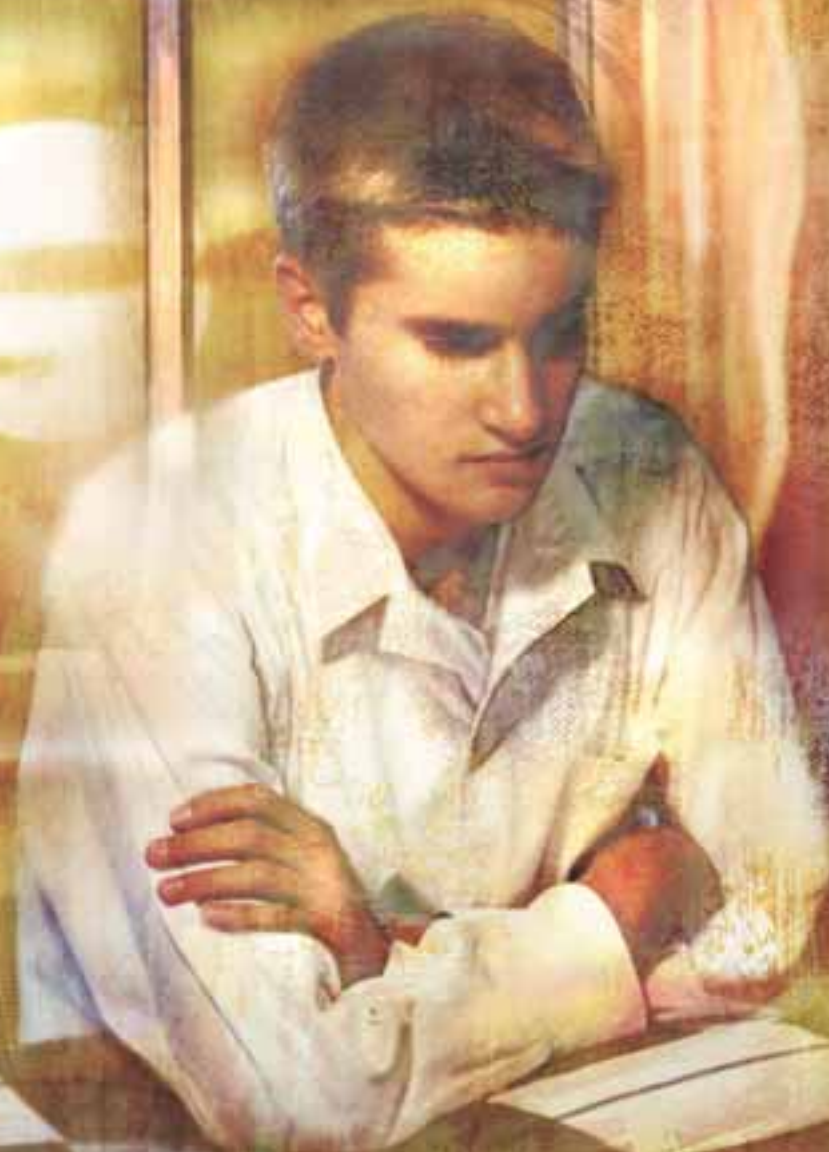
I was baptized almost two years later on 26 July 1998. I marvel now as I look back at the fellowship, the friendship, and the examples of those people who were willing to extend a hand to a stranger. **NE**

Stephen Rucker is currently serving in the Spain Madrid Mission

TODAY I WILL...



N. Eldon Tanner was ordained an Apostle in 1962. In 1963 he began serving in the First Presidency, where he remained until his death in 1982. Here he teaches us to prepare for eternal life—by beginning today.



BY PRESIDENT N. ELDON TANNER (1898–1982)

*Supposing today were your last day on earth,
The last mile of the journey you've trod;
After all of your struggles, how much are you worth?
How much can you take home to God?*

—Anonymous

These words from a well-known poem sum up what life is all about. We are born, we live, and we die; and for what purpose? Our knowledge and understanding of the reason for our existence and what our eternal destiny will be should help us in determining how we shall live and how to sift out and strive for the really important things in life.

Each of us might well say: “Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Let me begin now to prepare for eternal life, that I may know a fulness of joy and happiness now and forever.” After all, this is really what each of us wants, and it is most important that we take time to find out how to get it and begin now to work at it day by day.

Day by Day

To accomplish this we must study and learn and increase our knowledge and understanding of the gospel. Then by application of our learning day by day and every day we will have an increase of faith and testimony that is so necessary for our own salvation, as well as for our influence on the lives of those we love, those with whom we want to share our happiness and blessings.

Remember always that the gospel is designed to teach us how to conduct ourselves for the benefit of our spiritual and temporal affairs. It is not enough to attend Church meetings, partake of the sacrament, participate in religious discussions, and then turn a deaf ear to the needs of our families, our neighbors, or our communities; or be dishonest or unscrupulous in our dealings with them.

Neither is it enough to be a good, solid citizen, contributing to charities, serving on community boards, and in general living a good Christian life. Although

commendable, this is not sufficient to entitle one to the fulness of joy and the eternal life that our Father in Heaven has promised to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Our Duties

We recall the scriptural account of one who came to the Savior and said:

“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

“And he said unto him, . . . if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:16–17).

The scriptures recount again and again what the commandments are and that a requirement for eternal life, or living with God, is baptism by proper authority in His Church and kingdom. At the time of baptism, when we become members of the true Church, we take upon ourselves the responsibilities of that membership.

We are admonished to learn our duty and to act in the office in which we are appointed and are warned that if we do not we shall not be counted worthy to stand (see D&C 107:99–100).

Practice Makes Perfect

How do we keep ourselves headed in the right path for the achievement of our goals and eventual eternal life? Only by disciplining ourselves and by repenting each day of those old habits or weaknesses that will keep us from reaching our God-given potential and destiny. We know that we have to work constantly to attain anything worthwhile in life.

Before entering a tournament a golfer will practice a single shot by the hour. Musicians, artists, and public speakers all must work and practice to become proficient. How much more important it is for us to make preparations to be about the work of our Heavenly Father, who has placed us here for a wise and glorious purpose.

As we reflect on the value of resolving to do better, let us determine to discipline ourselves to carefully select the resolutions we make, to consider the purpose for making

them, and finally to make commitments for keeping them and not letting any obstacle stop us. Let us remind ourselves at the beginning of each day that we can keep a resolution just for that day. As we do this it gets easier and easier until it becomes a habit.

Make Your Day

I knew a young woman who was taught the gospel and who wanted to join the Church but who was having trouble with the Word of Wisdom. She used cigarettes and coffee, and the thought of never having another cigarette or cup of coffee in her whole life overwhelmed her. One of the missionaries told her to try it for just one day and then just one more day. She found that by living it a day at a time she could make it, and she was soon baptized. The same would be true in changing any bad habit for a good one.

The greatest blessing one can enjoy in life is to go to bed at night with a clear conscience, knowing that he or she has lived that day in harmony with the teachings of the Savior and has accomplished the work assigned to him or her to do.

So we come now to the first day of the rest of our lives. With discipline and determination let us make it a good year and a good life for us and for our families and neighbors. It is desirable to begin each new day with resolves such as these or some others of your own choosing.

Just for Today

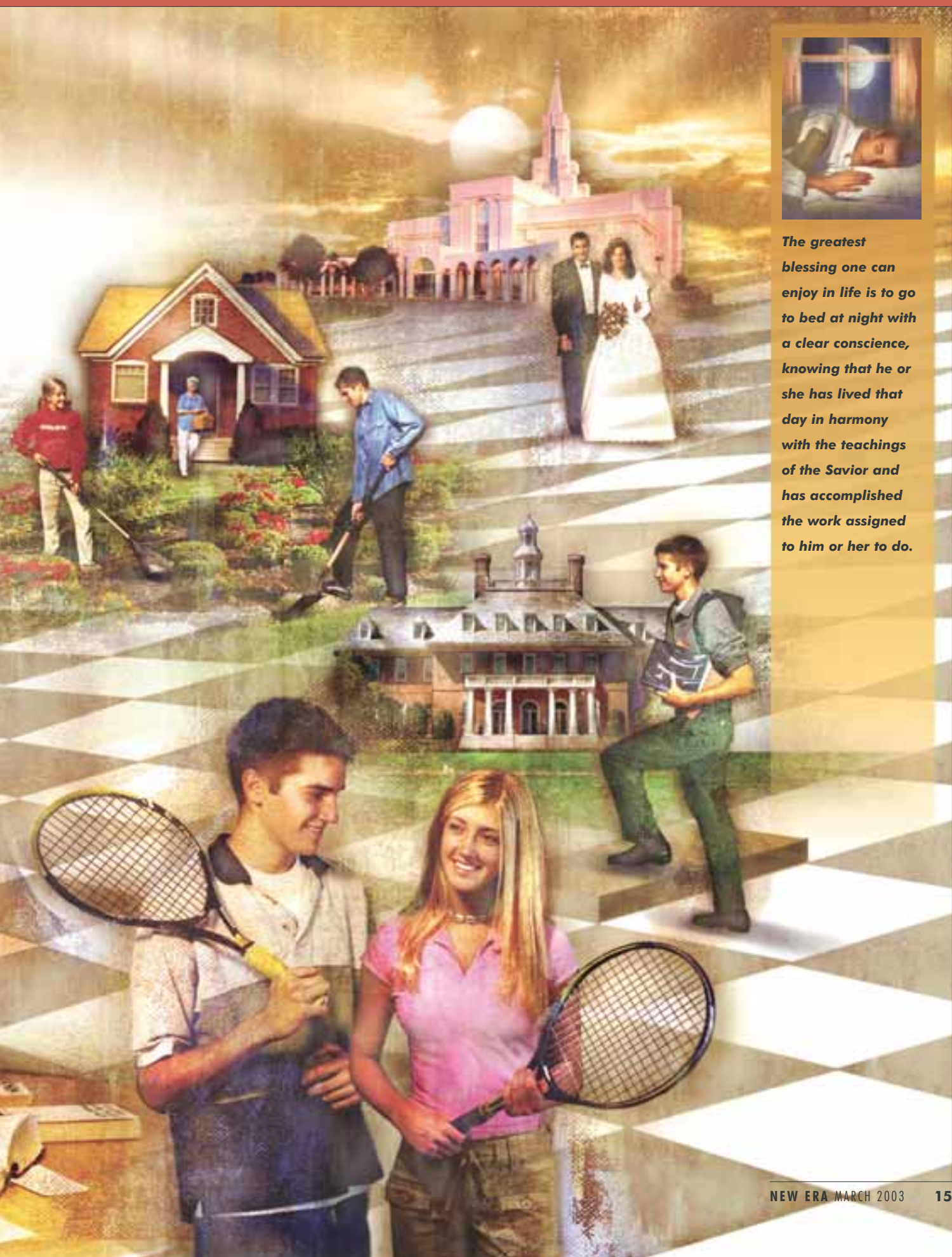
- I will seek my Heavenly Father in earnest prayer. I will listen for the promptings of the Spirit to guide me.
- I will *express* my love for God and His Son, Jesus Christ, in prayer and will *show* my love for Them through service to my fellowmen.
- I will study and strive for more understanding of the gospel.
- I will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- I will listen to and heed the counsel of God's prophet. I will keep the covenants and commandments.

- I will teach someone about the gospel by word or by example.
- I will observe the standards of the Church.
- I will express through word and deed my love for my family.
- I will be honest in all my dealings.
- I will prepare myself for the tasks that have been assigned to me.
- I will do a kind deed for someone this day.
- I will express appreciation and gratitude for all blessings.
- I will be loyal where I should be loyal.

Finally, we can do no better than to make and keep the resolves found in our thirteenth article of faith: "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." **NE**

Originally printed in the January 1975 New Era.





The greatest blessing one can enjoy in life is to go to bed at night with a clear conscience, knowing that he or she has lived that day in harmony with the teachings of the Savior and has accomplished the work assigned to him or her to do.

Q & A

Why should I pay tithing on the money I'm earning now since I'm planning on using my earnings to pay for my mission? Won't all that money go for the same purpose anyway?

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

NEW ERA

It is true that your tithing money and the money you use to pay for your mission is all used for the same purpose, to build the kingdom of God. But the reason we pay tithing isn't just to provide the Church with money. Paying tithing teaches sacrifice and obedience. Obeying this law will help with your personal development as well as helping build Christ's Church on the earth.

"It is not so much a matter of money as it is a matter of faith," President Gordon B. Hinckley said. "I have yet to find a faithful tithe payer who cannot testify that in a very literal and wonderful way the windows of heaven have been opened and blessings have been poured out upon him or her" (*Ensign*, December 1989, 4). It takes faith to save money for a mission. And it takes faith to pay tithing.

President Hinckley said, "Whether it be going into the mission field, living the Word of Wisdom, paying one's tithing, it is all the same. It is the faith within us that is evidenced in all we do" (*Ensign*, May 2001, 68).

The Lord has promised marvelous blessings for those who pay tithing.

Paying tithing will prepare you to make further sacrifices in the mission field.

Remember you're not just paying tithing to the Church, you're giving it to the Lord.

Everything you have comes from God. He only requires a small percentage in return.

The faith it takes to pay tithing will help your personal development as well as help build the kingdom.

READERS



I had the same question about six months before my mission, but I went ahead and paid it anyway. The following week my boss decided I needed a raise. I found

out that through obedience come the blessings.

Elder Adam Buchanan, 20
England London South Mission

Tithing teaches sacrifice, obedience, and faith. These are among the most needed traits to be a successful missionary.

James Washburn, 16
Westminster, California



Tithing is a commandment, and saving for a mission is a sacrifice. We should learn to obey the commandments while we also make

sacrifices. Even though paying our tithing and saving for a mission at the same time seems hard, I know the Lord will bless us.

Elder Owusu Sarpong, 24
Nigeria Lagos Mission



It's great that you're saving money for a mission, and you will be blessed for doing so. If you pay tithing on the money you earn, it may take longer to save, but the Lord promises to pour out His blessings on us when we keep His commandments.

Esther Young, 14
Sparks, Nevada



We should always pay our tithing happily and willingly. God gave us the blessing of a job to earn money; we should at least give Him 10 percent back.

Lorraine Payne, 13
Deming, New Mexico



Remember that when you are paying tithing, you aren't just giving money to the Church, you're giving it to the Lord. Also, know that when you pay tithing you will be blessed.

Sid Pendle, 13
Jacobstown, New Jersey



I believe the reason we are asked to pay tithing is not just to help the Church financially, but also to help us to become more humble. We need to follow the counsel of our Heavenly Father even when we could

NEW ERA

As you pay your tithing you will learn more about the blessings and challenges that come from sacrificing a part of your income. This lesson in sacrifice is great preparation for the mission field, where you will be required to make many sacrifices to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the principles you will be teaching as a missionary is the law of tithing. If you learn to live this law and gain a testimony of it, you will be prepared to testify of the value of paying tithing. And forming a habit of paying an honest tithe now will make it easier in the future.

Remember that everything you have comes from God. He only requires you return 10 percent to Him. He has promised that if you pay your tithing, He will “open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). In the end, we are the ones who receive blessings for sacrificing a small percent of our income.

“How grateful I am for the law of tithing,” President Hinckley said. “It is the Lord’s law of finance. It is set forth in a few words in the 119th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It comes of His wisdom. To every man and woman, to every boy and girl, to every child in this Church who pays an honest tithing, be it large or small, I express gratitude for the faith that is in your hearts. I remind you, and those who do not pay tithing but who should, that the Lord has promised marvelous blessings (see Malachi 3:10–12). He has also promised that ‘he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming’ (D&C 64:23)” (*Ensign*, November 2001, 74). **NE**



With all my heart, I plead with the Latter-day Saints to live honestly with the Lord in the payment of tithes and offerings. I plead with youth to establish this habit while you are still young and to resolve to continue with it all the days of your lives”

(*Ensign*, December 1989, 4).

— President Gordon B. Hinckley

READERS

use that money for something good.

Whitney White, 13
Fielding, Utah



You should pay your tithing because the Lord has asked you to. You will earn more blessings if you do as the Lord asks. Remember, tithing is a

commandment of faith. We pay our tithing because we have faith in the Lord’s promises.

Stephanie Wood, 12
Draper, Utah



Our Father in Heaven has given us everything. He only asks us to return 10 percent. How can we complain? We should be willing to give

anything and everything to our Father because He gave us all we have.

Sarah Schrubbs, 14
Rapid City, South Dakota

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send us your answer to the question below, along with your name, age, and where you are from. Please include a snapshot of yourself that is 1 1/2 by 2 inches (4 by 5 cm) or larger. Please respond by May 1, 2003.

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

QUESTION

“What should I say when friends are asking me questions about the Church, but they twist everything I say and only want to debate? I don’t want to argue, but I want them to understand. What should I do?”

FISHING LICENSE

ELDER BATEMAN
THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

CATCH THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONARY WORK.
THERE'S NO LIMIT TO THE GOOD YOU CAN DO.
(SEE JEREMIAH 16:16.)

Mesa Pageant: Getting into the Act

BY CHERI EARL

It's a lot of work, but it's so rewarding that many come back year after year. (Right) Preston Merchant and Connie Fairbanks prepare for their scenes. (Far right, top) The Paces are just one example of many who participate as families.

Every spring, youth in Mesa, Arizona, join with hundreds of other Church members to share the Easter story with huge audiences.

It's not a real mission, but it is missionary service. And it's for four weeks instead of two years. But it does bless and change lives.

Every year around Easter, people of all ages are called to serve in the Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant.

Performed on the grounds of the Mesa Arizona Temple, the pageant tells the story of the Savior's birth, life, death, and Resurrection. The production requires hundreds of volunteers to design and sew colorful period costumes, build stages and props, write original music, and perform for an audience of approximately 150,000 during the month.

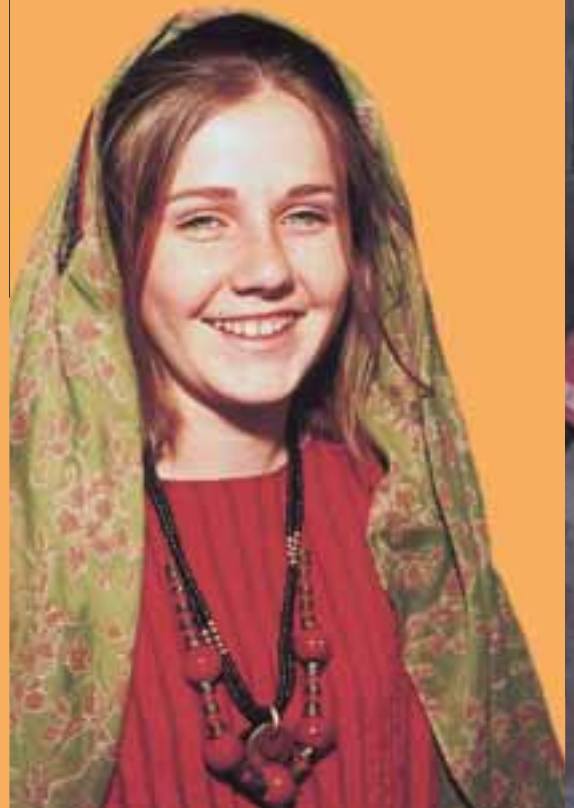
While a production as demanding as the Easter pageant might burn out the normal volunteer, the youth who participate tell of a different attitude.

These 132 young volunteers say they are changed forever by the strong spirit that fills the temple grounds, and they want to return to the pageant again and again.

Every cast member a missionary

Before and after each performance, 425 cast members step out of their biblical characters to become real-life missionaries. Their job is to mingle with the crowd, greeting visitors and answering their questions about the pageant and the Church.

"One night, I was talking to some people in the audience and started talking to a family," says Preston Merchant, 12. "I had a



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM BERRY AND RICHARD K. WEBB



A LAMB TO CARE FOR

Two years ago, the Pace family was able to bring a part of the Easter pageant home with them. A pure white baby lamb, needed for a scene where Adam offers a sacrifice, didn't have a mother, and many worried the lamb might die.

"When my mother noticed the lamb," Kelsey Pace, 14, remembers, "she told the owner that I had raised lambs on a bottle before. So the lamb became my responsibility. I had to feed her every four hours, even in the middle of the night, with extra-large bottles of powdered goat's milk and sometimes medicine, too.

"We prayed for her every day. She is now healthy, and she's even in the pageant again as one of the sheep with the shepherds who hear the angel tell of the birth of Jesus." The lamb, now a family pet, lives in the Paces' backyard.



A few weeks after my family tried out for the pageant, we each got letters telling us that we all made it. My dad was assigned to be Joseph in the scene of 12-year-old Jesus in the temple, my mom got to be Mary, and I played Jesus. When I looked at our letters again, I couldn't believe it! I know Jesus lives and the Church is true, and I'm glad I got to be a missionary by being in the Easter pageant." —**Tyler Starr, 12**

Janna Halcomb (right) and the Nielson teens—David, Kristin, and Telicia. (Opposite page) The scene depicting the parable of the ten virgins.

good discussion with them and really felt the Spirit. I thought, "This is what the Easter pageant is all about!" "

Participants promise to obey certain simple rules:

- Never miss even one rehearsal or performance;
- Attend the evening devotionals;
- Pray often;
- Read your scriptures every day;
- Tell your friends and neighbors about the pageant;
- Be a good representative of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in every way.

Full-time missionaries from the Arizona Tempe Mission met with cast members to teach them how to answer questions about the Church and how to give away a Book of Mormon.

"I loved bearing my testimony to the audience," says 14-year-old Connie Fairbanks. "After our performance, we talked to the people in the audience. It was really neat to see how the Spirit had touched them."

When the family gets together

The youth aren't the only ones getting into the act. Entire families participate in the pageant, either as members of the cast or part of the crew. One family, the



Nielsons, voted to audition for the pageant together. "My family said either everyone's in or no one is. Majority rules," says David Nielson, 14.

"So we all went as a family and tried out—and we all made it!" David played a beggar and a member of the mob in the pageant.

Telicia, David's 12-year-old sister, played a child in the multitude, but she's also a gymnast, so she was worried about the time commitment. "I love gymnastics," she says. "And I knew if I got a part, I wouldn't be able to work out [in the gym] for a whole month." But Telicia says she doesn't feel bad about her choice to miss gymnastics because she gained a stronger testimony of the Savior and His sacrifice.

"I invited my gymnastics coach and several of my teammates to come to the Easter pageant," she adds. "They're not members, but they said they would come. I was so excited!"

Kristin, 17, Telicia's older sister, played



Being cast as Eve alongside my brother, Trevor, who played Adam, was the best thing that could have happened to me. Every time I watched the scenes of the miracles Jesus performed so long ago, I received such a strong confirmation from the Spirit! I know He suffered and died for us. I know He did that so I could repent of the bad choices I've made. That piece of knowledge is priceless to me." —**Casey Gorton, 17**







an angel. The angels dance and sing on a platform high above the stage, which is



Last year was my ninth year in the pageant, and I loved the experience. It was a wonderful way to bear testimony of Jesus Christ and His life. Sometimes it was hard for me when I had to act in the betrayal scene and yell, 'Crucify him!' I can't imagine doing that in real life. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to be in the pageant. It helped my testimony to grow."

—David Butler, 14

pretty scary for Kristin. But she says she felt peaceful and closer to the Savior when she and the other angels sang about His birth. "Not only have I drawn closer to my Savior, but my family became closer to each other," she says. "For one month, we dropped all our other activities and spent every night together. It was the neatest experience ever!"

Coming unto Christ

The best part about the pageant is the spirit that surrounds it. Eighteen-year-old Janna Halcomb's

brother encouraged her to try out for the pageant with him just before he left on his mission to Hungary. "That year we were able to be angels together," she says. "It

was such an incredible experience. The Spirit on the temple grounds is so strong, and as we bore witness of the Savior and His life my testimony was strengthened."

Many of the youth describe the mood of the pageant and on the temple grounds as a sweet feeling that seems to envelop them and anyone else who comes. "The many witnesses of Jesus Christ that I have received have been incredibly worth my time and sacrifice," says 17-year-old A.J. Wilcox. "This has been great preparation for my mission."

Dayton Rohner's mom thought it would be a good idea for her family to volunteer for the pageant. At 17, Dayton wasn't so sure. But now he's grateful to his mom. "Being in the pageant helped me feel what others might have felt when the Savior healed the sick and taught through example what we should do in our lives. Through this experience I now have a better understanding of our Lord and His sacrifice."

These young volunteers say they want to be a part of the pageant again; it's such a great experience. Sister Nanci Wudel, director of public affairs, has heard similar comments. "The young men and women tell me they do better in

their schoolwork, on tests, at sports, and in their lives altogether during the month of the pageant. They believe they really are blessed for participating," she says. **NE**



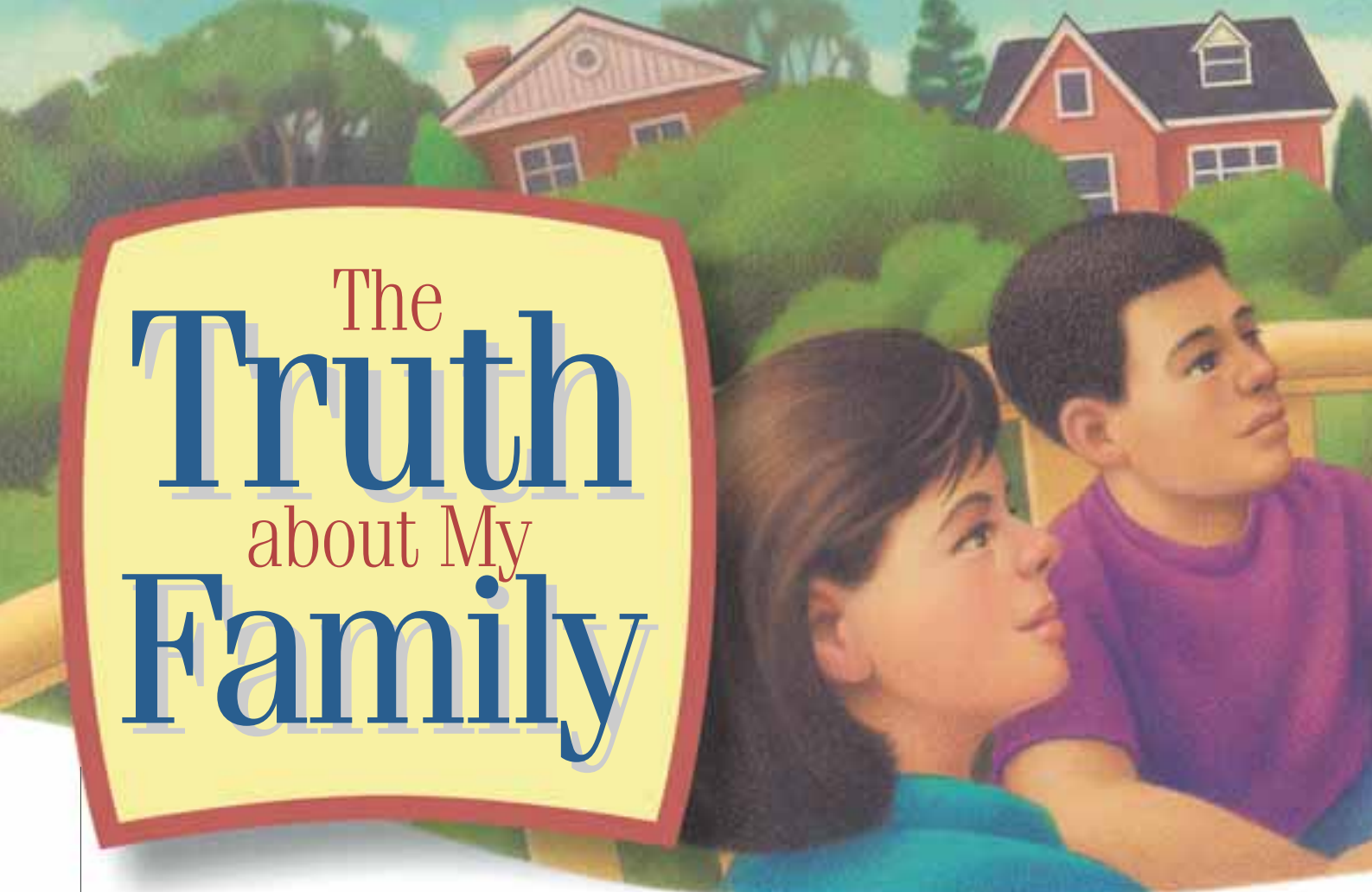
Cheri Earl is a member of the Hobbie Creek 14th Ward, Springville Utah Hobbie Creek Stake.



I loved setting up for the Last Supper scene. At the beginning of this particular scene, the director asked for silence because it allowed the Spirit to really touch our hearts but also because the subject matter is so sacred. My favorite part is when Jesus tells His disciples to love one another. It was almost as if He were talking to me. It made me want to go out and just love everybody."

—Aubri Erbe, 16

Trumpeting the appearance of the Savior (opposite page). (Left) A.J. Wilcox plays an angel, and Dayton Rohner is a shepherd.



The Truth about My Family

BY SCOTT BEAN

A few weeks before school started, I was sitting on the porch with my friends Grace and Ron when the discussion turned to how much Grace disliked her father. This wasn't a new topic for her.

"He always embarrasses me in public just by being there. It is just so annoying when he always . . ." She went on to talk about her father's failings and how he wasn't living up to her expectations.

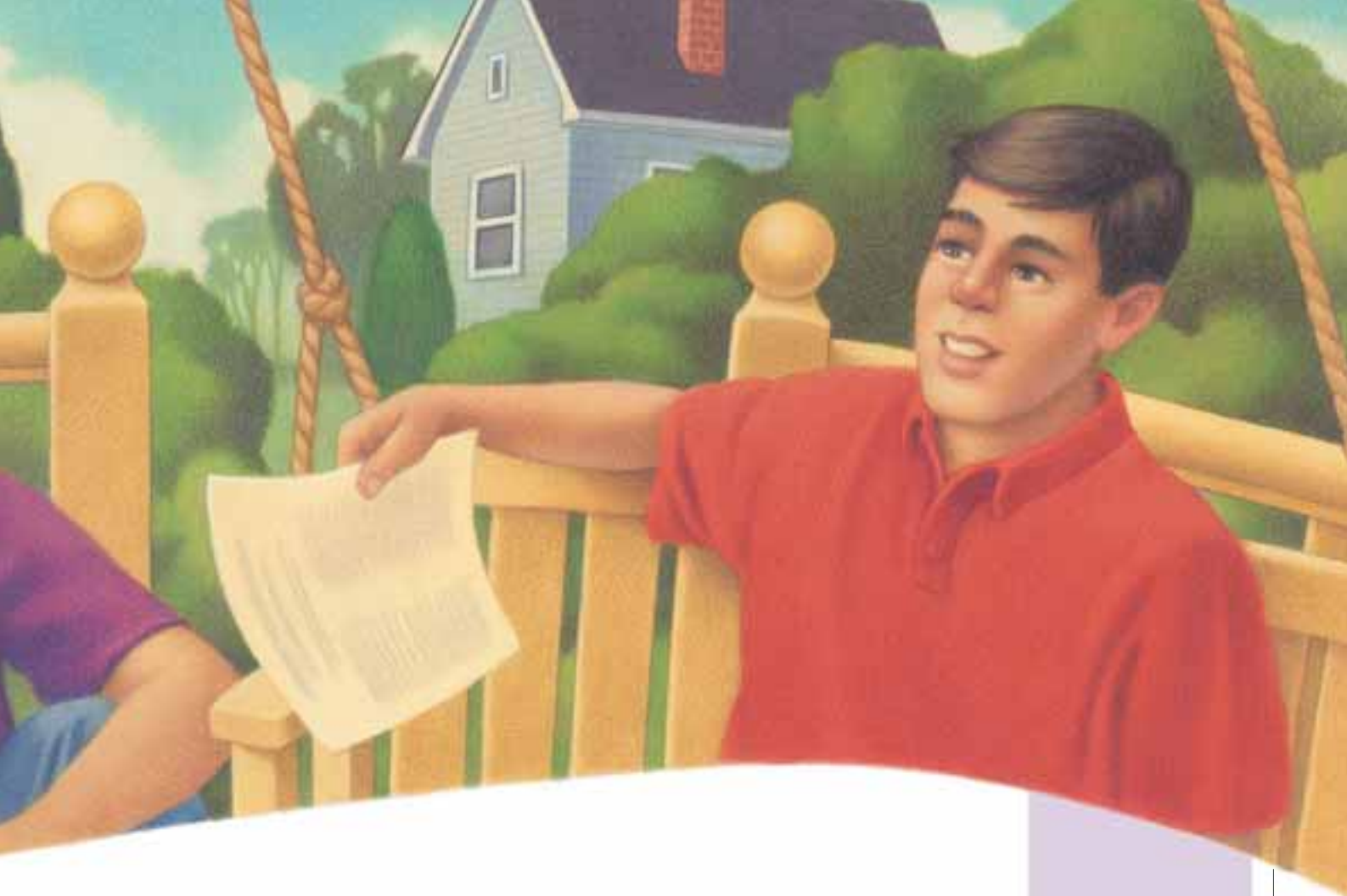
Ron decided he would take over the conversation by talking about his family and how he didn't think his mom was home enough and that he didn't like the way she dressed. He didn't think he should have a curfew or that his dad should yell so much.

The whole time I just sat on the porch swing waiting for them to ask me what I didn't like about my family. I couldn't say I didn't love my family. Moving five times in my lifetime had given my brother, sister, and me really tight bonds. We depended on each other and stuck up for one another. Our closeness was something my mother was very proud of.

Then Grace said, "What about your family, Scott?"

I didn't say anything for a minute. I was choosing my words carefully, knowing the things I said would represent what I believe in. When I finally spoke, I felt the Spirit guiding my words. There were no interruptions from either of them as I spoke of how much my family means to me and that I hope to spend eternity with them. I encouraged them to be more patient with their families. I told them to look at the big picture.

I ran inside the house and got my copy of the proclamation on the family by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I read to them the seventh paragraph, focusing mostly on what qualities we should base our family relationships on: "Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995).



After reading that, I said, “This is what my family believes. This is what we want to be and are striving for. I know if I can do all that, then I will be able to stand tall on the Judgment Day with my family, knowing we are going to live together forever.”

I didn’t know how well my friends took this information because of a long pause from both of them. We just sat there for a while, pondering what had been said.

Later a thousand thoughts went through my mind. I was proud I was preparing for a mission by sharing the Church’s teachings on families with my friends. But was I doing it appropriately? And what would they think if I tried to explain more about the gospel?

As I was getting ready for bed, I flipped through my scriptures and turned to section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Here we

are told if we serve the Lord in missionary service “with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength,” then we “may stand blameless before God at the last day” (D&C 4:2).

Of course, my friends and I still have our disagreements. But I realized no one ever loses a true friend just by talking about religion and beliefs. Although Grace and Ron didn’t join the Church, I have continued my friendship with them. It felt good to explain my beliefs to them. Just because they didn’t immediately change what they believed about families or religion didn’t matter. I know there are hundreds of stories about the value of perseverance in missionary service. Mine may end up one of them. **NE**

Scott Bean is a member of the Elkhorn Ward, Omaha Nebraska Stake.

When my friends asked, “What about your family, Scott?” it was my opportunity to share the truth—about my family and about the gospel.



SHEENA'S

Keys to Success

Sheena Rosander's greatest talent may be finding ways to use all of her gifts.

BY JANE H. FORSGREN

Sitting on the stand of the St. George (Utah) Tabernacle, waiting for her performance to begin, Sheena Rosander couldn't help remembering the year before when she had been waiting to perform at a high school talent show.

"It was one of the only times I really had the jitters before a performance," says Sheena. "I followed a rock group and knew immediately that the classical song I loved to play on the piano wasn't really what kids wanted to hear. I depend so much on the Spirit to help me play, and that Spirit just wasn't there."

But this night, things were different. Thankfully, the Spirit was in abundance as her six functioning fingers flew over the keyboard of the grand piano creating music, the kind that brings a lump to the throat.

Sheena Rosander, 18, from Hurricane, Utah, was born with what some people consider a disability. But to Sheena, having only a partial thumb and no fingers on her left hand is a gift. "Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to have all 10 fingers, like how much easier keyboarding would be," says Sheena. "But I usually just find a way to go around it. My mom wanted me to peel potatoes, and I was really struggling with that potato peeler. So I decided when I have my own family I'll just have baked potatoes. There's always a way to do things."

And that's pretty much how Sheena has been able to enjoy her favorite activities, like playing and teaching tennis, playing the

violin, teaching piano lessons, and competing at performing-arts festivals.

In fact, she's used her good attitude as a springboard to propel her into positive social situations. On her first day of kindergarten, when Sheena proudly displayed her hand at "show and tell," one child told her it looked like a Cabbage Patch doll's hand. Delighted, she added several Cabbage Patch dolls to her already thriving collection. Her favorite had red hair and blue eyes, just like Sheena.

That kind of confidence comes naturally. Even before she was born, her mother, Toni, decided all her children would learn to play piano. Sheena began lessons at age five.

"She was determined to play the piano," recalls her teacher, Tammy Drake. "Her hand was never an obstacle. She would compensate with her right hand to achieve a full sound. Then one day, she began playing with her left hand, using her thumb and pinky stub. Sheena has shown all of us a new kind of courage and determination. Some listeners never even know about her hand. She plays beautifully."

But piano wasn't Sheena's only interest. She developed a love for sports, particularly basketball. Just before ninth-grade tryouts, however, Sheena experienced what she would term the greatest challenge of her life so far. She developed immune thrombocytopenic purpura, or ITP, a blood disorder which causes bleeding under the skin. Her disease prevented her from playing basketball since even an accidental bump on her head could cause a major brain hemorrhage.

After a year of transfusions, cortisone, and other medications, Sheena faced the decision of whether or not to have her



Though born without fingers on her left hand, Sheena has a positive attitude that takes her to ever-higher levels of accomplishment.



spleen removed. As she had done since she was a small girl, Sheena turned to the Lord in prayer for a confirmation of her decision. After her surgery, she continued to worry. What if the ITP returned and kept her from her normal activities?

"I kept asking Heavenly Father if I was done with it," she says, "but I never felt like I was getting an answer. Then my friend Leisel Bennion and I went to EFY [Especially for Youth] at BYU-Idaho. I had a wonderful counselor there who gave a devotional about the woman who had suffered with an issue of blood for 12 years and touched the hem of the Savior's garment. When she read the words, 'Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace' (Luke 8:48) and sang a song called 'Close Enough to Touch,' my heart started pounding and tears sprang to my eyes. I knew at that moment I was done with the ITP. In a way I felt I also had touched the Savior's hem by exercising faith in having the surgery."

Not long after, the two friends decided to enter the Miss Hurricane pageant. This was not new to Sheena. She had

tried out the previous year and had won the talent award but bombed the interview. So, in her typical style, she practiced with anyone who would interview her and tried out again. "I was so excited when I got first attendant, with talent and interview awards. And I was so happy for Leisel to be chosen queen. We've had a lot of fun together."

As a senior at Hurricane High, Sheena loves performing, competing with the high school tennis team, and attending to her many responsibilities as mayor of the Hurricane Youth City Council. She loves family outings with her four siblings, going to school games, yelling and cheering, and watching old movies.

But while Sheena loves average teenage activities, she is far above average in her desire to serve and be obedient to the Lord. As Brother Stewart Wilson, her seminary teacher, says, "Sheena doesn't lead with charisma. She leads with consistency. She lets her choices speak for themselves and carries the Spirit with her wherever she goes."

Sheena doesn't really see herself as a leader, just someone who knows what she wants to do and does it.



"I'm really comfortable just slipping out of a room if I don't like the movie my friends and I are watching," says Sheena. "But I usually find most of the group out on the trampoline with me long before the movie is over."

Friends, family, and fun are all a major part of Sheena's life. But the most important aspects to her are faith and character. "Everyone has some kind of handicap and some distinct talent," she says. "I think the best advice is to count your blessings and find something you can do well."

"Then remember," she adds, "nothing is impossible. If you run into an obstacle, find a way to either go through it or around it. Then bring the Spirit into your life so you can put your trust and faith in the Lord to help you." **NE**

Jane H. Forsgren is a member of the Holladay 25th Ward, Salt Lake Holladay South Stake.

Determination is a major key. (Clockwise, from above) Her family, including youngest sister, Mayata, (inset) provides a lot of encouragement and was a major support as she battled illness. Sheena's will to succeed as a young pianist is something she tries to pass along to her own students. That drive led to her selection as first attendant to her friend Liesel and to her success as a performer.

G-RATED RECRUIT

BY PRESTON D. TAYLOR

The pressure to perform was intense. Make a mistake, and the reward was a chewing out with some pretty bad language. Then, one night the sergeant asked me what I thought of his language. Suddenly my standards were on the line.

The drill instructor stressed honesty and integrity. Now he was testing mine. An honest answer could easily offend this man who had so much power over my life at that time.

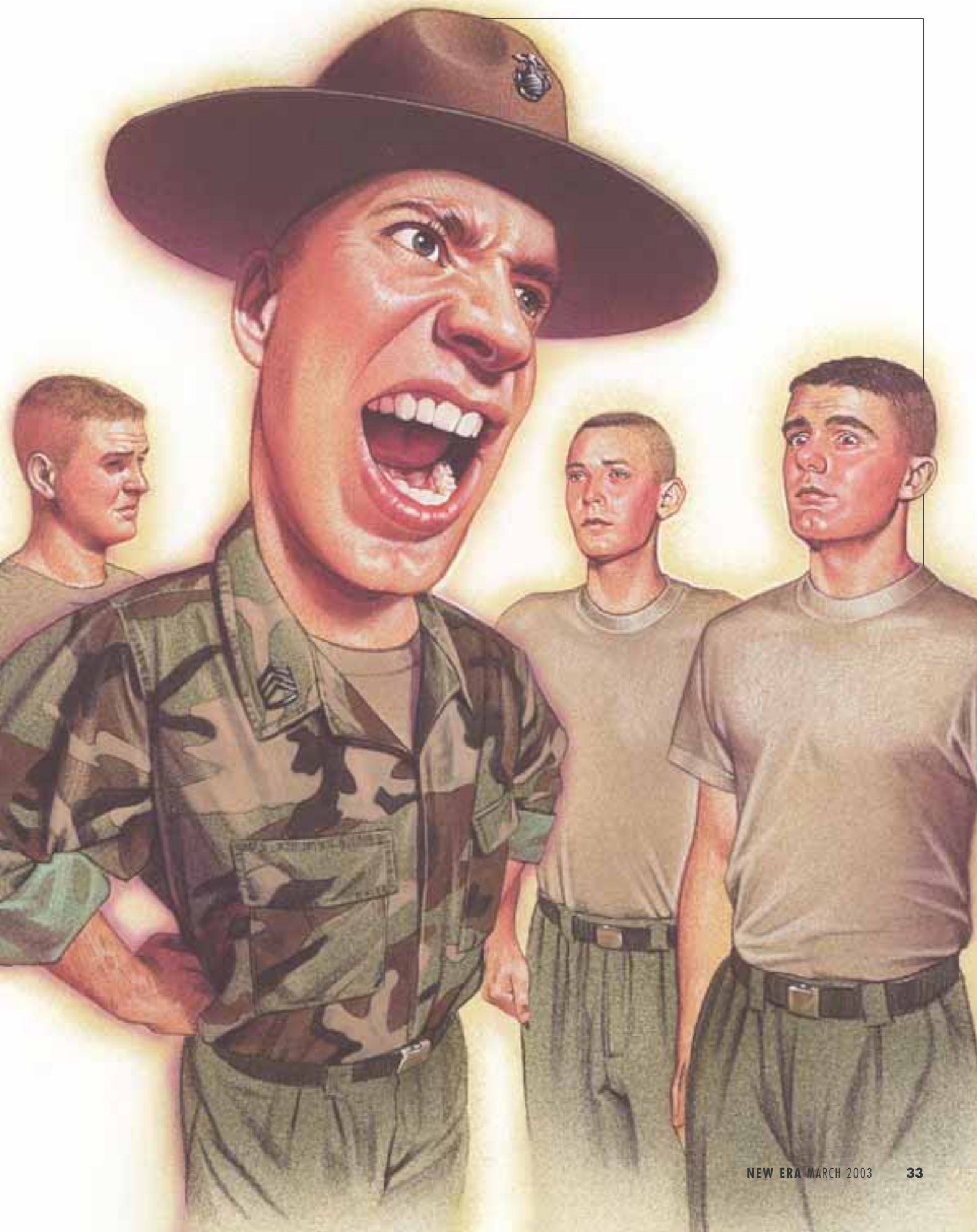
The United States Navy's Officer Candidate School (OCS) is an intense 13 weeks of training for college graduates who want to become naval officers. The first week is especially difficult—seven days with a Marine drill instructor whose job it is to indoctrinate his new class with military discipline and attention to detail. During the training, the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment are taught and emphasized.

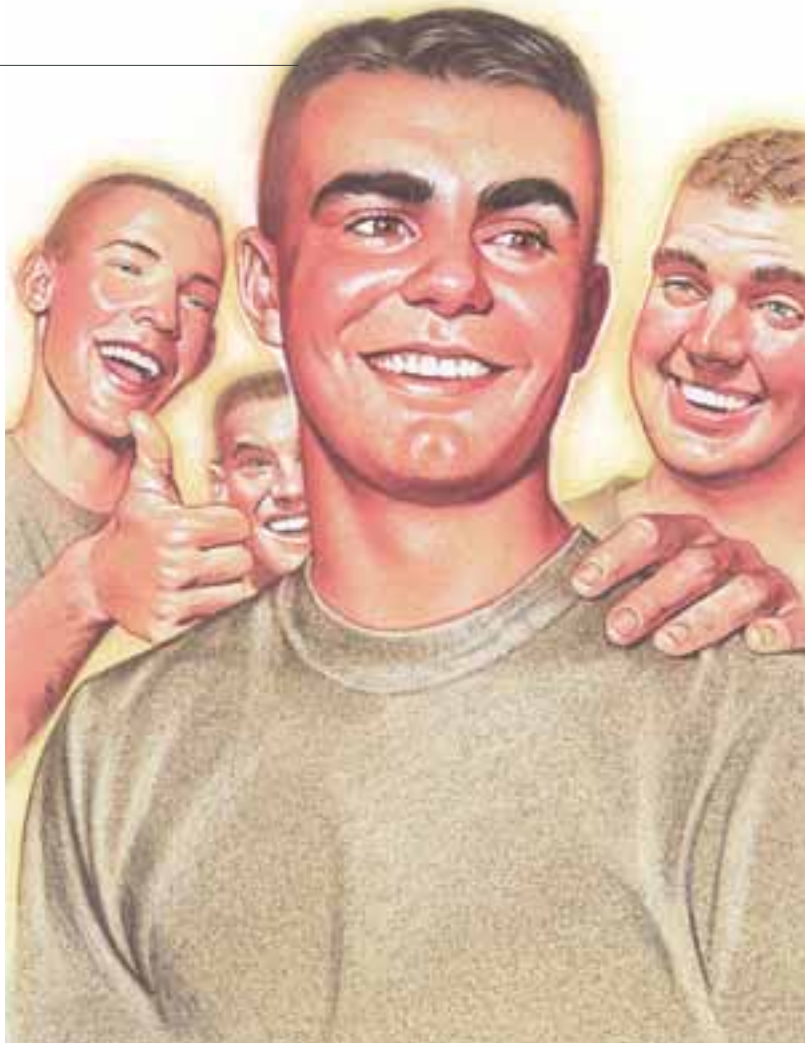
My class drill instructor, Gunnery Sergeant Cagle, stressed to us the importance of honesty and integrity. The consequence of making a mistake was a powerful chewing out—packed with choice words—by Cagle and a “mashing session” consisting of extra push-ups, jumping jacks, leg lifts, and eight-count bodybuilders. Often he would test us by putting us in situations in which we would have to stand up and admit that we had made a mistake just to see how we would act. If someone confessed, his punishment was usually reduced

significantly. Still, no one wanted to stand out and draw more attention to themselves than was necessary.

Having been forewarned about what to expect at OCS, I was a little worried about being able to mentally and emotionally handle it. And knowing that many of my classmates probably would not have the same standards as mine regarding drinking, entertainment, and other distractions, I worried that I would not have the strength to stand up for my beliefs under pressure. So, as part of my preparation to enter OCS, I prayed and fasted for strength and asked for a blessing that everything would work out okay. I determined how I would react and what I would do if I found myself in a situation where I would have to defend my beliefs. Still, those drill instructors sounded pretty intimidating.

An opportunity to stand up soon came. Gunnery Sergeant Cagle had all my classmates packed into one of our rooms to show us how we were to fold our clothes and





For days afterward my classmates asked me about the encounter with the sergeant and about my beliefs. They also gave me an interesting new nickname.

store them in our wall lockers for an upcoming inspection. He started his explanation, mixing it with a few colorful metaphors. At one point he stopped and asked if there were any of us who had not seen a R-rated movie. I almost didn't raise my hand for fear of standing out, but I remembered what he had said about being honest as well as the commitment I had made to myself to stand up for what I believed. Much to the disbelief of Cagle and the rest of my class, I raised my hand. He stared at me for a minute then asked if I really hadn't seen an R-rated movie. I answered again that I hadn't. He told me he would talk to me later, then continued to justify his language to the class.

After he dismissed us for the evening, he pulled me aside and again asked me, in disbelief, if I really had never seen an R-rated movie. For the third time I told him, "No." He then asked me if I found his language

offensive. Taking a deep breath, I told him that, yes, I did find it offensive—a bold answer to my drill sergeant, but one worth any retribution I might receive.

My response caused him to pause again. He asked if I minded if he used that language as long as it was never specifically aimed at me. Again I told him, "Sir, I do mind, and I would prefer it if you would not use that kind of language. However, it is your choice, and I understand that some of it may come with your job."

I guess he was taken aback, but he let me go. Later that night, and even for a couple of days after, my classmates would ask me what had happened. They told me they didn't really like Cagle's language either. They told me I was brave, then asked why I didn't watch R-rated movies. Their curiosity gave me the chance to tell them about what I believed and about the Church.

Later in the course, we were reminiscing with Cagle, and someone asked him if anybody had ever answered his R-rated question like I had. He looked at me and replied that I was the first, and that I had totally taken him by surprise.

By the end of OCS, my classmates humorously dubbed me "rated-R." Many of them were even more cautious about swearing in front of me. Because I stood up for my beliefs, I feel I earned the respect of not only my classmates but also my drill instructor.

I am grateful for the strength I felt from the Lord. I am also grateful I decided ahead of time what I would do if I had the choice to say nothing or stand up for my beliefs. I do know the Lord watches out for us and even turns sticky situations into missionary opportunities. **NE**

Preston D. Taylor is a member of the Jacksonville Second Ward, Wilmington North Carolina Stake.

THE EXTRA SMILE

"By the way, I accidentally opened some of the mail. Let's see, bill, bill, bill, you're going to Lima, Peru, on your mission. Bill, bill."



RYAN STOKER

"So long, bro. Don't worry. Your car will be safe with me."



RYAN STOKER

"Hey, you know what I noticed this morning? Our toothbrushes look exactly alike!"



BRETT BEVER

"Me? I thought you had the tickets."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

YOUNG WOMEN BROADCAST

Remember to tune in on March 29 to watch the Young Women general broadcast at 6:00 P.M. MST.

The Young Women presidency and a member of the First Presidency will speak on this year's Young Women theme: "Press forward with

steadfastness in Christ" (see 2 Nephi 31:20). You can also watch or listen to the broadcast on the Internet at www.lds.org.



TEST YOUR LDS I.Q.

The Book of Mormon is full of all kinds of information, including many interesting stories and facts we sometimes don't pay attention to. Take this quiz to see how well you can trace some of the family trees in the Book of Mormon.

1. Who was Enos's grandmother?
2. Nephi and Lehi were brothers around 30 B.C. Who was

their father?

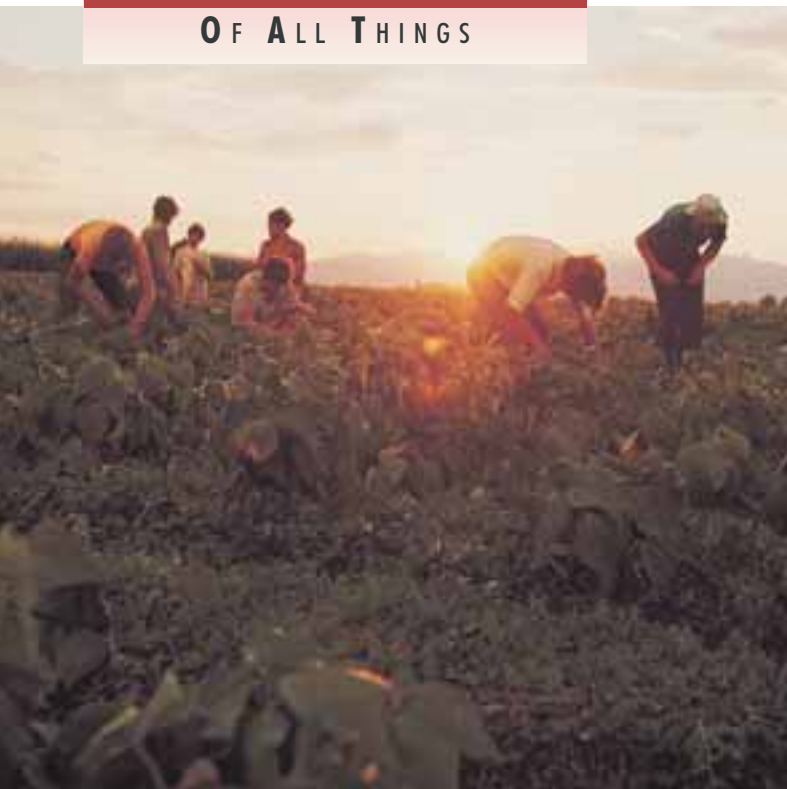
3. Nephi (same as in question two) had a son whose name was also Nephi; this Nephi brought his brother back from the dead. What was his brother's name?
4. Who was the grandfather of Mosiah, son of King Benjamin?
5. Who was Jacob's great-grandson?
6. Lehi fled Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to establish a new peo-

ple in a promised land. He descended from which of the 12 tribes of Israel?

Answers: 1. Sariah; 2. Helaman the younger (see Helaman 3:20–21; 3. Timothy (see 3 Nephi 19:4); 4. Mosiah (see Omni 1:23–24); 5. Omni (see Omni 1:1, Jarom 1:1, and Jacob 7:27); 6. Joseph, through Manasseh (see Alma 10:3).

LEADERSHIP TIP:

Be on time—to class, to meetings, to everything. Or better yet, be a little early. Not only do you set an example, you also give yourself time to ponder, pray, or prepare. It's hard to feel the Spirit when we are in a big rush, so set a goal to be on time.



WRITE AWAY!

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The welfare plan sanctifies both the giver and the receiver. We are all both givers and receivers” (*Ensign*, May 1986, 30). The welfare system of the Church is based upon the principles of self-reliance, sacrifice, and work. The *New*

Era wants to hear about your good experiences with the Church’s welfare system.

Write to:

New Era

**50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah
84150**

Or you can e-mail us at:
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

BE IN THE KNOW

“**T**hough the world is becoming more wicked, the youth of Christ’s church can become more righteous if they understand who they are, understand the blessings available, and understand the promises God has made to those who are righteous, who believe,

who endure. All of our youth are entitled to and need this knowledge to combat the forces of deception that would lead them captive into darkness” (*Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 40).

—**Elder David B. Haight**
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

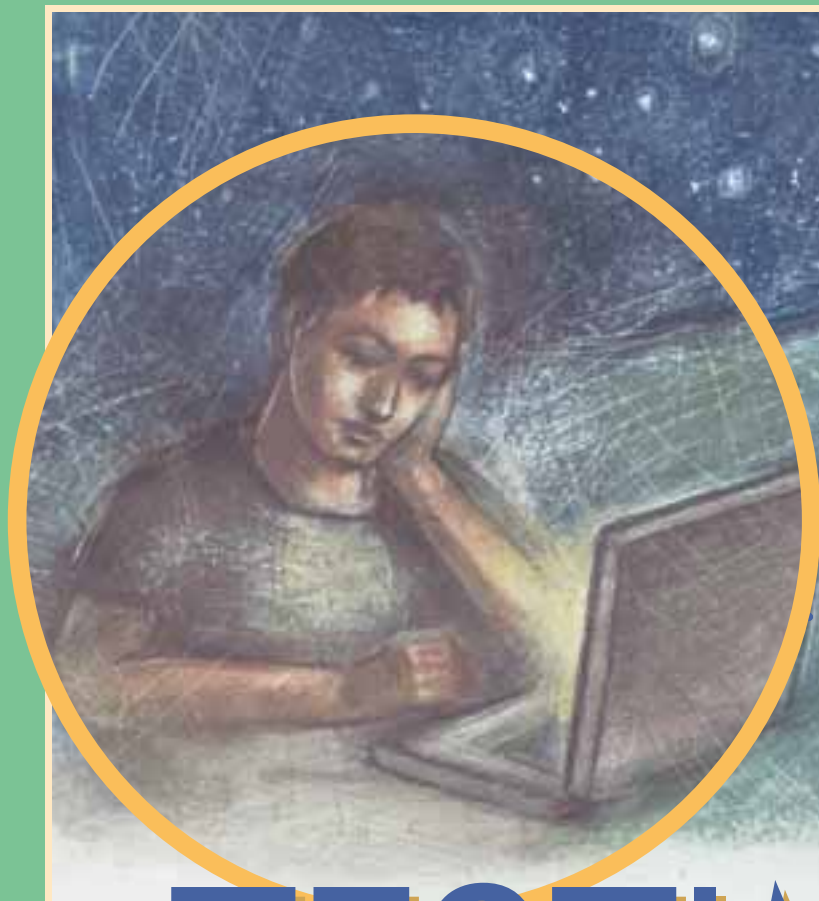


HAROLD BINGHAM LEE

President Harold B. Lee, 11th President of the Church, was born in Clifton, Idaho, on March 28, 1899. In their home, President Lee’s family had a piano, and he grew to love music at an early age. Later on, he played the slide trombone in a dance orchestra and earned extra money for his family.

When he was 17, the future prophet became a teacher. And when he was 18 he was asked to be the principal of a four-room school. After teaching for four years, President Lee was called by President Heber J. Grant to serve in the Western States Mission. When he returned he continued his teaching career, but in the early 1930s, he was elected a city commissioner in Salt Lake City and called as a stake president. On 20 April 1935, as the Great Depression was winding down, the First Presidency called him to manage what is now the Church’s welfare program.

At the age of 43, President Lee was called as an Apostle, and he was ordained President of the Church in 1972. He died a short year and a half later. Of President Lee, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “He . . . never blanch[ed] from his responsibility as a servant of God in bearing testimony of the truth” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1972, 9).



ONLINE TESTIMONY

His questions about the Church quickly filled my screen. Could I answer just as quickly? And would he listen?

BY AMANDA M. ELLSWORTH

It was 9:30 at night, and all was quiet except for the sound of the quick “tap, tap, tap” of the keyboard as I was chatting on the Internet with a friend from school. Many people mistook him for a member of the Church, but he was not. Just for fun, I asked him, “Hey, would you ever consider being a Mormon?” His response was more than blunt as he described his feelings toward the Church. I was a little hurt, but I typed so as not to offend him, “Oh, I was just playing with you! I wasn’t serious.” Then, a thought came to my mind and I typed, “So, why wouldn’t you be LDS?”

That’s when he sent me some “facts” about the Church. He said he didn’t understand the dating “rule,” as he called it. I began to explain why the Church has standards and guidelines. He went on to say they were strict, harsh rules that only limited fun. I sighed as I thought what to write next.

“No, no, no, you have it all wrong! The Church doesn’t make rules to stop our fun or make life boring. Guidelines are set and we are taught to choose the right. We have a choice to either follow them or not.”

After I had typed this response, neither of us said anything for a couple of seconds. Then the screen on the computer showed that he was typing a message.

“But how do you know your church is true?” he asked. “The Jews have the Torah, the Muslims have the Koran, and the other religions have their own ancient records to prove their religion is true. What’s so different about your Book of Mormon?”



Suddenly the computer screen lit up with his answer to my testimony. I held my breath.



I took a minute or two to think about this question. Then the inspiration came to bear my testimony. I took a deep breath, put my fingers on the keys, and began typing.

"I know for myself that the Book of Mormon is true. I remember reading in a certain chapter and wondering if any of this was true. Then I read about this man named Moroni who was writing at the end of his life. He was witnessing the total destruction of his people, and he was in fear of dying. But guess what he wrote about? He wrote about his convictions of the gospel and of the scriptures. Then he gave a challenge. He said anyone can read the Book of Mormon and pray about it to know if it is true. So I took the challenge, and I felt the Spirit. I knew it was true. Heavenly Father answered my prayers and told me in so many ways that it was true. I love that feeling I got, and I get it more and more when I choose the right. It's such an awesome feeling, like time stops and the world stops spinning. It's like I'm being carried. It's really a peaceful feeling."

I finished typing, and my fear of sharing this with him was gone. I hit the send

button and waited for him to respond.

I was anxious. I reread what I had written, hoping that it made sense. Then the computer screen lit up with his answer to my testimony. I sat up in my chair, held my breath, and allowed my eyes to scan the screen. I read aloud his response: "You are on drugs."

My mouth hung open. I felt my heart drop down to my bent knees. My head lowered a bit from the force of what he wrote.

"But that was my testimony," I whimpered.

I had just poured my heart out and described very sacred things in hopes of sharing the gospel, and he totally blew it off. Then, as I was thinking these things, the Spirit came to me saying, "It's okay. You tried. He just doesn't understand, but later he will." I felt comforted, and I decided not to take it personally. Although my testimony was rejected, I still had a good feeling. I felt as though I had a burden lifted. I needed to share my testimony. A testimony is a light, and just like real light, you can't just trap it inside forever; it has to come out. **NE**

Amanda M. Ellsworth is a member of the Menlo Park Ward, Mesa Arizona Citrus Heights Stake.

Becoming a True Friend

BY KRISTI McLANE

All of us need friends. But to gain a friend we must become one. Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said to become a true friend we must “love, listen, show, and testify” (*Ensign*, May 2002, 28). Here are some ideas on how you can be a good friend:

♥ **Focus outside yourself.** Although it’s tempting to talk about yourself, try to focus on what others have to say. People love to talk about themselves, and amazing things happen when you ask questions and listen.

♥ **Say what you mean and mean what you say.** Before you ask how someone is doing or attempt to serve up a compliment, make sure you mean it. Others know when you are being insincere (see 2 Corinthians 1:12).

♥ **Look for the good.** People’s faults are often more noticeable than their positive traits. If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts about someone, try to replace them with good thoughts.

♥ **Stand up for truth.** As Elder Eyring said, a true friend must testify. It is important that we stand for what we know is right in our actions, words, and deeds. By not compromising our standards, others will know we won’t expect them to compromise theirs.

♥ **Serve.** The more we serve, the more we love. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “The compassion of Christlike friends deeply touches and changes our lives” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 32).

♥ **Remember the Golden Rule.** As simple as it may seem, do unto others as you would have others do unto you really works (see Matthew 7:12). Show others that you love them by being respectful and kind to them.

♥ **Keep a Christlike view.** We should learn to love others as Christ loves us. Remember, “a friend loveth at all times. . .” (Proverbs 17:17). **NE**



Reasons to Stay PURE

The blessings of obedience are beautiful. Disobedience is spiritually crippling. The power to choose is yours.



BY ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

My attempt will be to deal somewhat differently with the basic cluster of standards associated with chastity before marriage and fidelity after—all of which are a part of the stern but sweet seventh commandment, perhaps the least popular of the Ten Commandments.

Not a usual topic in our day, the seventh commandment is one of the least heeded but most needed laws of God. The world cares very little for the keeping of this commandment, so long as people appear to be admirable in any other respect. Once they are driven off the high ground of principle, so many people then settle for being “practical.” But immorality is so impractical!

As disciples we cannot so cave in. We have been given the commandments concerning chastity before marriage, fidelity after, and

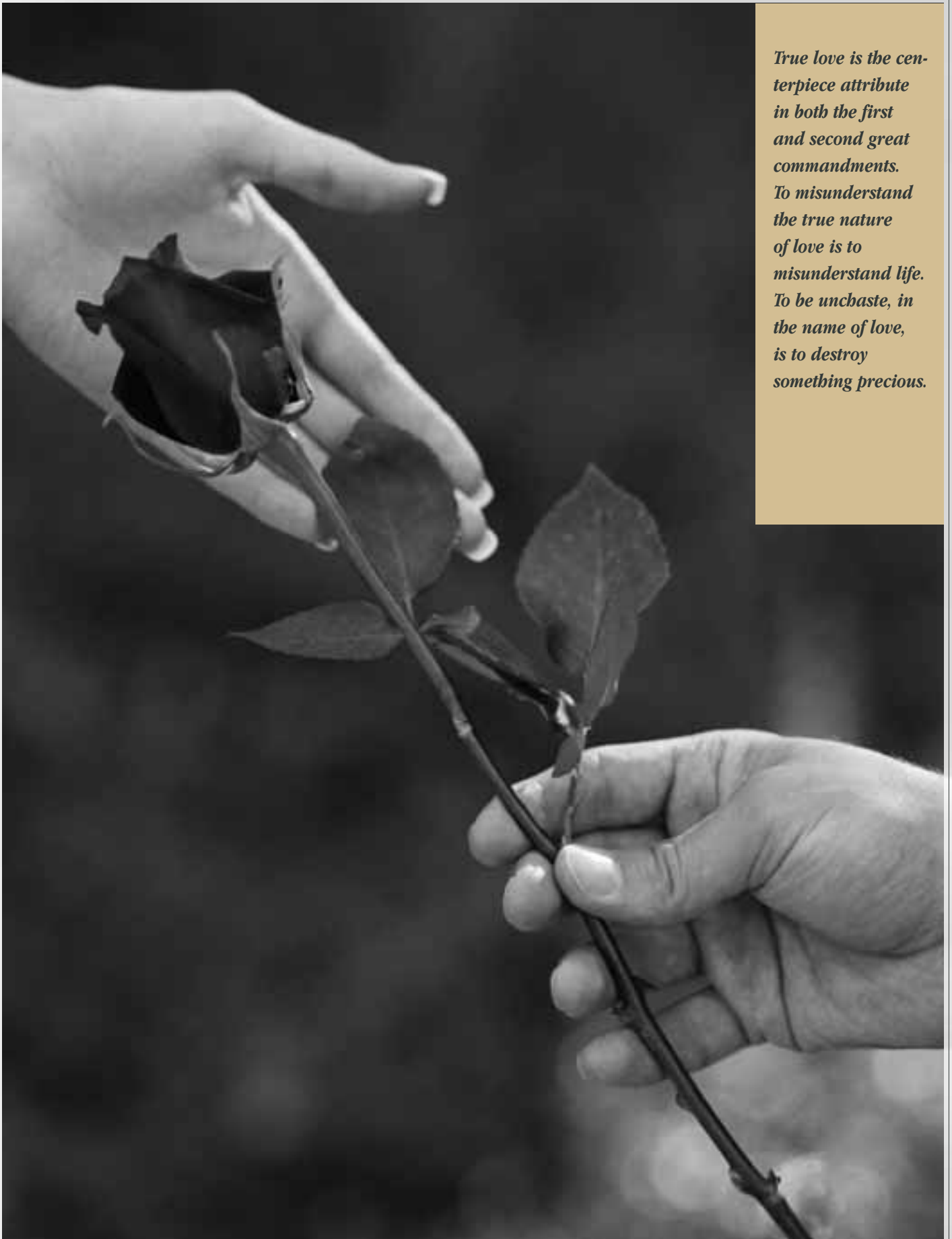
the avoidance of homosexuality. We have even been instructed with regard to the perils of mental unchastity (see Matthew 5:28). The trends of a particular time cannot alter the eternal laws of God, nor can we give up.

Eternity Starts Now

I have long believed that inside some of the hardest doctrines, deep inside them, are some of the greatest truths and the most precious principles. But these are not to be discovered casually or irreverently. Obedience actually brings both blessings and additional knowledge as Peter promised; obeying correct principles accelerates knowing (see 2 Peter 1:8). Such is the case with the seventh commandment.

For instance, Alma said that we must bridle all our passions so that we can “be filled with love” (Alma 38:12).

If such passions were actually true love, they would not need to be replaced with



True love is the centerpiece attribute in both the first and second great commandments. To misunderstand the true nature of love is to misunderstand life. To be unchaste, in the name of love, is to destroy something precious.

Reason 1: The blessings of being in harmony with divine law and the Lord.

Reason 2: The blessing of being in harmony with our own potential selfhood.

• Resist the rhetoric of the world. If you stand fast, so will others.

• Since you don't let people walk around in your house with muddy feet, do not let them walk through your minds with muddy feet.

love. The Lord (in an 1839 revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith) linked “charity towards all men” with letting virtue garnish our thoughts unceasingly (D&C 121:45).

In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of how some of those who might change for the better fail to do so because the lusts of former things actually “choke the word” (Mark 4:19). This choking occurs because carnality is a profound contraction of the soul.

In pondering the seventh commandment, we come to see that we are also dealing with considerations of a transcendental or eternal character. In Proverbs we read, “Whoso comiteth adultery . . . lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul” (Proverbs 6:32; emphasis added). There are some consequences of sexual immorality which we are simply not able to measure fully; but they are very real—though not seen. Paul wrote about the things that are not seen which are eternal (see 2 Corinthians 4:18).

Quite frankly, brothers and sisters, we should be preparing now to live in a better world. This life is so vital, but it is such a small moment. And if we are too quick to adapt to the ways of this fleeting and flawed world, that very adjustment will maladjust us for our life in the next—a life that will last forever! No wonder those who break this commandment “lacketh understanding.”

Three Good Reasons

There are, of course, some concerns associated with the seventh commandment that we share with the world. Both in the kingdom and in the world there is a desire to avoid the disease that often goes with unchastity and infidelity.

A second point of concurrence is avoiding pregnancies in unwed mothers. Unfortunately, the world’s “final solution” is abortion. Abortion, like unchastity, produces, as Jacob so eloquently wrote of unchastity, conditions in which many hearts die, “pierced with deep wounds” (Jacob 2:35). Listen to these sounds of pain put in the form of questions to me by a young woman who had two abortions:

“I wonder about the spirits of those I have aborted—if they were there, if they were hurt. I was under three months each time, but a mother feels life before she feels movement.

“I wonder if they are lost and alone.

“I wonder if they will ever have a body.

“I wonder if I will ever have a chance again to bring those spirits back as mine.”

Alas, brothers and sisters, “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

A third concern shared somewhat between us and the world is that sexual immorality adversely affects marriage and family life, increasing the spiraling divorce rate.

Fortunately, the kingdom’s reasons for keeping the seventh commandment go far beyond these three concerns, real as these are.

The Best Reasons

The primary reason for obedience to all the laws of chastity is to keep the commandments of God. Joseph understood that reason clearly when he resisted the entreaties of Potiphar’s predatory wife (see Genesis 39:9). Joseph, who clearly noted his loyalty to his employer, Potiphar, concluded, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Joseph’s obedience was an act

of many-splendored loyalty—to himself, to his future family, to Potiphar, to God, and, yes, even to Potiphar’s wife!



Another major reason for complying is that breaking the seventh commandment evicts the Holy Ghost from our soul. We lose the great value of His companionship, because He cannot abide in a sinful soul. And without His help, we then become less useful, less perceptive, less functional, and less loving human beings.

Real Love

Sexual immorality is also dangerous because it is so desensitizing. Lasciviousness can, ironically, move people who wrongly celebrate their capacity to feel to a point where they lose their capacity to feel! They become, in the words of three different prophets in three

different dispensations, “past feeling” (see Ephesians 4:19; 1 Nephi 17:45; Moroni 9:20).

The Atonement came through obedience and charity, not a lesser form of love. It was the most selfless and significant act in all of human history, while immorality, on the other hand, relentlessly reinforces selfishness—which already exists in plague proportions in the world. True love is the centerpiece attribute in both the first and second great commandments—on which every other law hangs! Therefore, to misunderstand the true nature of love is to misunderstand life.

To be unchaste, in the name of love, is to destroy something precious in order to celebrate its existence wrongly. When we lose our capacity to feel, it is because we have destroyed the taste buds of the soul.

Yet another reason underlying the need to keep the seventh commandment is that unchastity lowers self-esteem because we are actually sinning against our nature and who we really are (see 1 Corinthians 6:18, 19). In my opinion, we are also breaching previous promises made in the premortal world. Unchastity also impacts severely on others.

The tens of thousands of young people who are unmarried but living together represent a major breach in the family way of life. The harsh consequences of that breach on our social environment will be felt for generations to come.

Being Free

These, and other concerns, go far beyond the world’s concerns over disease and pregnancy. But the Church must resolutely be, as Paul said, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Reason 3: The blessing of specific and deserved self-esteem.

Reason 4: The blessing of freedom from the tyranny of appetite.

• *Those who are driven by appetite have a false sense of being free. It is an empty freedom.*
• *Where mistakes have been made, remember we have the glorious gospel of repentance. The miracle of forgiveness awaits all who are seriously sorry and who will follow the necessary steps.*

Reason 5: The blessing of freedom from corrosive guilt.

Reason 6: The blessing of expanded agency by learning to act wisely for ourselves rather than merely being acted upon by appetite.

• Where the impulse to do wrong appears, act against that impulse while the impulse is still weak and while the will is still strong.

The Church is also concerned with one of the ultimate dimensions of freedom, which is freedom from sin. Paul said, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

When we think of this interconnected constellation of reasons, we can understand why it is not just recurring rhetoric when prophets, like Mormon, observe that the loss of chastity is the loss of that which is precious above all things (see Moroni 9:9). And why, so many times in history, have the writers of the scriptures, observing their own people’s decadence, equated ripening in iniquity with the spread of fornication and adultery (see Helaman 8:26)?

Finding Ourselves

By denying ourselves some appetites altogether, by governing other appetites, and by losing ourselves in service—we find ourselves (see Alma 39:9; 3 Nephi 12:30). We simply cannot make a difference in the world if we are just like the lost people of the world. Remember, if the salt loses its savor . . . (see Matthew 5:13)!

We must resist the wrong fashions of the world. The thirteenth article of faith does not say that we believe in all things that are popular, fashionable, ugly, and sensual, and that we seek after these things! Rather, “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men” (Articles of Faith 1:13). And these attributes depend on each other.

Another of the consequences of gross sexual immorality with its desensitization is that it begins to rob people of hope. As an individual is emptied of hope, despair quickly

enters in, for as one prophet said, “Despair cometh because of iniquity” (Moroni 10:22).

Ten Warnings

My closing counsel to you is contained in these 10 additional observations:

1. Resist the rhetoric of the world, and you will find that, if you stand fast, so will others—some surprisingly. As Paul said, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Neither women nor men can be truly free if they behave so as to lose the Spirit.
2. Since you don’t let people come in and walk around in your house with muddy feet, do not let them walk through your minds with muddy feet.
3. Build your strong personal link in a chain of chastity and family fidelity, so it can proceed forth from grandparents to parents to children and then on to their posterity. To be so welded together is, of course, to be drawn together in the strongest kind of bond and is to affirm, by your actions, that you believe in the commandments in spite of what is going on in the world around you.
4. Do not company with fornicators—not because you are too good for them but because you are not good enough. Remember that bad situations can wear down even good people. Joseph had both good sense and good legs in fleeing from Potiphar’s wife.
5. Along with the traditional, predatory, selfish male there is now the predatory, selfish female. Both, driven by appetite, have a false sense of being free—but it is, alas, the same sort of empty freedom Cain possessed (after he had broken a

commandment by slaying Abel) when, ironically, he said, “I am free” (Moses 5:33).
6. Where mistakes have been made, remem-



ber we have the glorious gospel of repentance. The miracle of forgiveness awaits all who are seriously sorry and who will follow the necessary steps. Bear in mind, however, these are situations in which the soul must first be scalded by shame, for only with real cleansing can real healing occur. But the road of repentance is really there.
7. Where the impulse to do wrong appears, act against that impulse while the impulse is still weak and while the will is still strong. Dalliance merely means that the will weakens and the impulse grows stronger. There is a Parkinson’s law of temptation: Temptation expands so as to fill the time and space available to it. Keep “anxiously engaged” (D&C 58:27) in doing good things.
8. Because our Church’s behavioral standards are different, connect that fact with what several prophets have told us about

how we must come to despise the shame of the world. We must not hold the people of the world in contempt; we must love them. But we must come to have contempt for the shame of the world, because it matters so little in the end.

9. Remember, those who are in error must not call the cadence for your life, for those who boast of their sexual conquests are only boasting of that which has conquered them. We may pity behavioral clones, but we do not envy them.
10. My young friends, in your concern for justice, deal justly with yourselves! There is a very telling verse in the Book of Mormon that describes an ancient political leader with these words: “And he did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself because of his many whoredoms” (Ether 10:11).

Consequences and Blessings

I have tried to describe for you some of the consequences attached to immorality: antibiotics instead of abstinence; pills instead of children; partners instead of marriage; childbirth with unwed parents; and old perversions masquerading as new thrills.

I now need to say, however, that so far as the stern but sweet seventh commandment is concerned, obedience is also entrance. By avoiding the evils and consequences of unchastity, we also gain entrance and access to such blessings as always accompany those who keep the commandments. Moses promised ancient Israel that if they would keep the commandments, “all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee” (Deuteronomy 28:2).

These next blessings and others “shall

Reason 7: The blessing of personal momentum that always comes when we practice decision-making in which we both reject wrong and choose the good.

Reason 8: The blessing of the integrity of soul that leads to personal wholeness and unafraid openness.

• We must come to despise the shame of the world. Those who boast of their sexual conquests are only boasting of that which has conquered them.

• *Build your strong personal link in a chain of chastity and family fidelity, so it can proceed forth to your posterity.*

come on thee, and overtake thee” if you keep the seventh commandment:

1. Keeping the stern seventh commandment



in the full sense of the word will yield the blessings of being in harmony with divine law and the Lord.

2. Obedience will likewise give the blessing of identity by being in harmony with our own potential selfhood. The gospel helps us think of ourselves not only for what we are, but for what we have the power to become.
3. Keeping the seventh commandment will bring the blessing of specific and deserved self-esteem.
4. The keeping of this commandment blesses us with freedom from the tyranny of appetite, which may be the most oppressive tyranny of all.
5. There will come, too, the blessing of freedom from corrosive guilt with its wasted

rationalizations and with its turning inward to self-pity instead of outward in genuine service.

6. We also come to know the blessing of expanded agency by learning to act wisely for ourselves rather than merely being acted upon by appetite, a vital dimension of agency (see 2 Nephi 2:26).
7. There is, too, the significant blessing of personal momentum that always comes when we practice decision-making in which we both reject wrong and choose the good. It is not enough to reach a bland behavioral point when we no longer take pleasure in sin; we must hunger and thirst for righteousness.
8. Additionally, there is the immensely important blessing of the integrity of soul that leads to personal wholeness and unafraid openness. How can we become “one flesh” (Matthew 19:5) in marriage if, as we enter into marriage, we are a sundered self? Chastity, integrity, and serenity—these are interdependent and inexpressible blessings.

My young friends, deviations from the commandments of Jesus Christ are a lessening of our personal Christianity. Therefore, part of being a true Christian is to keep the seventh commandment.

When God the Father introduced His Son, Jesus Christ, to the young prophet, Joseph Smith, His opening words were, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). This Church and its prophets have been hearing Him ever since—including what He has to say about chastity and fidelity! **NE**

Adapted from an article printed in the June 1979 New Era.

Personal Improvement

•“The Enemy Within” on page 4 focuses on self-mastery and personal worthiness. Share your testimony of a gospel-centered habit, like keeping the Word of Wisdom, being honest, or honoring the Sabbath with a close friend. It will help strengthen your resolve and may show your friend the way to go.

•Doesn't it feel good when someone says something nice about you? Read “True Beauty” on page 9. Spread that good feeling by going out of your way to give sincere compliments today as you help raise someone's feelings of self-worth.

•In “G-Rated Recruit,” on page 32, a young man is blessed because he made good decisions about entertainment. Do you have any questionable material in your music, video, or reading collection (no matter what it's rated) that you'd be better off without? Throw away any garbage you're keeping.

Seminary Devotional

•Every issue of the *New Era* has articles written by a member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see pages 4, 42). Can you name all of the First Presidency and the Twelve in order of seniority? Memorize them by putting their last names to a song and sing it over and over again as a class. (The Primary songs that help you learn the books of the Bible work well.) Then share a couple of interesting facts about each one. The more you get to know them, the more their words will stick with you when you hear them speak or you read one of their articles.

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tithing

Family Home Evening Ideas

•Read Q&A, and discuss the principle of tithing. Read D&C 64:23. For an activity, have each family member decorate an envelope, box, or jar to keep their tithing money in.

•Emphasizing the positive in your home will help maintain happiness and harmony. Read together “The Truth about My Family” (page 26), then make a list of what makes your family great. Put the list and a copy of *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* in a place where family members can refer to them often.

Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women Mutual Ideas

•Sharing your testimony can be intimidating (see “Online Testimony,” page 38). Get together and practice what you can say in response to questions your friends might ask, like “Why are your standards so strict?” or “Why do you think yours is the only true church?” To practice what you've learned, write your testimony in a Book of Mormon and give it to a friend.

•Using Elder Neal A. Maxwell's article “Reasons to Stay Pure” (page 42) as a guide, plan a standards night on chastity. Pay special attention to the list of 10 principles of chastity and the list of 8 consequences and blessings of staying pure.

WHY REVERENCE?

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the article "Will A Man Rob God?" (March 2002). Lately I've been struggling a little about why the Lord expects so much reverence and everything, and the dialogue between the author and his friend about how he obtained his land helped me realize it.

Leila Watts

Coon Rapids, Minnesota (via e-mail)

COULD NOT WAIT

Thank you so much for all you do with this magazine. I could not wait until I turned 12 because I was so excited about subscribing to the *New Era*. I am always looking forward to receiving it in the mail every month. Thank you for all the wonderful stories. They get me thinking about which path I want to take to return to my Father in Heaven.

Kassidy Hill

Las Vegas, Nevada

THOSE WHO DIDN'T GO

I was just reading the February 2002 issue of the *New Era*, and the Q&A part about missions really offended me. I don't want to be rude or anything, but do you know how awful that makes men who didn't go on missions feel? My dad and grandpa are wonderful men who are awesome leaders in the Church, and neither of them went on missions. They are two of the greatest men I have ever met. My cousin just turned 20, and he didn't go on a mission. Is he supposed to feel guilty because his debt isn't paid off because he is getting instead of giving? I'm sorry but that is really rude of you guys to say. And what about women like me who aren't encouraged at all to go on missions. Is my debt to the Lord never going to be paid off? Am I supposed to feel selfish

"I could not wait until I turned 12 because I was so excited about subscribing to the New Era. I am always looking forward to receiving it in the mail every month."

because I am getting instead of giving? I love this Church, but I think it was mean of you guys to say this. It really hurts people who are close to me. But more than anything it makes me mad.

Name Withheld (via e-mail)

THIS SAME SUBJECT

I want to thank you for the article in the February 2002 issue titled "The Gospel and Romantic Love." I had been talking with my sister earlier about this same subject. It was amazing to open the *New Era* and read the answer to my problem. Thank you again for all of the hard work that is put into making the *New Era* such a wonderful magazine.

Katie Johnson

Dillon, Montana (via e-mail)

MORE REMOTE CONTROL

Thanks so much for the article "A Question of Time" in the July 2002 *New Era*. It really made me start thinking about how much TV I watch. Just recently, I was arguing with my sister over control of the remote. Then I remembered the questions at the beginning of the article, and one came to mind: "Do you like it better than your brother?" And I thought, "Wow. I'm fighting over the TV when I could be gaining more respect and a better relationship with my sister. Instead, I'm pushing her away." So anyway, I just wanted to say, thank you for the article. It gave me a lot to think about.

Jennifer Schofield

Provo, Utah (via e-mail)

*We love hearing from you. Write us at
New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150*

Or e-mail us at

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

SELF-PORTRAIT

BY TARA CARPENTER

Stroke by stroke we paint our lives,
day after day.
We form the painting with our actions
and shade it with our doubts.
We color it with kindness,
and tone it with our personalities.
We smudge it with our sins
and brighten it with our good works.
With loving hands we brush and shape our picture.
The empty canvas is our potential.
The right is ours to fill it.
Each portrait will be different,
but none are ever ugly.
And when the portrait is done
and the artist has moved on,
the portrait will remain
for others to pattern their own by.



***"I loved bearing my
testimony to the
audience. After our
performance, we talked
to the people in the
audience. It was really
neat to see how the
Spirit had touched
them."***

***See "Mesa Pageant:
Getting into the Act,"
p. 20.***