

THE New Era



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Why Do We BAPTIZE FOR THE DEAD?

BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



It matters tremendously what we do in relation to those who have gone before, because they live today as spirits and shall live again as immortal souls, and that because of Jesus Christ.

Christian theologians have long wrestled with the question, What is the destiny of the billions who have lived and died with no knowledge of Jesus? With the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ has come the understanding of how the unbaptized dead are redeemed and how God can be “a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15).

While yet in life, Jesus prophesied that He would also preach to the dead. Peter tells us this happened in the interval between the Savior’s Crucifixion and Resurrection (see 1 Peter 3:18–19). President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) witnessed in vision that the Savior visited the spirit world and “from among the righteous [spirits], he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. . . .

“These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, [and] the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands” (D&C 138:30, 33).

The doctrine that the living can provide baptism and other essential ordinances to

the dead vicariously was revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 124; 128; 132). He learned that the spirits awaiting resurrection are offered not only individual salvation but they can be bound in heaven as husband and wife and be sealed to their fathers and mothers of all generations past and have sealed to them their children of all generations future. The Lord instructed the Prophet that these sacred rites are appropriately performed only in a house built to His name, a temple (see D&C 124:29–36).

The principle of vicarious service should not seem strange to any Christian. In the baptism of a living person, the officiator acts, by proxy, in place of the Savior. And is it not the central tenet of our faith that Christ’s sacrifice atones for our sins by vicariously satisfying the demands of justice for us? As President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) expressed: “I think that vicarious work for the dead more nearly approaches the vicarious sacrifice of the Savior Himself than any other work of which I know. It is given with love, without hope of compensation, or repayment or anything of the kind. What a glorious principle.”¹

Some have misunderstood and suppose that deceased souls “are being baptized into



the Mormon faith without their knowledge.”² They assume that we somehow have power to force a soul in matters of faith. Of course, we do not. God gave man his agency from the beginning. The Church does not list them on its rolls or count them in its membership.

Our anxiety to redeem the dead and the time and resources we put behind that commitment are, above all, an expression of our witness concerning Jesus Christ. It constitutes as powerful a statement as we can make concerning His divine character and mission. It testifies, first, of Christ’s Resurrection; second, of the infinite reach of His Atonement; third, that He is the sole source of salvation; fourth, that He has established the conditions for salvation; and, fifth, that He will come again.

The Power of Christ’s Resurrection

As regards the Resurrection, Paul asked, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:29). We are baptized for the dead because we know that they will rise. “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23). “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Romans 14:9).

It matters tremendously what we do in relation to those who have gone before, because they live today as spirits and shall live again as immortal souls, and that because of Jesus Christ. We believe His words when He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). By the baptisms we perform in behalf of the dead, we testify that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . .

“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 25–26).

Jesus Christ, the Sole Source of Salvation

Our anxiety to ensure that our kindred dead are offered baptism in Jesus’s name is testament to the fact that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6). Some contemporary Christians, concerned for the many who have died without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, have begun to wonder if there truly is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). To believe that Jesus is the only Savior, they say, is arrogant, narrow-minded, and intolerant. We say, however, that this is a false dilemma. There is no injustice in there being but One through whom salvation may come, when that One and His salvation are offered to every soul, without exception.

Conditions of Salvation Set by Christ

Because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, we also accept His authority to establish the conditions by which we may receive His grace. Otherwise we would not concern ourselves with being baptized for the dead.

Jesus confirmed that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life” (Matthew 7:14). Specifically, He said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This means we must “repent, and be baptized every one . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and . . . receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Notwithstanding He was sinless, Jesus Christ Himself was baptized and received the Holy Ghost. He said, “He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do” (2 Nephi 31:12).

There are no exceptions granted; none are needed. As many as will believe and be baptized—including by proxy—and endure in faith, shall be saved, “not only



Notwithstanding He was
sinless, Jesus Christ Himself
was baptized
and received the Holy Ghost.



those who believed after [Christ] came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came" (D&C 20:26). It is for this reason that the gospel is preached "also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6).

Freeing the Dead from Prison

The vicarious ordinances we perform in temples, beginning with baptism, make possible an eternal welding link between generations that fulfills the purpose of the earth's creation. Indeed, without these ordinances, "the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [Christ's] coming" (D&C 2:3).

In the scriptures, the spirits of the dead are sometimes referred to as being in darkness or in prison (see Isaiah 24:22; 1 Peter 3:19; Alma 40:12–13; D&C 38:5). Contemplating God's glorious plan for the redemption of these, His children, the Prophet Joseph Smith penned this psalm: "Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free" (D&C 128:22).

Our charge extends as far and as deep as the love of God to encompass His children of every time and place. Our efforts on behalf of the dead bear eloquent witness that Jesus Christ is the divine Redeemer of all mankind. His grace and promises reach even those who in life do not find Him. Because of Him, the prisoners shall indeed go free. **NE**

From an October 2000 general conference address.

NOTES

1. "Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 73.
2. Ben Fenton, "Mormons Use Secret British War Files 'to Save Souls,'" *The Telegraph* (London), Feb. 15, 1999.

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TENDER MERCIES OF THE

Lord

Reverently ♩ = 92-108

Words by Julia D. Olsen
Music by Kevin R. Olsen



1. Some - times when I'm feel - ing scared, I kneel down and say a prayer and
2. Some - times when I'm all a - lone and long for my heav'n - ly home, I
3. Some - times when I just don't know the path I should choose to go, I



ask Him to help me through the day.
ask Him to help me feel at peace.
ask Him to help me make a choice.



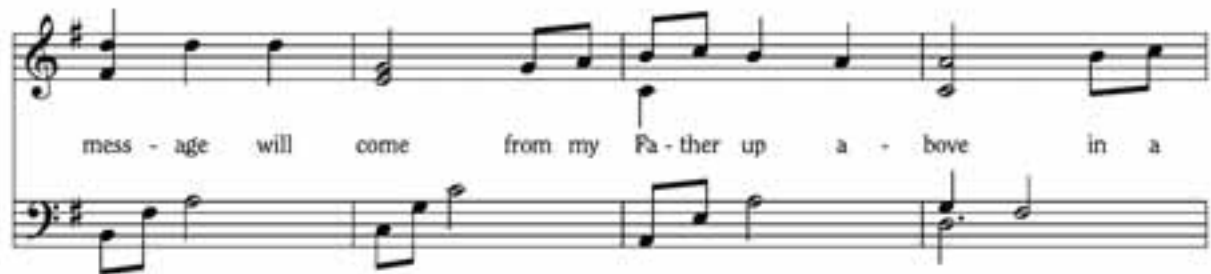
Some - times when I'm feel - ing sad for hard times that I have had, I
Some - times when I'm feel - ing pain or stand - ing in pour - ing rain, I
I know He is al - ways there to guide me through sim - ple prayer and



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ask Him to help me find my way. Then a
 ask Him to help me feel re - lief. Then a
 help me to hear His lov - ing voice. And a



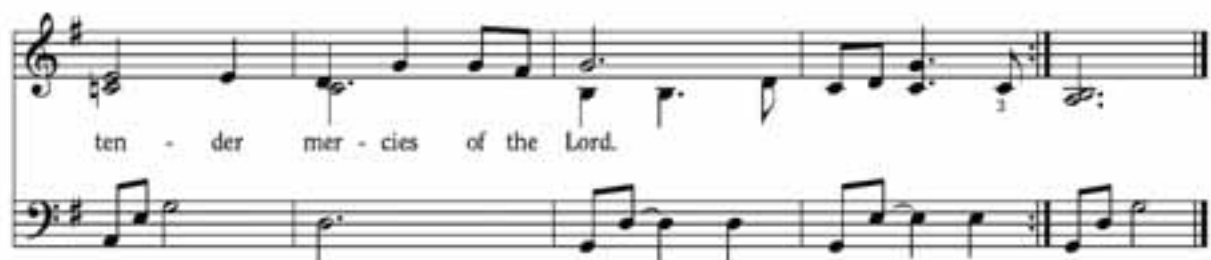
mess - age will come from my Fa - ther up a - bove in a




song or a dream or the beau - ty that sur - rounds me. If I



try to o - bey and re - mem - ber to pray I'll see the



ten - der mer - cies of the Lord.

 Listen to and download this song at NewEra.Ids.org



Love Speaks Loudly

BY BRADLEY UNDERWOOD

Since our investigator couldn't hear, we had to find another way to communicate with him.

Pablo wasn't much different from any other investigator I had taught as a missionary in Paraguay, except for one thing: he couldn't hear. That sometimes made it difficult to communicate. Because he didn't know sign language, our discussions were usually a mix between lip reading and writing notes back and forth.

During the week, Pablo lived alone. His wife worked as a housekeeper and could only come home on weekends. He really enjoyed our company but was becoming less and less interested in the Church. My companion and I wondered what we could do to help Pablo progress. One day my companion said: "You know, Pablo's birthday is next week. Maybe we should get him a card."

It sounded like a good idea, so on Pablo's birthday we headed to his house with the card. He saw us crossing the lawn and came out to welcome us. "Happy birthday, Pablo," we said, exaggerating our lip movements and showing him the card. For a moment he didn't seem to know how to respond. A tear came to his eye.

As we stood there on Pablo's front patio, something changed in him. With his wife gone for the week, we were the only people who had remembered his birthday. Though no real conversation took place, we came to an understanding we hadn't had before. Pablo started "listening" more closely to our messages, and he even went to church the next Sunday. He couldn't hear the words spoken there, but he felt the Spirit testify of the truth of it.

Within a short time, Pablo was baptized and later ordained to the priesthood. The Church has made such a big difference in his life. His wife joined the Church, and they are now preparing to be sealed together in the temple.

I never would have guessed what a difference that card would make. Simple love and kindness had helped a man who couldn't hear to accept the gospel. Sometimes it's by the simplest means that the greatest things are brought to pass (see Alma 37:6). **NE**



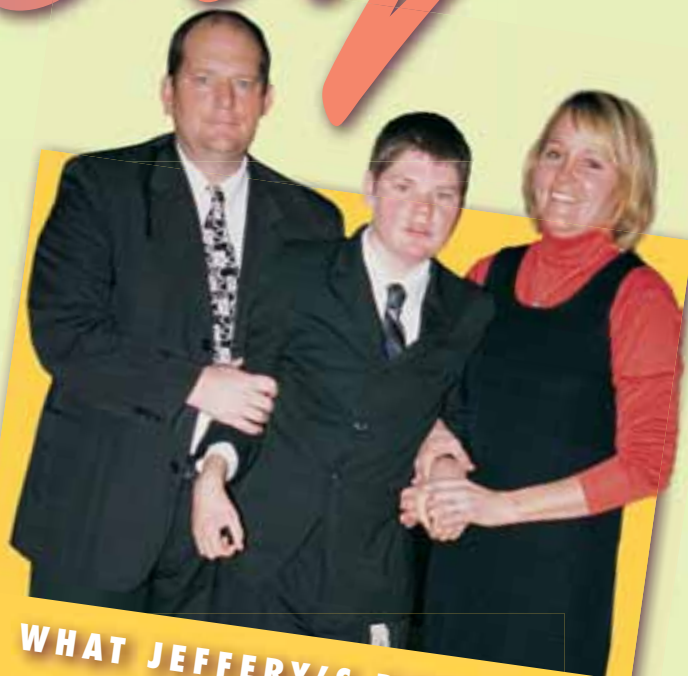
WE KNOW Jeffery

BY SALLY JOHNSON ODEKIRK
Church Magazines

By helping one of their own, members of this deacons quorum found they received more than they gave.

Some people play such a significant role in a group that everyone wants them involved, even if it means going the extra mile. That's the way the members of Jeffery Libberton's deacons quorum feel about him.

Jeffery struggles with multiple physical and mental disabilities, including having no verbal communication skills. He attended Primary until he was 12 years old, and then his parents started taking him with them to their Sunday classes. Jeff's friends in the Roosevelt Utah 10th Ward deacons quorum who had already turned 12 couldn't imagine quorum meetings and activities without him, and they



WHAT JEFFERY'S PARENTS HAVE TO SAY

When Jeffery's parents learned about www.disabilities.lds.org, they reviewed the Web site and found it very useful. His dad, Jeremy, said, "I found the links to helps for fathers and grandparents helpful, but most of all I loved the constant focus on the eternal perspective and the reminder of love and faith needed to cope successfully with raising a family with a disabled child in it."

His mother, Suzie, says, "This Web site has everything it needs to educate new teachers or helpers who work with those with special needs. A new teacher can go to this Web site and gain useful insight in a short time."

They appreciated having so much helpful information in one place. "We can browse on many subjects and get answers to questions or information to help others understand what we have spent many years learning."

wanted him to come with them.

The first step for the quorum presidency was to meet with his parents. "We talked with the boys about Jeffery, his needs, and his attitudes," says his father, Jeremy. "Their immediate response was, 'We know Jeffery. He has been in our Primary for a long time.'"



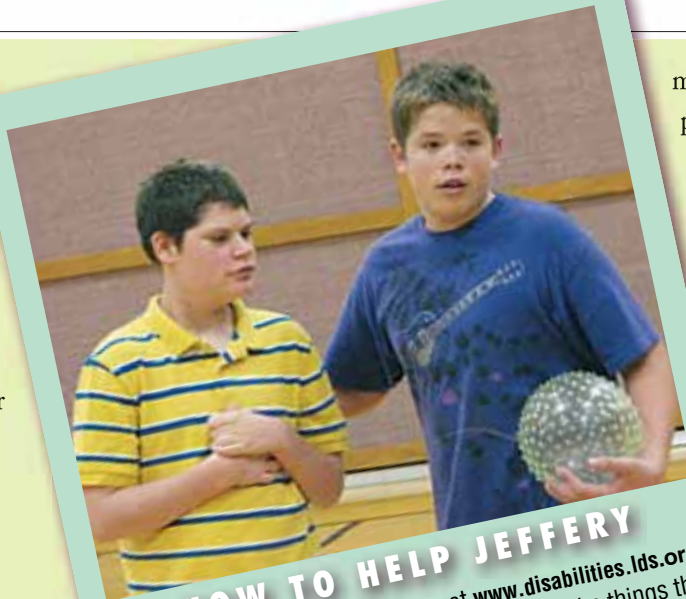
The second step was to turn to **www.disabilities.lds.org** for suggestions. The boys went to the autism section of the Web site to learn even more about Jeff's disability. And the third was to work together as well as individually on the Boy Scouts Disability Awareness merit badge.

Part of a Quorum

The more the boys learned about Jeffery's disabilities, the more they discovered ways to help him. Jayde Bertoch learned that Jeff cannot always control his emotions. Sometimes it is just one of those days. They also learned that even though he is nonverbal, he likes to have his friends around.

Everyone joins in to welcome Jeffery at quorum and Young Men meetings. "We play rock-paper-scissors to see who gets to help him," says Kenyon Mitchell, 13. "The winner gets to be Jeffery's buddy and helper for the day. My testimony has grown and is still growing every Sunday at church and on Tuesdays at Young Men when I help him get around."

Tyler Scott, 12, agrees. "It's fun having him in our



HOW TO HELP JEFFERY

After reviewing the information at **www.disabilities.lds.org**, the boys decided that these were some of the things they could do to include Jeffery more:

- Plan at least one activity a month specifically geared to include Jeffery.
- Talk regularly with his parents and ask them questions and get their feedback.
- Use more pictures in lessons.
- Be more aware of how their own behavior may affect Jeffery.
- Continue to use the buddy system so Jeffery is safe and is never alone.
- Give Jeffery lots of praise.
- Use more lesson-appropriate videos. Jeffery likes videos, and the boys have positive learning experiences.

meetings," he says, "because he puts a smile on all of our faces. He enjoys it when we sing, and he also likes listening to the lessons. He can't talk, but we can talk to him, and he understands everything we say. I like having him as one of my friends."

Their adviser, Marshall Bellon, says, "Jeffery does not need words to express his love, since his smile and eyes say it all. His eyes are the windows to his heart. As I am teaching the lessons in class, it is comforting to have Jeffery reach out and grab my hand as he looks up at me. It is through this simple

spirit is able to touch mine and we share in the truthfulness of the gospel. It seems that it is his way of saying 'I understand and believe the things being taught.'"

Jerico Liddel, 12, likes to give high-fives to Jeffery when he responds to him. He says, "It's a lot of fun to be with Jeffery. He likes us to push him around in his wheelchair. I



OUR DUTY

"It is a duty which every Saint ought to render to his brethren freely—to always love them, and ever succor them."

Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:229.

INDIVIDUALS

"Individuals with disabilities are exactly that—individuals who happen to have disabilities. They want to be loved and recognized, to participate, and to experience the same joys."

"Six Myths about Members with Disabilities," at www.disabilities.lds.org.

like to help out. It makes me feel good." They note that Jeffery likes to ride go-carts with his brothers and watch his friends play games.

Learning More about Disabilities

The boys also thought about others they know who have disabilities and learned more about how to help them.

Brayden Sleight says, "My Grandma Sleight has Parkinson's disease and uses a wheelchair. Because of her, I have learned to be more concerned for Jeffery and how to help move his wheelchair and

A NEW DISABILITIES SITE AT LDS.ORG

Do you know someone who is hearing impaired and whom you want to learn how to communicate with? Is there a member of your ward with a learning disability whom you want to involve more in activities or lessons? A new site at lds.org can help answer these questions and more about helping those with disabilities. The site, www.disabilities.lds.org, can be accessed under the "Home and Family" section of lds.org.

The site is a central location of resources to help those with special needs. It includes general information about several types of disabilities and links to related Church articles and community resources. There are links to Church materials, including those translated into Braille and American Sign Language; frequently asked questions; and an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback.

Christine Crockett, 16, and her Young Women adviser, Sheila Dixon, of the Rose Park Seventh Ward, Salt Lake Rose Park North Stake, recently looked at the Web site. They both felt that www.disabilities.lds.org

gives valuable insights into the needs of those with disabilities. Christine says, "It made me more aware of those around me and gave me helpful suggestions on how to reach out and help others."

make sure he's comfortable. I learn how he's feeling from watching his expressions."

After working on their disabilities merit badge and deciding to involve Jeffery more in their activities, they met with Jeffery's parents to find out what he was capable of doing. The boys in the quorum decided to invite him to participate in their basketball game. Since Jeffery couldn't par-

ticipate in the actual game the boys

were playing, they took turns removing themselves from the game in order to step to the sidelines to toss the ball to him.

Brother Bellon notes, "Having Jeffery become a more active part of the

quorum helps us realize that he is really no different than any one of us. Building a relationship with him has allowed all of us to be more compassionate toward him and toward each other."

These deacons have learned for themselves that it is true that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). As Brother Bellon says, "Their friendship and service to Jeffery are preparing them to become better missionaries, husbands, and fathers, and it allows them to have more compassion for all of those who need a hand of fellowship and friendship. It has allowed them to be grateful for a loving, merciful Heavenly Father who loves all of His children." **NE**



SEND A KNEE MAIL

WHEN YOU SEND AN INSTANT MESSAGE TO
HEAVENLY FATHER, HE IS ALWAYS THERE.
(SEE 2 NEPHI 32:9.)

“Sometimes the humor in my family crosses over into teasing that hurts. How can we get out of this habit?”

Sometimes family members make jokes without realizing that their humor is really hurting the person it is aimed at. Other times, mean-spirited humor is used intentionally. If you or another family member is being hurt by this kind of humor, let the person who is using it know that feelings are being hurt. Maybe they think they are just being funny without knowing how it affects other people. If they are being unkind intentionally, they need to know their behavior is not OK. In either case, one of the best ways to solve the problem is to talk about the problem as a family and come up with ways your family can change this behavior.

One way you can help your family is if you first stop participating in this kind of humor. Don't tease your family members and don't react when they tease you. Show your love for them instead. The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet encourages you to “use language that uplifts, encourages, and compliments others. Do not insult or put them down, even in joking. Speak kindly and positively about others so you can fulfill the Lord's commandment to love one another” (22). It may take time and effort, but you can learn to be kind to each other. **NE**



Have a Better Relationship

Work to develop a closer relationship so that you are able to distinguish between hurtful and playful teasing.

Learn to understand your family members better and recognize when a certain subject is sensitive. Remember that teasing is meant as fun for both people, to laugh with the person, not at the person. If you see that the other person is not laughing, talk it over and do not repeat the same mistake.

Christine C., 19, Victoria, Australia

Love and Serve

My brothers and I have a weakness of teasing each other which sometimes leads to spiteful feelings. King Benjamin taught that we are supposed to love and serve one another (see Mosiah 4:14–15). We all need to strive to serve and love each other, including me and my brothers. Praying and studying the scriptures daily will help you be loving and help you *want* to serve.

Harmony H., 15, Arizona, USA



Don't Say Hurtful Things

My mom taught us to question whether is it kind, necessary, or true before we say something. That has cut back on a lot of teasing that hurts. And if we still say it, our mom will make us sing the song "Kindness Begins With Me" (*Children's Songbook*, 145). After singing that song about a half a dozen times, we got tired of singing and just quit saying those hurtful things.

Rebeka M., 16, Missouri, USA

Have a Family Discussion

When I was growing up we had the same problem. Something that helped us was just talking about it in a family night and explaining that it hurts your feelings and you would like to change these habits.

Elder Avelar, 20,

Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission



Express Your Feelings

Talk to the person who is teasing and express your feelings and ask them to stop the teasing. If that doesn't help, talk to somebody about it.

Corinne Z., 13, Utah, USA

Talk to the Person

First, think carefully about whether they are trying to hurt you, or if they are just playing around. If they don't mean it, talk to them and ask them if

they can be a little more considerate about the words they use. Pull them aside and talk to them about it. If all else fails, talk to a parent, youth leader, bishop, or teacher for their advice.

Alex W., 14, Oregon, USA



Tell Them It Hurts

I find that when my family and friends end up doing this, most of the time they don't

know that it hurts someone. You need to tell them that it hurts and explain that you don't appreciate it, and to please stop. That way they know and you're not being rude.

Kimberly T., California, USA



Be the Example

If you don't use hurtful humor yourself, and don't react to this humor from others, they

will notice. When you show others you don't find hurtful things entertaining, they may follow your example.

Curren S., 18, Arizona, USA

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

NEXT QUESTION

"Why do I need to forgive someone if I know I'm right?"

Send your answer by April 15, 2009, to:

New Era, Q&A, 4/09

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SIGNATURE

PARENT'S SIGNATURE (IF YOU ARE UNDER 18)



THE WAY WE TREAT OUR FAMILIES
One of the adversary's tactics in the latter days is stirring up hatred among the children of men. He loves to see us criticize each other, make fun of . . . and generally pick on each other. . . . The way we treat the members of our families is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize."
Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915-94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword," *Ensign*, May 1992, 18.

Cherish **VIRTUE**



BY ELAINE S.
DALTON

Young Women
General President

*The paths of virtue
lead to happiness in
this life and in the life
to come.*

*Here's why "Virtue" has been
added to the Young Women theme.*

Several years ago I went on a backpacking trip in the Teton Mountains of Wyoming with a group of young women. It was a difficult hike, and on the second day we arrived at the most dangerous part of the hike. We were going to hike along Hurricane Pass—aptly named because of the strong winds which almost always blow there. We were instructed by a ranger to stay in the center of the path, stay as low as possible on the exposed part of the trail, secure everything in our packs, and move quickly. This was no spot for photographs or for lingering. I was very relieved and happy when each one of the young women had navigated that spot successfully. And do you know—not one of them asked how close to the edge they could get!

Sometimes as we walk life's paths, we want to loiter in dangerous places, thinking that it is fun and thrilling and that we are in control. Sometimes we think we can live on the edge and still maintain our virtue. But that is a risky place to be. As the Prophet Joseph Smith told us, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue" (*History of the Church*, 5:134–35).

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord

gives counsel to one of His precious daughters, Emma Smith, to be faithful and to "walk in the paths of virtue before me" (D&C 25:2). The Lord's advice to Emma Smith is also His advice to all His precious daughters. What are those paths and what is virtue?

Virtue is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards. It encompasses chastity and moral purity. Virtue includes modesty—in thought, language, dress, and demeanor. Virtue provides an anchor on the path leading to our Heavenly Father's presence. The paths of virtue lead to happiness in this life and in the life to come. The paths of virtue lead to strong families. The paths of virtue contain the foundation stones for the blessings of eternity. They lead to the temple. No wonder Joseph Smith said, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

In another revelation the Lord promises each of us that if we "let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly," we will have confidence. He promises that our "confidence [will] wax strong" and "the Holy Ghost will be [our] constant companion" (D&C 121:45–46). Living the standards helps each of us stay on the paths of virtue. Whenever we are worthy of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, we can always be assured that the daily decisions we each



make will be correct even when they are difficult.

In a world that surrounds us with sights and sounds, music and messages that are less than virtuous, is a return to virtue even possible? And what about those of us who have made mistakes along the way? President Monson has said to those who have made mistakes, “If any of you has slipped along the way, there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will, with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord” (“Examples of Righteousness,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 65–66).

All over the world young women are living lives of virtue and purity. It shows in your eyes and radiates in the light that shines forth from your countenance. Never has there been a time in the history of the world when virtue is more needed.

The blessings and promises of being virtuous will help you be free and happy and worthy to enter the Lord’s holy temples. For this reason we have added “virtue” to the Young Women values and theme. Each week when you repeat the theme, I hope you will be reminded of what it means to cherish virtue. **NE**

SEARCH AND RESCUE

What does emergency preparedness mean to you? In the Dominican Republic, it means these young men and young women are ready to lend a hand.

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

They help people injured in car accidents. They rescue drowning swimmers and find hikers or cave explorers who get lost or hurt. On holidays they operate sidewalk booths to assist those in trouble. They help with community vaccination programs. And they know what to do in an earthquake, hurricane, or other disaster.

They are trained in basic and advanced first aid, water rescue, confined-space rescue, disaster response, and survival skills. They know their training manuals and classroom drills, but they also train in the outdoors, hiking into the mountains and caves where they simulate real dangers. Then they take on actual emergencies.

Since they were organized in 2003, they have helped more than 300 people, many with serious or critical injuries. They have also drawn a lot of teens from the troubled streets into their ranks and taught them about discipline and love.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY



The Comité de Emergencias Santo de los Últimos Días (the Latter-day Saint Emergency Committee) includes both Latter-day Saints (above) and other members of the community (left) who are trained and ready to help.

Service Oriented

They are the *Comité de Emergencias Santo de los Últimos Días*, the Latter-day Saint Emergency Committee, a volunteer group open to anyone willing to follow their rules of courtesy and service. And at their core are teenage Latter-day Saints, led by dedicated adults. More than 200 youth have participated in the group since it began.

"I found out about the committee when I came to a baptismal service one Saturday," says Junior Rivera. "In another room, I saw all these kids like me, dressed in black, with a logo on their T-shirts and hats, learning about first aid. What really got me interested was when I found out they were preparing to help other people. I saw it as a way to do something good, and that's part of Church teachings, to reach out and help those around us."

Onel Rodriguez explains that the group learns procedures similar to gospel principles. "For example," he says, "in an emergency we learn to take care of our own families first. Then when we know they are all right, we are able to assist others. That's what the Church teaches about welfare. Take care of your own family; then help others."

Franklin de los Santos says working on disaster preparedness has helped him realize that sometimes the need for spiritual search and rescue is just as important as physical care. "Some people need a helping hand or a kind word or a shared testimony to help them be strong," he



Committee members like Franklin de los Santos (above) are trained using proper equipment and techniques. As well as assisting with search and rescue, they provide additional services to the community, such as helping with emergency preparedness and with vaccination programs.

says. “When we’re living the gospel, we should care about and strengthen other people spiritually too.”

Application Oriented

Omar Rodriguez points out that many of the committee’s activities have been used to fulfill Duty to God requirements and have been planned in coordination with Aaronic Priesthood and Mutual activities.

José Núñez, second counselor in La Caleta Ward bishopric, says that while youth learn the gospel in their classes and quorums, the committee helps them apply what they learn to everyday life. “When they’re in the street having direct contact with needy people, then they



really learn what it means to love one another,” he says. “They develop love for the people around them. And they also develop love for themselves because they learn about self-discipline, and that gives them confidence to act in appropriate ways no matter where they are.”

Brother Núñez also points out that the committee doesn’t replace the normal activities of the Church. “It complements them,” he says. “In priesthood quorums and Young Women classes, for example, they are taught gospel principles. But in gospel-oriented activities like the committee and other service projects, they have the opportunity to practice what they have learned.” That’s one of the ways, he says, that they can become “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Community Oriented

Omar says the committee is often asked to help with community programs like measles vaccinations. “We want to be present wherever help is needed,” he says, “and the community knows that. They trust us because we prepare well.” In fact, the *comité*, founded by Church members Basilio Cabrera and Domingo Peralta, uses the same techniques as Red Cross and civil defense units. The public health department has given the LDS-sponsored group special recognition, and the governments of the city and the province have also given the group awards.

Brother Núñez explains that the committee creates emergency-response plans according to a study of critical

zones in Santo Domingo and nearby communities. “In an emergency we would go into those zones and determine if there are members of the Church who need help,” he says. “At the same time, we would assess the needs of all the people in that area and report to authorities. We have identified which places would be most critical in the case of a cyclone, earthquake, flood, or something similar. We know which areas will need an immediate evacuation. We even know where tree branches can be trimmed to avoid damage if high winds come. This is part of what the youth are assigned to do.”

Committee members also give up some of their own celebration time at Christmas and Easter so that, under adult supervision, they can participate in a 24-hour watch. “We do this because these are the days when a lot of people get into accidents or have trouble because they are drinking,” Brother Núñez says. That fact has taught committee members, in a very practical way, the value of living the Word of Wisdom (see D&C 89).



Ready, Willing, Motivated

So why do committee members give up time to serve? Why go through all that training?

Omar says that although being involved requires time and effort, it's worth it. He feels particularly good that he can help other people, something he learned a lot about after tropical storm Noel. “Our duty was to help those in need to get clothing and food,” he says. “I saw people who were suffering, and to be able to bring them something to wear and something to eat and then to see their satisfaction, that made me feel good.”

Osiris Rodriguez says he appreciates the unity he feels in the committee. He sees it as an extension of the unity he feels in his quorum and among the youth in the Church in general.

Junior Batista, who joined the Church several months ago, said that when he learned about the emergency committee, he was eager to be involved. And he hasn't been disappointed. “We feel good because we are fulfilling the commandment that says we should love one another. We are together as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of God.”

When you feel that way about service, you will continue to serve. **NE**

Note: If you desire to start a similar committee, please check first with your priesthood leaders and local government officials.

Why do committee members give up time to serve? Why make the effort to go through all that training? Participants say they feel good because they are fulfilling the commandment to love and serve those around them.



Osiris Rodríguez



Junior Rivera



Junior Batista



José Núñez

Getting to KNOW

Because of my dad's illness, I've grown closer to him and my Heavenly Father.

BY TEDDY WRIGHT

When I was growing up, I had a fantastic life. I remember thinking that life was perfect and nothing could ever go wrong. We were a happy family, and we lived the teachings of the gospel. I never thought anything bad would happen.

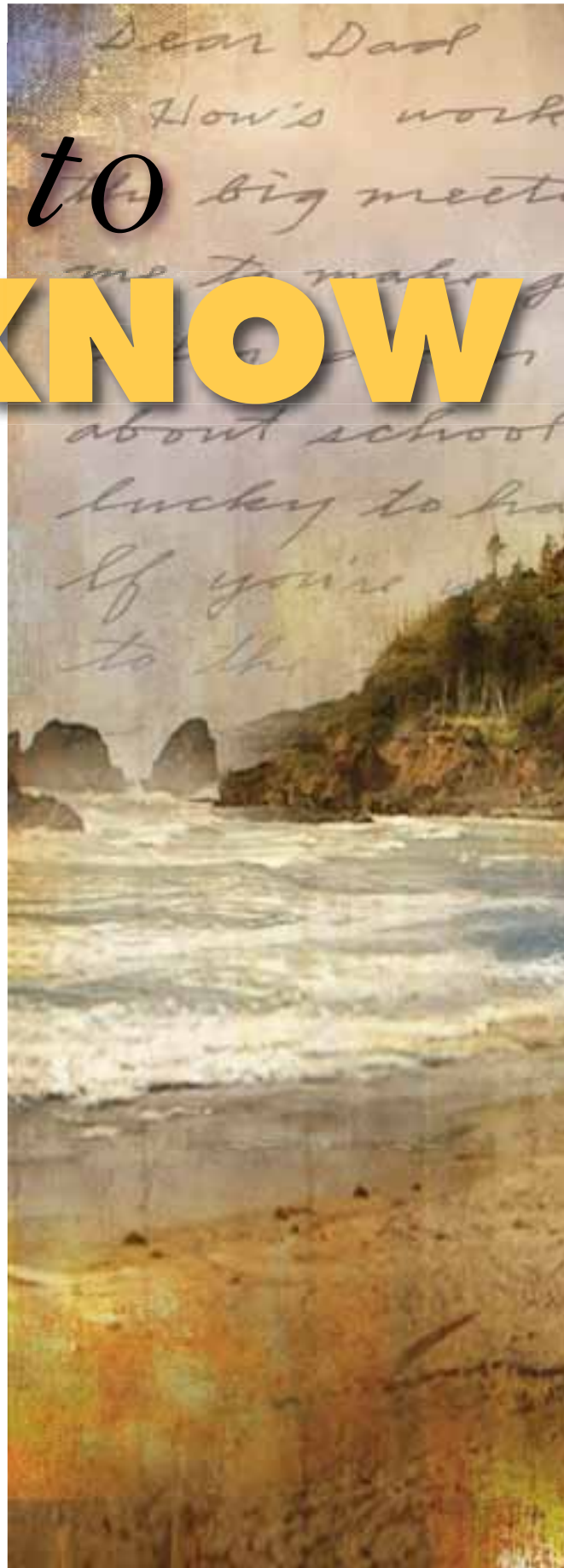
But then when I was 11 years old, it felt like disaster had struck. My dad brought us all into his bedroom and announced that my mom was having another baby, the eighth. I was so excited! But then he proceeded to tell us that he had just been diagnosed with a terminal cancer that may someday end his life.

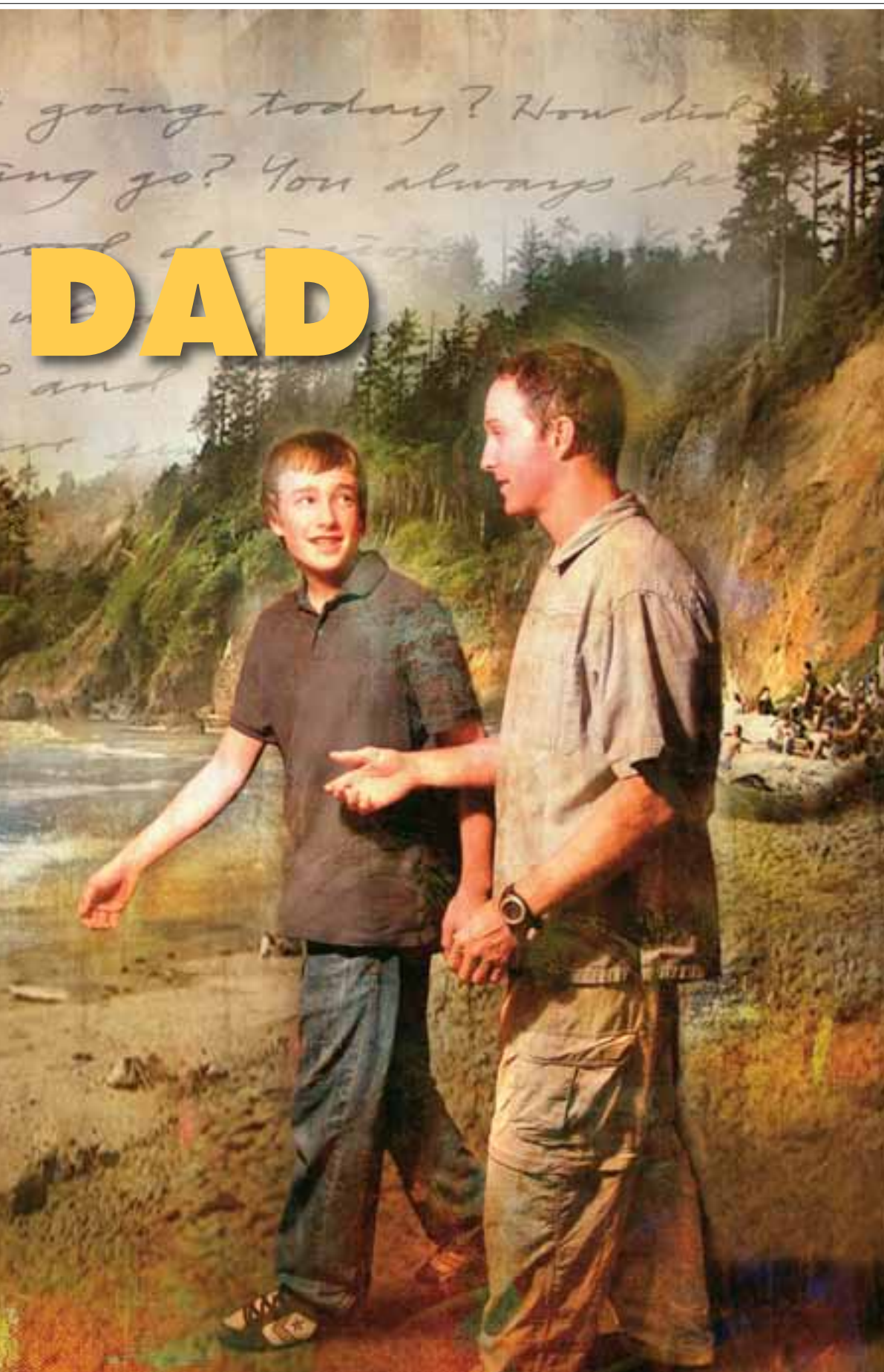
It was hard to understand, and I really didn't know what to do. Since then my dad has gone through many painful treatments and is now in remission. Through these difficult times, the Lord has helped and comforted me and my family countless times.

I also became closer to my dad through notes, calls, and walks. I used to leave little notes for my dad in his lunch box and on his desk. These little pieces of paper helped me more than I could ever dream. Now I call my dad almost every day during lunch and just talk. We also go on walks and talk about our day and our likes and dislikes. I've gotten to know my dad a lot better now, and I love to talk to him. He's always interested in what I have to say.

My dad is not cured, and he probably never will be. But the simple gestures like little notes, a quick call, or a walk around the block have helped me understand, at least in part, why my family is going through this. I know that I've become closer to my dad, and so has my entire family. I love my Heavenly Father, and I know that He knows what's best. My family's love for the Savior has made me understand that I can keep going and that my family will be together forever. I know that this Church is true with all my heart. **NE**

ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE





Writing letters and going on walks helped me become closer to my dad. Though he'll probably never be cured, knowing that our family can be together forever helps me keep going.



Drawing the Line

BY ANNE PETERSEN CREAGER

I found I had to learn how to push back the world.

Though I'd been in college for a year, I hadn't attended many activities sponsored by my university. I hadn't been avoiding them. I had just filled my time with institute activities, school, and work. One night when my friend, Stacy, asked me to go with her to a dance, I jumped at the chance. It would be great to meet some new people and get away from studying for a little while.

As we entered the ballroom where the dance was being held, Stacy introduced me to some of her friends, and I noticed a

few familiar faces from my classes. I felt comfortable and excited as we danced on the fringe of students. When one of my favorite songs began booming from the speakers, I grabbed Stacy's hand, and we plunged into a mass of people. We danced and sang along with the music. It was more fun than I'd had in a long time.

After a few more songs, a song I was not familiar with blared, loud and raucous. I wanted to hold my hands over my ears. I didn't know what the lyrics were saying exactly, but they weren't good. Everyone around me began dancing differently than they had moments earlier.

Suddenly, I realized something was terribly wrong. I was encircled by many young men I didn't know well. They closed in on me, pushing themselves against me inappropriately. I shoved one of them back, but others moved in. I screamed and pushed and shoved until one of them finally let me out of the circle, swearing and calling me a name. Tears streamed down my face as I fell into my friend's arms. I tried to explain what was wrong, but when I turned back to show her what had happened, I noticed another girl had taken my place. And she seemed to be enjoying her participation in their dance.

I was horrified. I stood back and watched the students dancing. The song changed again, and though it was familiar, I did not want to get back on that dance floor. I left the building and did not return.

After my experience at this dance, I spent a lot of time searching my own feelings about the situation. I had always been aware of the dark corners you avoided during school dances, but this dancing was right in the middle of the floor. Sure, my dancing had been enthusiastic, but it had not been inappropriate. I had done nothing to warrant such unwanted attention.

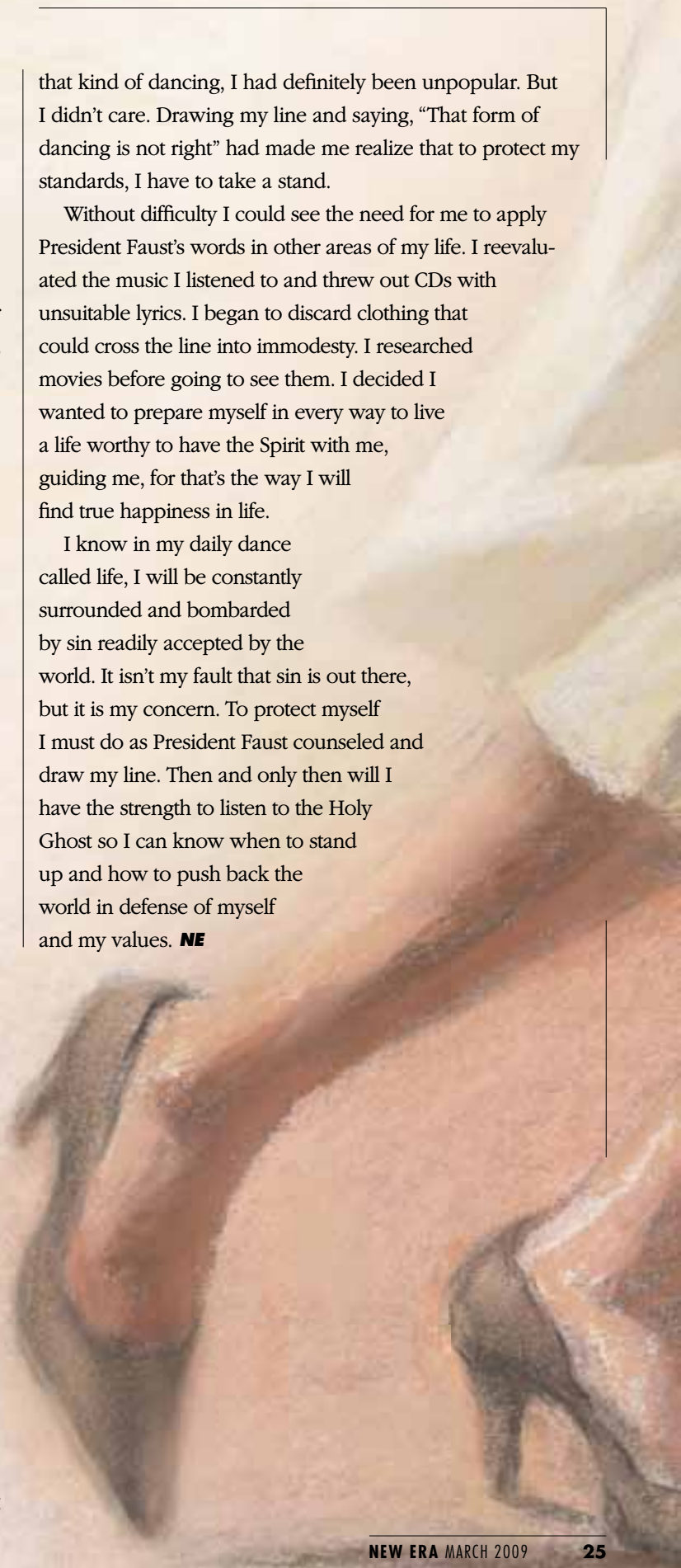
Then one day I came across an article by President James E. Faust called "The Devil's Throat." In this article President Faust taught, "There are so many shades of right and wrong that each of you has to decide where the line will be. . . . With all my heart I urge you to please help us push back the world. We must stand against the wind. Sometimes we must be unpopular and simply say, 'This is not right'" (*Ensign*, May 2003, 51-52).

When I read those words, I knew, all through me, they were meant for me. It didn't matter what other people thought. When I tried to "push back the world" by escaping

that kind of dancing, I had definitely been unpopular. But I didn't care. Drawing my line and saying, "That form of dancing is not right" had made me realize that to protect my standards, I have to take a stand.

Without difficulty I could see the need for me to apply President Faust's words in other areas of my life. I reevaluated the music I listened to and threw out CDs with unsuitable lyrics. I began to discard clothing that could cross the line into immodesty. I researched movies before going to see them. I decided I wanted to prepare myself in every way to live a life worthy to have the Spirit with me, guiding me, for that's the way I will find true happiness in life.

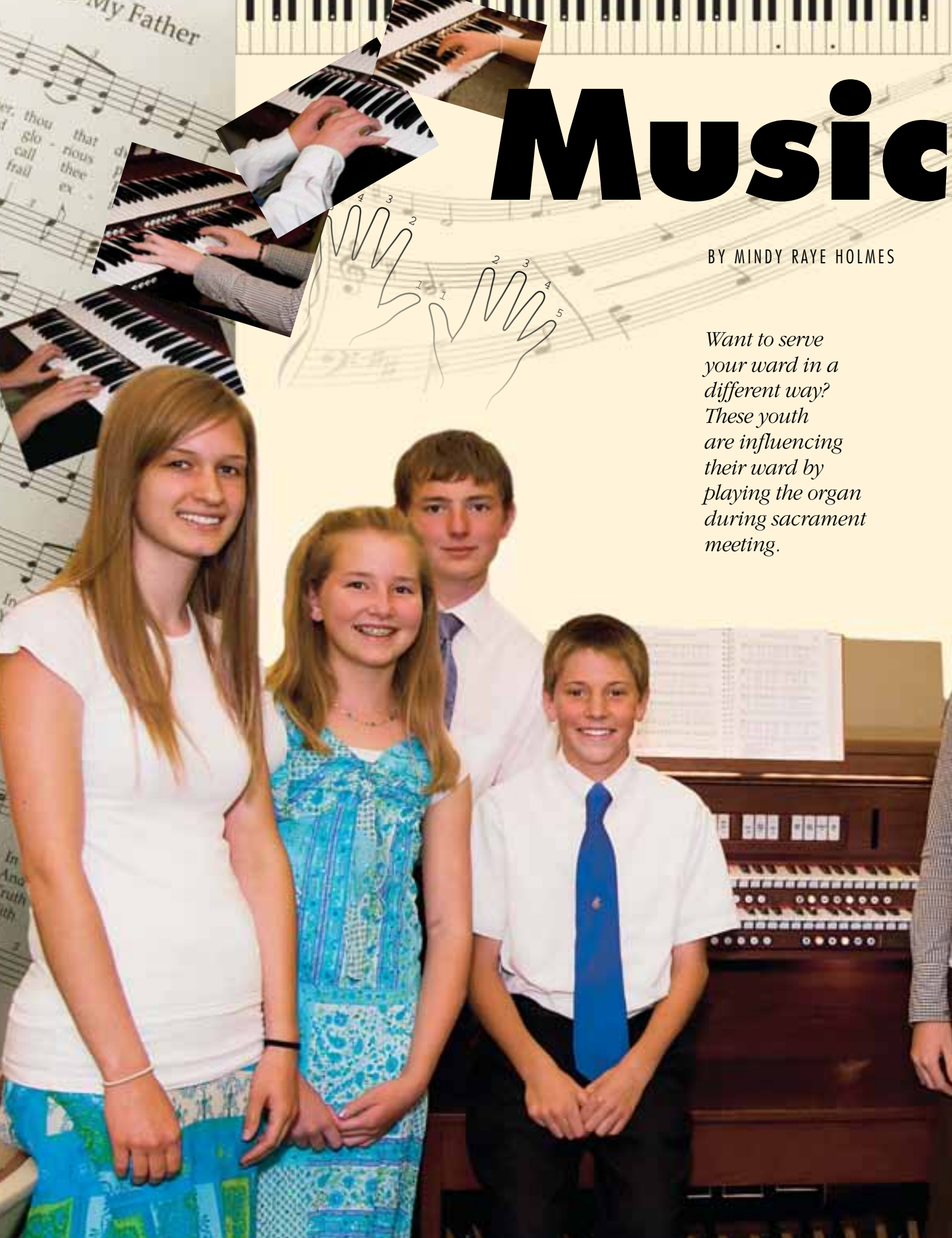
I know in my daily dance called life, I will be constantly surrounded and bombarded by sin readily accepted by the world. It isn't my fault that sin is out there, but it is my concern. To protect myself I must do as President Faust counseled and draw my line. Then and only then will I have the strength to listen to the Holy Ghost so I can know when to stand up and how to push back the world in defense of myself and my values. **NE**



Music

BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES

*Want to serve
your ward in a
different way?
These youth
are influencing
their ward by
playing the organ
during sacrament
meeting.*





Makers

Sacrament meeting is going to start in a few minutes, and Steven Forsyth, 13, is well prepared. He isn't going to speak, though; he's going to play the hymns.

Steven warms up by practicing the hymns he will be playing for the meeting. The ward organist, Kathy Craven, sits nearby to help with whatever he needs. Marla Bishop, the ward chorister, stands next to the organ and

conducts the hymns as Steven practices, making sure he is following the beat. "Remember to hold that for three counts," Sister Bishop says, pointing to one of the notes. Ward members continue coming in and taking their seats while Steven plays in the background.

Five minutes before the meeting starts, Sister Craven takes over playing the prelude music. Steven sits near the organ and watches her, shifting nervously as he waits to play the opening hymn. He has nothing to worry about, though; he plays all three hymns for the meeting beautifully.

"I get very nervous the week I'm supposed to play, and my hands get all sweaty," Steven says, "but it's a good feeling afterwards."

Some people may think it's unusual for someone as young as Steven to play the organ for sacrament meeting, but for the Parkway Eighth Ward in South Jordan, Utah, young players are a regular occurrence. Steven is just one of seven youth in this ward who take turns playing the organ for sacrament meeting.

Switching to the Organ

The youth involvement started when Sister Deanna Sorensen, the former ward organist, was going to retire from her job as a schoolteacher and go on a mission. There was only one other person in the ward who could play, so Sister Sorensen decided to teach some of the youth who already played the piano how to play the organ.

"Sister Sorensen was always talking about how the world needs more organ players," says Emily Holbrook, 17.





Emily decided to learn the organ when Sister Sorensen was tutoring her in math and mentioned she would be teaching the organ. Emily thought it sounded exciting and wanted to learn how to play.

The most important thing she and the other students would learn was to hold down the organ keys for the duration of the notes, because unlike a piano, an organ has no sustain pedal. An organ also has two keyboards, a number of foot pedals, and things called stops, which change the type of sound that comes out of the organ.

Learning the organ can be difficult, but these youth have put in the effort and received

support from their leaders and parents. And they know their efforts make a difference.

"It's really blessed our ward because we've all developed a greater love and appreciation for the hymns," Sister Craven says. She also says the ward has grown closer as they've come together to support the youth.

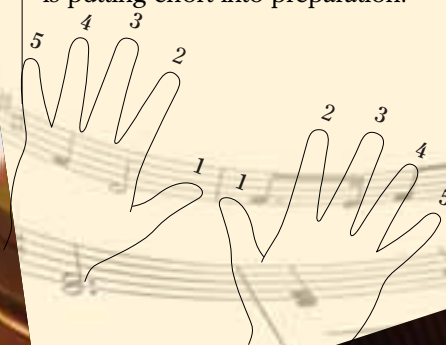
"A lot of people come up and give me compliments and they seem really happy the youth are helping out," says Landon Howard, 14, another organist.

Overcoming Fear

Playing for sacrament meeting was not easy at first. Lauren Howard, 17, remembers being nervous. "I was terrified," she says. "I remember my hands were just shaking." All the youth admitted they were scared, but they did it anyway.

"I knew it would be a good experience and it would help me overcome my fear of playing," Lauren says. "And now it has. I'm a lot better than I was my first time."

The key to overcoming fear, they learned, is putting effort into preparation.



"I just practiced a lot," says Randon Fullmer, 13. The other youth agreed that practice helped them overcome nervousness. They also relied on the Lord.

"I think that the Lord has helped me play by calming my nervousness before I play," Steven says. "I pray before I play, and it helps me play better, without too many mistakes."

A Life-Enriching Experience

These students started taking lessons so they could learn a skill and help their ward, but in the process they learned a lot of other things.

"I know Heavenly Father is there," says Jenny Forsyth, 16. "I know that I can't do it without Him."

Sharli Fullmer, 11, the youngest of the group has learned that "your testimony can grow when you sing and play because the hymns teach you truth."

Sister Craven says the youth have also learned how to magnify a calling. They choose the hymns they would like to play, subject to approval from the ward music leader and the bishop. And not one of

them has ever missed a Sunday assignment. Learning to play the organ will prepare them for future callings, especially if they are somewhere an organist is needed.

"I think it could be a good talent to use on a mission, for example," Landon says.

Advice for Learning Something New

Many youth at some point have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, and some have the chance to play in sacrament meeting. The youth of the Parkway Eighth Ward know youth can be successful at both.

"Stick with it; don't give it up," Emily says. "A lot of people do it because their parents want them to. Or they get really discouraged because they're not doing very well. I say just have fun with it and have a good attitude."

"Pray to Heavenly Father that He will help you, and practice really hard and practice a lot," Jenny says.

It's the positive attitude, practice, and reliance on the Lord that has helped them to play and to serve, something they do so well that the members of their ward are excited to look and see who is playing. **NE**

A REVERENT INFLUENCE

"Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Reverence Invites Revelation," Ensign, Nov. 1991, 22.





From

SKEPTIC

to

SAINT

BY C. BRADLEY

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, my family was not affiliated with any religious group, nor were many of my friends. It had never really occurred to me that there was a God. My Sundays were spent going shopping or doing homework. I was content believing that when I died, my body would turn to soil and I would cease to exist.

When I was 14, my family moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. All of a sudden, I was with a community that had a completely different outlook on the world. At first I ridiculed them. I thought it was outrageous that my friends politely turned down my invitations to go to the movies on Sundays. I thought they were crazy for wasting a precious weekend day attending a three-hour church session. What could possibly be so fascinating at church that would make missing out on sleeping in worth it? How did my classmates survive without coffee the night before a big project was due? Why did they so willingly turn over 10 percent of their earnings to their church?

After I overcame my initial culture shock, I noticed something interesting. Despite their different ways, these LDS people were incredibly happy.

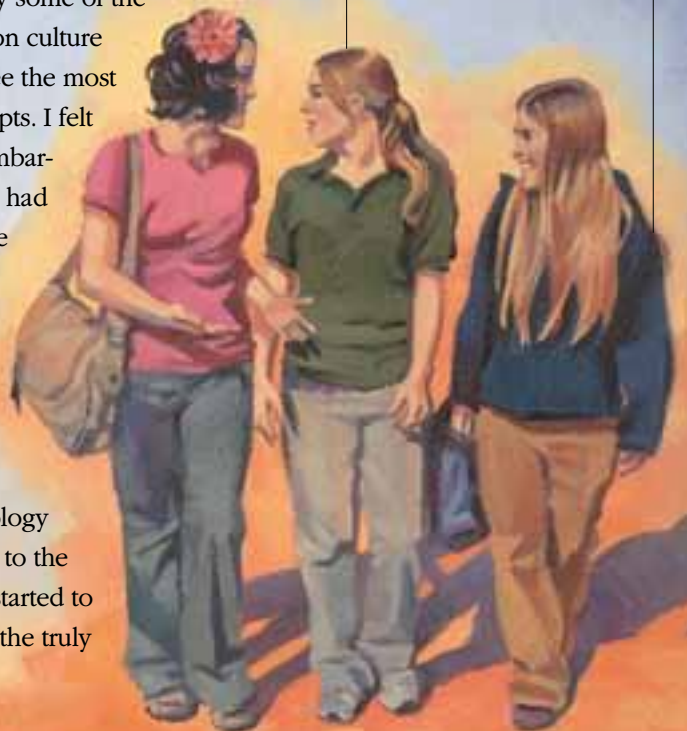
In general they were friendly and had a fresh, enthusiastic outlook on life.

Many of my friends were

preparing to give two years of their lives to teaching people about their faith. This sparked my curiosity. Never before had I seen a religion in which the members were so excited about their faith, and so willing to invest much of their time and energy helping others. As far as I could see, there was no other motive for members to reach out to people except to bring happiness to those around them. So, I became an investigator.

When I told my friends I was interested in finding out more about the Church, they were overjoyed and very supportive. At first I had many questions about the Church and was skeptical about what it had to offer me. I was so intimidated by some of the details of Mormon culture that I failed to see the most important concepts. I felt awkward and embarrassed because I had to ask what stake conference was and what “bearing your testimony” meant. It wasn’t until I became familiar with the terminology and accustomed to the traditions that I started to seek answers to the truly

My new friends were nice, but kind of strange. So why did I find myself wanting to be just like them?



FIVE WAYS TO HELP A NEW CONVERT

important questions about the gospel.

Oftentimes, when I asked someone a question about the Church, such as “How can I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior?” the answer was, “Pray about it.” For someone who wasn’t sure that there was a God to pray to in the first place, this wasn’t a very helpful answer. When I asked about the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, most people responded with, “Read about it in the Book of Mormon.” This wasn’t very helpful either, as I had a tendency to stumble over the language of the scriptures, which was very new to me.

However, the more I read my scriptures and the more I attended church, the stronger the urge became to pray about the decisions I was making and the church I was investigating. I began praying for a better understanding of the Church. I asked to receive an answer about whether this was the true Church. To my great surprise, I received an answer. It came in response to my seeking—a quiet, peaceful assurance from the Holy Ghost that what I was reading and praying about was true.

The Book of Mormon, which had been so difficult for me to understand, began to make more sense. The teachings of the prophet and other Church leaders touched my heart and took on new meaning. Waking up to spend three hours at church on Sunday morning no longer seemed like a great sacrifice. I knew that this was the true Church and that I was to join it.

A wonderful friend and her family generously offered to host missionary discussions at their home every week. A pair of kind, dedicated missionaries

1. **Be a good example.** Acts of kindness, community service, and just being friendly are good ways to represent the Church.

2. **Be genuinely good.** Some people who leave the Church say they do so because of the actions of other members and not because they don’t believe the doctrines of the Church. Make your actions consistent with your beliefs.

3. **Be willing and prepared to answer questions.** New members have lots of questions. It can be uncomfortable for them to ask about things that seem obvious to longtime Church members. Encourage investigators to search scriptures and pray for answers, but be knowledgeable and ready to answer their questions too.

4. **Don’t criticize.** For many converts old habits may be hard to break, but this does not mean that they do not believe the Church is true. If you see someone having a hard time with a commandment, do not chastise him or gossip about him. Try to support him in good behaviors, and congratulate him when he makes lifestyle changes to meet Church standards.

5. **Include friends from all faiths in your activities.** Asking others with different backgrounds to join in activities helps friends of other faiths to see how much fun Latter-day Saint people can have together.

taught me and helped clear up questions I still had. I was fortunate to have a tremendous amount of support in learning the gospel. Several weeks after I started the missionary discussions I was ready to be baptized. Though my parents were not members of the Church and did not have an interest in joining, they were happy for me and supportive of my decision. My best friend baptized me and confirmed me. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

Even after I joined the Church and began preparing to obtain a temple recommend, I often struggled with some of the lifestyle changes I had made. I sorely missed cold ice tea on hot summer days. I sometimes felt embarrassed when I had to explain to friends who weren’t members that I didn’t want to see an R-rated movie with them.

However, when I remembered the eternal happiness I would receive if I kept the covenants I had made at my baptism and if I listened to the advice of Church leaders, those sacrifices felt more like blessings. I know that, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we can set a shining example to our communities. The help and support of loving Church members helped me make the decision to join the Church. It is my hope that the example of Latter-day

Saints will continue to be a positive influence on the world and that many will come to know of this Church as the true Church of Jesus Christ. **NE**



BY JANET THOMAS

Church Magazines

When McKay Hatch of Pasadena, California, and his friends started middle school at age 12, he was bothered by the increase in bad language. "I think what bothered me most," says McKay, "was that they were using it every other word. It wasn't just that they used a cuss word when they stubbed their toe. It was becoming part of their everyday language."

McKay got up his nerve, spoke to his friends, and basically said that if they wanted to continue hanging out with him, they had to quit using bad language. He wondered if he would lose all his friends, but they stuck with him and cleaned up their language. McKay came up with the idea of starting a club—a No Cussing Club.

The first club meeting was held June 1, 2007, at the end of the school year. "A lot of people came," says McKay. "I was surprised. We talked about what our goals were going to be and what we could do." Since that simple beginning, McKay reports having members or branches of the club in all 50 states and in 35 countries. They now have T-shirts, wristbands, and a Web site.

The club wanted to have a cuss-free week in their city. McKay wrote to the city council, who agreed, and last year, March 3–7 was declared Cuss-Free Week. In March 2009, the county of Los Angeles, home to over 10 million people, is also going have a Cuss-Free Week, with McKay receiving the proclamation.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing. At first, McKay almost quit because of negative response. Sometimes people would yell bad words at him. Or they would accuse him of trying to take away their freedom of speech. McKay points out that he isn't making them do anything. He asks them to challenge themselves to improve. "I'm just trying to bring awareness about people's language."

McKay is often asked to talk at elementary schools. He tells the younger kids that their words become their thoughts, their thoughts become their actions, their actions become their character, and their character becomes their destiny. "I tell them it all starts with your words." **NE**

**NO
CUSSING
CLUB**



THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE

BY ELDER L. WHITNEY CLAYTON
Of the Seventy

Everything good in my life has come from my decision to serve a mission.



Somehow I was able to perceive that these missionaries had gotten more out of life and were further down the road in a very positive way than others of the same age.

I was born in Salt Lake City but raised in Whittier, California, a suburb about 30 miles east of Los Angeles. I was raised in a home where, during my early years, we were less active. When I turned 11, we moved to a new home and began to attend church more frequently. We were sealed in the temple when I was 13. Now my brothers and I are all active members of the Church. We have all served missions. My brothers and I were married in the temple, but these are not things you would have predicted based on our early years.

Because my mother was raised in Southern California and that was where we lived, I knew my mother's side of the family much better than my father's side in Utah, simply because of proximity. My dad felt strongly about my getting to know the Utah side of the family and getting to know the people in Salt Lake. He thought there was experience to be gained and strongly encouraged me to go to the University of Utah, which I did.

When I arrived, I joined a fraternity. A majority of the fraternity were also Church

members, some of whom were returned missionaries. After a while I began to notice that the returned missionaries just seemed to "have their act together" in a way that the others, in my opinion, didn't. I had not been raised with the notion of serving a mission, although as I got to be an older teenager my parents began to mention it. My father had not served a mission because of World War II. His medical school training went right through the war.

Positive Examples

As I spent more and more time in Salt Lake and got to know the returned missionaries, somehow I was able to perceive that these missionaries had gotten more out of life and were further down the road in a very positive way than others of the same age. They were directed. They had goals. They had a feeling for who they were that others didn't seem to have. In my view, they had social skills that I thought were an advantage. That was what got me started thinking about a mission. At first, it was entirely for the wrong reasons, for selfish reasons.



I said, "I'm 19 now and still have three years of college and then time as an intern and a resident. I expect to be drafted into the military plus a mission. You add all of these things up, I've got 14 or 15 years to go before I get to real life. If I do all of these things, I won't get to real life until I'm 33 or 34 years old."

Elder Marion D. Hanks asked me.

"When you are 33, what would you rather have done? None of those things, half of those things, or all of those things?"

Even within this group there were some returned missionaries whose stories about their missions made me feel hesitant about service. Their stories were about how hard it was or how cold it was or how primitive the circumstances were. I was basically reluctant to do anything cold or difficult. But other returned missionaries took me aside and said, "Whit, let me tell you what it is really like, how wonderful it is."

Nobody who was a returned missionary said, "Don't go." They all told me to go, but a few of them delighted in telling me the hard parts. I decided to listen to these others who said, "That's just the way he talks. He had a great experience, and look what he became. You'll have a great experience too."

An Important Conversation

At the same time I had an experience that was very important to me. I used to go down to a local gym to work out. One time when I was down there in the late morning, I noticed Elder Marion D. Hanks of the Seventy. We were the only two in the gym, and he struck up a conversation with me.

After a little small talk, I asked him if I could ask a question.

"Sure, please go ahead," he said. He was very friendly, very warm.

"I'm trying to decide whether to go on a mission."

He said, "What are the things that you are thinking about? What are the considerations?"

I said, "Really just one, and it is a question about the amount of time it would take."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

At this point in time I thought I wanted to be a doctor. My father was a doctor, and I wanted to be a doctor. This was before I knew much about organic chemistry.

I said, "I'm 19 now and still have three years of college and then time as an intern and a resident. I expect to be drafted into the military (it was during the Vietnam conflict)

plus a mission. You add all of these things up, I've got 14 or 15 years to go before I get to real life. If I do all of these things, I won't get to real life until I'm 33 or 34 years old. That seems like a very late start."

He said, "Well, that's an interesting question. You should know that I did not serve a mission. I was in the military during World War II and was not able to serve a mission, but I'll tell you how I think you should answer the question."

He asked me, "How old are you now?"

I said, "I'm 19."

"How old will you be in 14 years if you don't do any of those things?"

I answered, "I'll be 33."

He again asked me, "How old are you now?"

I said, "I'm 19."

"How old will you be in 14 years if you do all of those things?"

I said, "I'll be 33."

Then he asked me. "When you are 33, what would you rather have done? None of those things, half of those things, or all of those things?"

I saw immediately the wisdom of his response, and it just penetrated me. I saw how it fit with what I had seen in the returned missionaries on campus. I decided then and there I was going to serve a mission.

The Best Decision

That was the best decision I have ever made, because everything good in my life has come from that decision. I don't believe my wife would ever have been willing to consider marrying me if I had not been a returned missionary. I think her decision to marry me was the best thing that has happened in my life. Our experience together across the years, raising a family and being involved in Church service, our community involvement, my professional involvement,

all of those things have been influenced by that mission.

I am so grateful for the example of returned missionaries—for the way they dressed, for the way they talked, the way they worked, for the light in their lives, which was immediately evident to me. I could see the difference in the way they dressed, spoke, and carried themselves, in the way they behaved. It was discernible. I could see it, and I wasn't looking for it. It was simply that I began to perceive something that I hadn't noticed before, and I learned that the Lord blesses those who do the things He asks them to do. He blessed me, and He blesses everyone who goes on a mission and then stays in essentially a modified missionary lifestyle after that. I'm grateful for that.

Those two experiences—watching returned missionaries and having a chance (well, maybe not a chance)

meeting with Elder Hanks. That was the turning point in my life. My parents wanted me to go on a mission and were delighted when I did. And I think it helped my younger brothers to see me go.

Young men, look forward to serving a mission. It is hard; it is work, but there is nothing about it that you can't do. You'll love the experience. Doing hard things is good for us, and missions aren't so hard that you can't do them. They just require something of you. You have to grow up a little, and I promise you that if you will prepare yourself for a mission in every way—intellectually, physically, and spiritually—keeping yourself clean and ready to go, you'll have a tremendous experience, and you'll be grateful. **NE**

Based on an interview in April 2008.





GENERAL YOUNG WOMEN BROADCAST

The Young Women General Presidency invites all young women ages 12 to 18, their mothers, and Young Women leaders to attend the General Young Women Meeting on Saturday, March 28, 2009. This meeting is held under the direction of the First Presidency.

The theme is: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"

(1 Timothy 4:12). President Monson has said, "You are an example of righteousness in a world which desperately needs your influence and strength."

The meeting will originate from the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The live meeting will be broadcast by satellite to meetinghouses worldwide and on the internet at www.lds.org/broadcast.

For those who receive KBYU or BYUtv, note times below.

Live Broadcast	Rebroadcast
8 p.m. Eastern time	10 p.m. Eastern time
7 p.m. Central time	9 p.m. Central time
6 p.m. Mountain time	8 p.m. Mountain time
5 p.m. Pacific time	7 p.m. Pacific time

QUEEN ESTHER, BY MINERVA TEICHERT,
© WILLIAM AND BETTY STOKES

DATING SURVEY RESULTS

In September we asked the members of our New Era e-mail group to respond to a dating survey. We had nearly 200 youth respond from 13 different countries.

Here are the top three answers to these survey questions, along with the percentage of respondents who gave that answer:

In your opinion, what is the difference between dating and hanging out?

1. The intention 53%
2. Couples are paired off 47%
3. Someone specifically asks the other out 11%

What are some things people in your area commonly do when hanging out?

1. Go to movies 66%
2. Play games 29%
3. Play sports 25%

What are some things people in your area commonly do on dates?

1. Go to movies 68%
2. Go out to eat 63%
3. Go to a dance 17%

In your opinion, what makes somebody a "boyfriend," or "girlfriend"?

1. Dating them exclusively 32%
2. They both like each other and go on multiple dates 30%
3. They kiss or hold hands 20%

Has *For the Strength of Youth* helped you in your dating decisions?

Most of you said yes to this question. Here are two sample responses:

"Yes. *For the Strength of Youth* sets the perfect guidelines of what dating is, how it should be, and who you should date."

"Absolutely! It has helped me with wanting to be really careful about physical intimacy."

If you'd like to join our e-mail panel and be part of the next survey, send an e-mail to newera@ldschurch.org letting us know you want to be on our e-mail list. You'll also get a monthly NEMail giving you a glimpse at our latest issue.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT REIER



REBUILD, REPAINT, REDO IN ROSWELL

More than 230 youth from the Roswell Georgia Stake took part in a youth conference over the course of four days. The goals for the conference were to help the young men and women of the stake build integrity, improve face-to-face communication, and do good works within the community.

Many of the youth said their favorite part of the conference was the service day, where they had a chance to care for abandoned babies and do landscaping at an infant shelter, along with hammering, painting, and landscaping at local schools. "Each place looked so much better when we were done," says Mitch Mills, of the Alpharetta Ward. "It made me happy inside that the kids would have a better place to go to school."



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARVIN TEDJAMULIA



WHAT'S UP?

MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE



James 1:5 This is my favorite scripture because it reminds me of how Joseph Smith received the First Vision and the revelations about the Church. He never wavered in his faith in the gospel and the Lord, and I wish I could be like him.

Hailey M., 14, Colorado, USA

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences. Send it to newera@ldschurch.org.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HAILEY M.

"Jesus Christ ministers to, and loves us all, one by one."

Elder Ronald A. Rasband
of the Seventy,
"One by One," *Ensign*,
Nov. 2000, 29.

THE CHURCH IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The first Dominican members were converted while living in the United States. They returned to the Dominican Republic in 1978, and missionaries arrived the following year. In one year, more than 350 converts joined the Church. In 1992, Dominican members watched general conference for the first time via satellite.

The first Church temple in the Caribbean was dedicated in Santo Domingo on September 17, 2000. About 80 Church meetinghouses dot the country.


Here are a few facts about the Church today in the Dominican Republic:

Membership	106,243
Missions	3
Temples	1
Wards & Branches	194
Family History Centers	19

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID LINN

THE SABBATH

A PERSONAL PRIORITY

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light-colored ribbed sweater and a patterned skirt, sitting on a patterned rug and playing a piano. The lighting is warm and focused on her. The piano keys are visible in the lower right corner.

Although she yearned for the challenge of competitive soccer, Lindsey Walch chose to spend her Sundays being with family and doing restful things such as playing hymns on the piano.

When challenges came, these teens in California made a personal decision to keep the Sabbath day holy.

What does the Sabbath day mean to you? In some ways, it's a very simple question with some simple answers. In other ways, however, it can be a difficult and highly personal question, especially if your team is counting on you.

Lindsey Walch and Carson Evers, two 17-year-olds from the Santa Cruz California Stake, had to decide what the Sabbath meant to them. When challenges came, they made their decision and found greater understanding and peace.

A Higher Level

Lindsey has played competitive soccer since she was nine years old. She enjoyed playing at a high level of competition, but at one point she felt she needed a break, so she entered a lower-level league. Eventually, however, she began craving a challenge again, so she tried out for a team at a higher level that played on Sunday.

"While I was trying out, my dad told me, 'You really have to think about this right now,'" she says. "So I was thinking about it." She recognized how the decision to play on Sunday could affect her spirituality. "I knew that I wanted the Church to come first. So I decided that it was really the best thing for me to not play on Sundays."

The decision was difficult because she loves her sport, and like most good athletes, she loves to play with the best in order to stretch herself. In addition, the higher the level you play at, the more likely you are to play in college.

"I was talking to the coach," she says, "and he said that I would have to play on Sundays. I

told him that I couldn't play on the team, and it was really hard for me because I wanted to play at that higher level. And I just felt really bad."

A few weeks later one of Lindsey's friends told her about a high-level team she played on whose coach was more flexible. "I went and talked to him about it," she says, "and he said that I could just play on Saturdays."

Lindsey says that keeping the Sabbath day holy makes a huge difference in her life. "This is a day that Heavenly Father wants us to keep separate, to keep for Him," she says. "I think it calms you down. If I have one day just to rest, it really helps me out."

And there are other blessings. "It's nice just to think," she says, "because sometimes you don't have time to really think about what's going on in your life and what all the stress is and everything. You don't really have time to think about Jesus Christ because you're so worried about other things that are going on right now. I think Sunday really helps me with that."

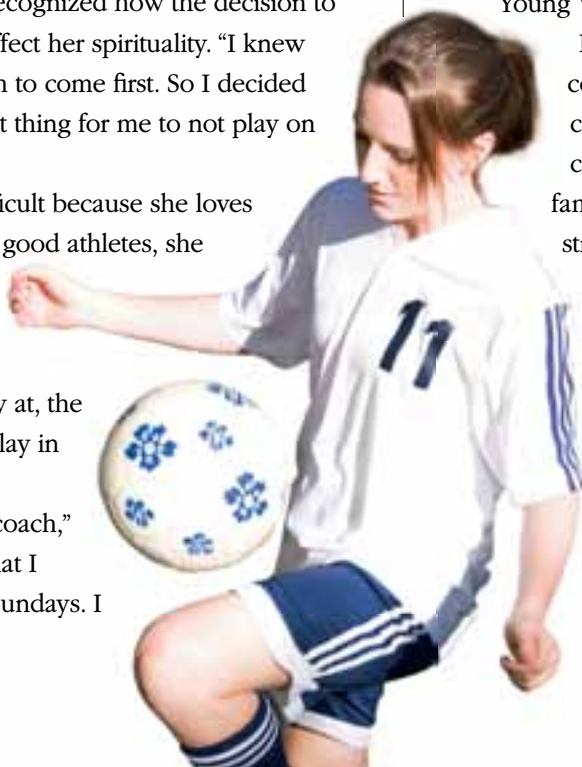
When she was 15, she used her time on Sunday to work on goals for her Personal Progress. "Every Sunday I would do two or three of the goals," she says. "I was able to get done with it a lot faster, and it actually worked out really well." In this way, she met her goal of receiving her Young Womanhood Recognition medallion.

Now that she has earned her award, she continues to use her Sabbath day to draw closer to Heavenly Father by attending church, reading scriptures, being with her family, and resting from school, soccer, and stress.

A Bigger Bounce

Carson's game is basketball, and he loves to play in tournaments. The problem, of course, is that many tournaments include Sunday in their schedules.

"At this one particular tournament we had a chance in the finals, which were on a Sunday," he says. "I was thinking about



going because it was the final big tournament. I said to myself, 'I don't want to give up. I don't think it's right.'"

When he talked to his coach, he felt even more pressure. "He was kind of pushing me to go because we were in the finals of the big tournament."

What made it even more difficult were his own prior choices. "Before then I was kind of used to making exceptions," he says. "I used to go play some on Sunday every once in a while for tournaments. I always played my worst game then. It just never worked out."

But this time he made a decision about what the Sabbath meant to him. "I talked about it with my parents," he says. "They said, 'Whatever you decide.' I always hate that when they make you choose."

Carson also received support for his decision from a friend and teammate, who is also LDS and chooses not to play on Sunday. "It's kind of easy for me, because he is a member," says Carson. "He's like my best friend, and we always play sports together. And it's easier for me because we both don't do

that stuff on Sundays. It's just good having another person there. I'm not the only one."

When Carson made his decision not to play, it had quite an effect on him. "I had this good feeling about it when I went to church that Sunday," he says. "I knew I needed to be there and not at my tournament. That whole day, I just knew—that nice little chill up the spine feeling, you know?"

Attending church is an important part of the Sabbath for Carson, particularly renewing his covenants and remembering the Savior through the sacrament. "It makes me keep the Sabbath day a little more holy," he says. "It helps me think of the Sabbath as a holy day and not just a day of rest."

So what does the Sabbath mean to Carson?

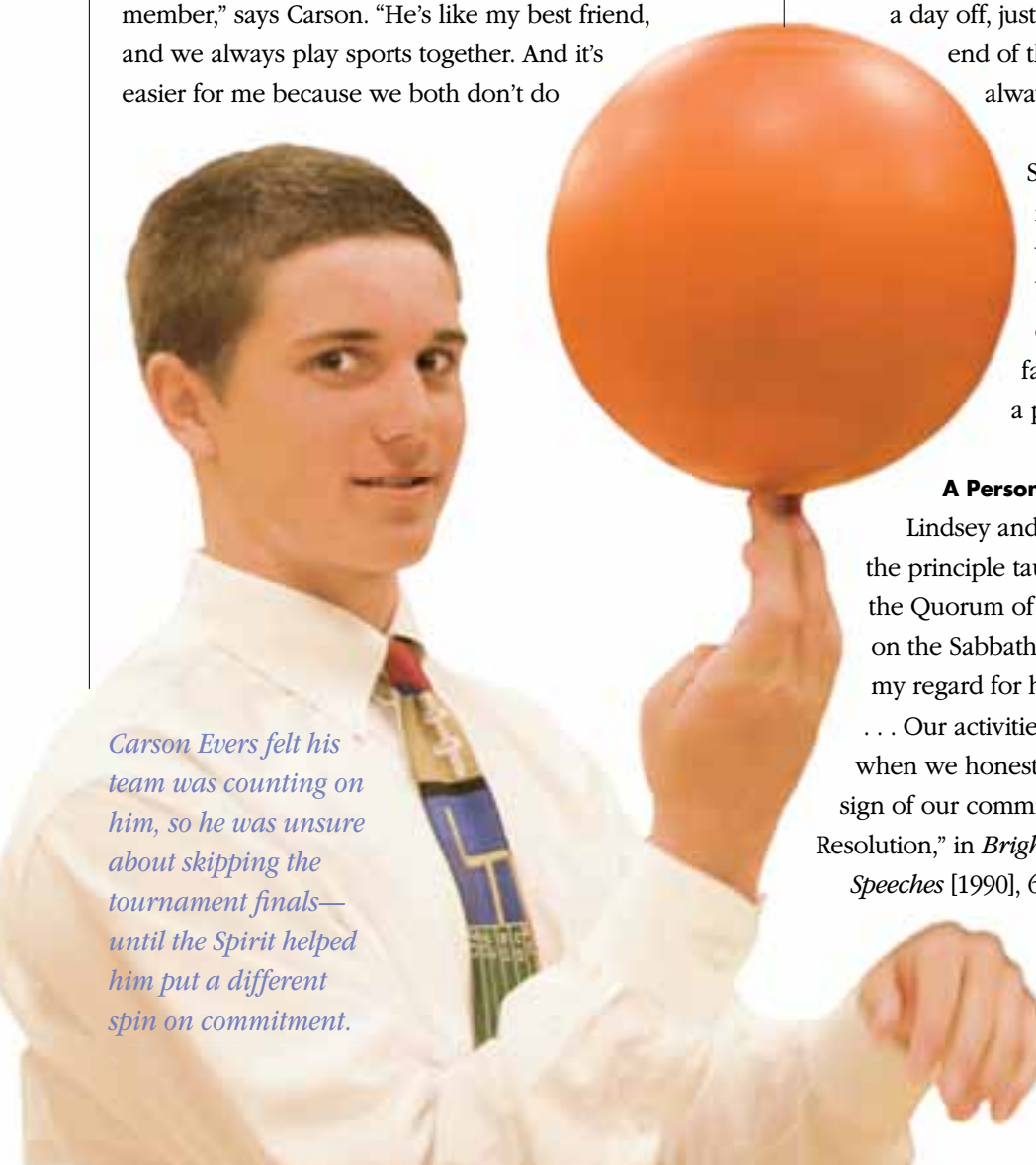
"For me, it's about showing respect for Heavenly Father and what He commanded," he says. "It's resting, taking a day off, just getting back in the groove. By the end of the week I'm burned out; I'm done. I always need a rest."

One of his favorite things about Sunday is spending time with his family. "It's just good to have one day just with my family to get to know them better," he says. "During the week I don't have the time to be with my family as much as I'd like. So Sunday's a pretty good day to be with them."

A Personal Sign

Lindsey and Carson have come to understand the principle taught by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "My behavior on the Sabbath constitutes my sign to the Lord of my regard for him and for my covenants with him. . . . Our activities on the Sabbath will be appropriate when we honestly consider them to be our personal sign of our commitment to the Lord" ("Reflection and Resolution," in *Brigham Young University 1989–90 Speeches* [1990], 6).

For these teens, committing to make the Sabbath a personal priority has made all the difference. **NE**



Carson Evers felt his team was counting on him, so he was unsure about skipping the tournament finals—until the Spirit helped him put a different spin on commitment.



CLIMBING BACK UP

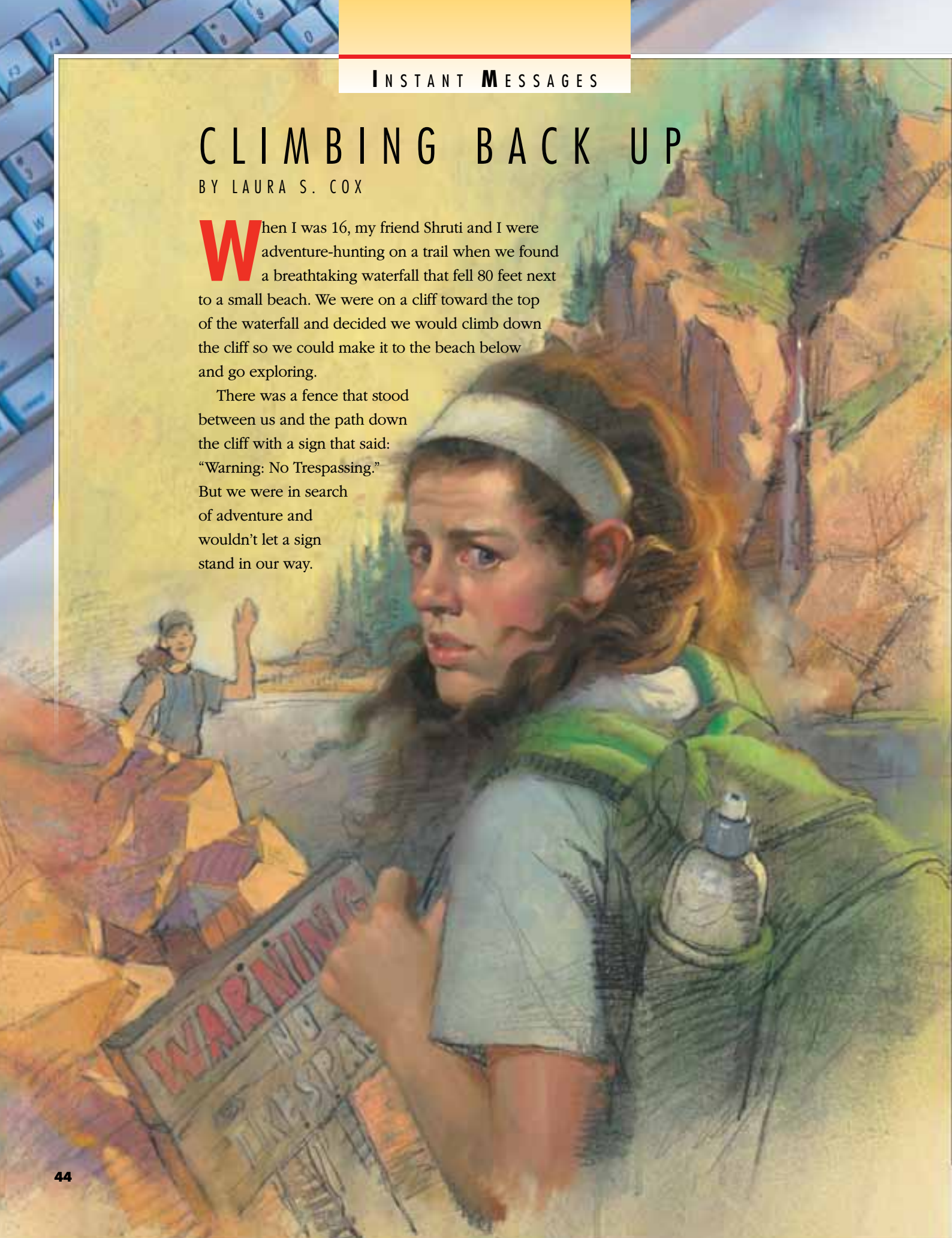
BY LAURA S. COX

When I was 16, my friend Shruti and I were adventure-hunting on a trail when we found a breathtaking waterfall that fell 80 feet next to a small beach. We were on a cliff toward the top of the waterfall and decided we would climb down the cliff so we could make it to the beach below and go exploring.

There was a fence that stood between us and the path down the cliff with a sign that said:

“Warning: No Trespassing.”

But we were in search of adventure and wouldn’t let a sign stand in our way.



We climbed over the fence and slowly started down the cliff. The descent was exhilarating. When we finally got to the bottom of the waterfall, we were excited.

However, it didn't take us long to figure out what we had done. We were at the bottom of the cliff with the tide coming in. Climbing back up looked much more difficult than coming down had been. At any time the tide could come in and carry us out to sea.

When we were at the top of the cliff we had choices. We could have kept walking on the trail, we could have gone back to the car, and we could have simply enjoyed the view. But because we chose to ignore the warnings, now our only choices were to be washed out to sea or to climb back up the steep cliff.

Our decisions in life affect us the same way. When we choose the right, we have more choices and more freedom. But when we make choices contrary to the will of the Lord, our options become more and more limited until we are enslaved by our choices and lose our freedom.

Shruti and I did what we should all do when we've fallen into this trap. We knelt down and confessed to Heavenly Father that we had made a wrong choice and that we needed His help to fix it.

The climb back to the top of the cliff was slow and hard, but with the Lord's help we made it. From this experience I learned that all of our choices have consequences, but Heavenly Father is willing to help us if we turn to Him. **NE**

REMEMBERING THE PROPHET

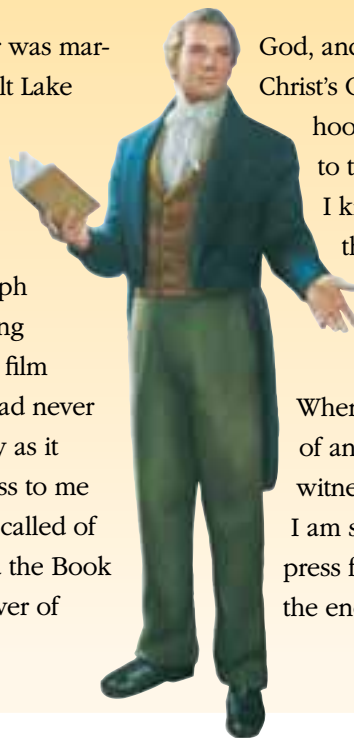
BY JACOB WORTH GARNER

When my sister was married in the Salt Lake Temple,

I went to see the movie *Joseph Smith: The Prophet of the Restoration* in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building nearby. I had seen this film before, but the Spirit had never come to me as strongly as it did then. It bore witness to me that Joseph Smith was called of God, that he translated the Book of Mormon by the power of

God, and that through him Jesus Christ's Church and the priesthood keys were restored to the earth. In that instant I knew without a doubt that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true Church on this earth.

Whenever I have had doubts of any kind, I remember this witness I have received, and I am strengthened so I can press forward and endure to the end. **NE**



IN TIMES OF NEED

BY VICTORIA FOX

Three years ago, my mom was diagnosed with lung cancer, and after eight months she died. The years after her death were really hard, but looking back, I discovered that I am much stronger than I thought.

What makes the experience so amazing is that I know I could never have done this on my own. When I trusted Christ and put my faith in Him, He lifted me up to a higher place than I ever imagined possible.

He's always been there, though I had my moments of doubt. But there were other moments—pure, sweet, quiet moments—when I felt Him there right beside me. It was like the light

switch was flicked on and I realized His presence in my life. Those moments gave me the strength and courage to move on when the lights went off again. And as I trust in Him, those sweet moments happen more and more often.

I love Him. I know He is my Savior and Redeemer. I know that He is always there, and He will never desert me. In my times of need, and in my day-to-day life, He will always be near. I have only to trust in Him and try my best to keep His commandments. And, ultimately, it is through Christ's Atonement that I can see Him, and my mom, once again. **NE**

PRAYERFUL PERSONAL PROGRESS

BY YÉSICA ANABELLE BENAVIDEZ

When I changed schools, I became good friends with a girl who was not a member of the Church. But after being my friend for a couple of years, she started to feel jealous of the Church because I was always going to activities and didn't have a lot of time to spend with her. The situation became worse and worse—even though I really wanted to be her friend.

One day while I was working on Personal Progress, I started to work on an experience that included praying regularly for two weeks. One of the things I decided to pray for



was that my friend would respect me and understand that the Church was very important to me. Two weeks later, when the experience was completed, I kept praying for the same thing.

Later when I was reviewing my Personal Progress, I was reminded of my experience with prayer. As I thought more about it, I realized that Heavenly Father had answered my prayers about my friend. My friend had totally changed; she no longer thought about me the way she had, and she had started to think about the Church in a positive way.

I got very emotional because I now had a testimony of sincere prayer. I know my Father in Heaven changed my friend's heart. I also know that He will help us and will work miracles if we do our part. **NE**

UNDESERVING OF HIS LOVE

BY HEATHER WALKER

I was taking the sacrament one day when I suddenly felt the Lord's love rest upon me, comforting and wonderful. I didn't know why it came to me right then, but I thought it was the greatest feeling in the world. It was complete joy and love.

As I sat there, I started to think of how undeserving I was of His love, and I wondered why I was so blessed. I hadn't done everything right, but still I was forgiven, time after time. I was blessed beyond measure, and I wondered how I could deserve such treatment.

In my life, I have been taught about Christ. He is perfect and deserved everything. Instead, he received the bitter cup. He went below all things and suffered so much. He did not deserve it, but He accepted it. He suffered so I, who felt so undeserving, could receive countless blessings, and so I could return to live with God. I receive so many blessings through and because of Christ. His love is so strong He was willing to suffer for me and for everyone. I am grateful for Him and his sacrifice. **NE**

INSTANT MESSAGES features personal experiences, insights into favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please e-mail it to

newera@ldschurch.org

or send it to:

New Era, Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Please limit submissions to 400 words or less. They may be edited for length and clarity.

NewEra.Ids.org

What's New?

Log on to the New Era online and find:

- A new song to download: "Tender Mercies of the Lord."
- A new survey.
- Mormonad videos.
- And the usual good stuff like cartoons, Q&A, downloadable Mormonads, and links to great articles.

TOP FIVE

Since we included the results of our dating survey in the What's Up? section on page 38, we thought we'd include the top five articles we've run about **dating** or the lessons people learn about dating. (Go to the *New Era* online and look these up in past issues.)

"Courting Disaster," Feb. 1998

Q&A (dating before 16) Feb. 2001

"My Worst Date Ever," May 1998

"Speaking of Kissing," by Bruce Monson, June 2001

"Just Hanging Out," by Brad Wilcox, Aug. 2001

RESOURCE LINKS

If teachers need additional articles to use in preparing lessons for Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood, look online under Lesson Helps for suggestions.

BEHIND THE SCENES

There's a little more to the story about McKay Hatch and his No

Cussing Club (page

33). McKay's father, Brent, sent us some information about his son and the club he started. The club really took off but not without some kids making fun of McKay and giving him a hard time. One guy who started out hassling McKay eventually changed his way of talking, joined the club, and became one of the officers.

We asked McKay's father to take a photo of his son in front of the lockers at school. We knew the club's shirt was orange, but we didn't know the school's lockers would be orange as well. So the photo turned out to be all one bright color.

Fiction

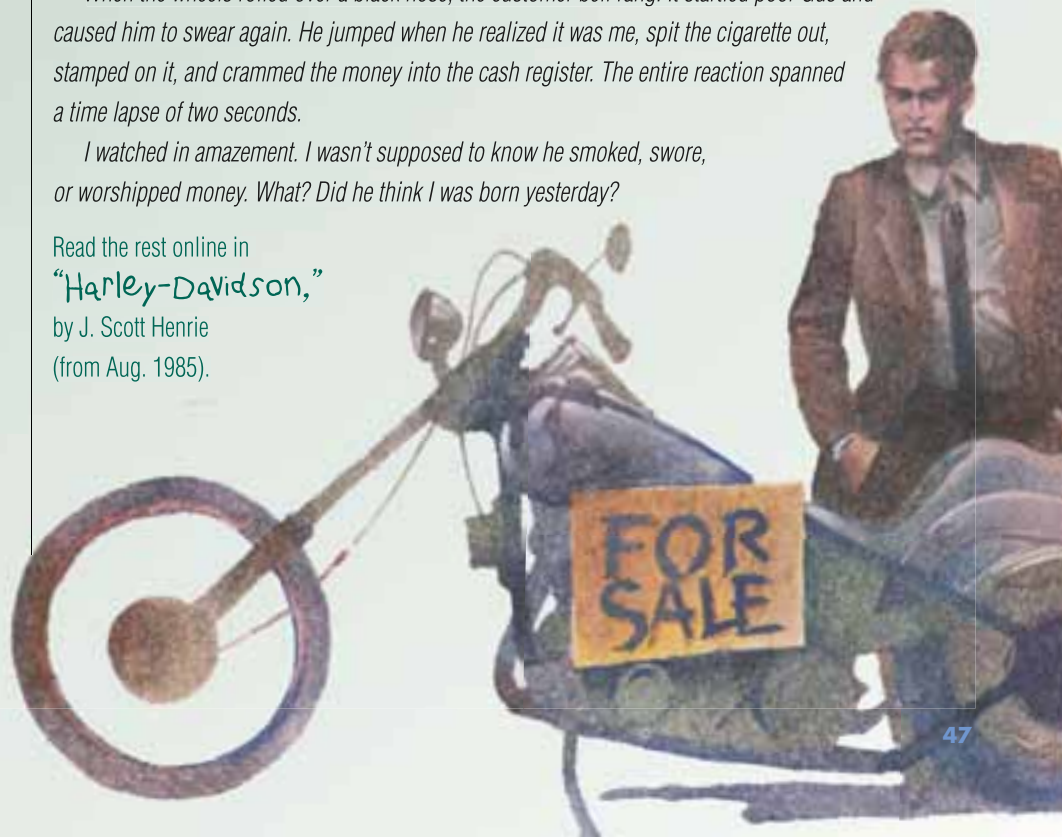
The day I received my mission call, I drove up to Gus's gas station. I saw him standing by the cash register counting a wad of money. He scratched his beard and pulled back his long hair as he puffed a cigarette. He looked perturbed, as if he hadn't made quite enough cash that day. I read his lips as he recounted the money and watched his mouth form numbers and then a four-letter word.

When the wheels rolled over a black hose, the customer bell rang. It startled poor Gus and caused him to swear again. He jumped when he realized it was me, spit the cigarette out, stamped on it, and crammed the money into the cash register. The entire reaction spanned a time lapse of two seconds.

I watched in amazement. I wasn't supposed to know he smoked, swore, or worshipped money. What? Did he think I was born yesterday?

Read the rest online in
"Harley-Davidson,"

by J. Scott Henrie
(from Aug. 1985).



WORTH OF WOMANHOOD

Thank you for your articles on the worth of womanhood in the November 2008 issue ("True Beauty," "The Message: The Sanctity of Womanhood"). I had been having a rough time with feeling my own individual worth before I read this issue, but when I read those articles they provided a spiritual boost. In "True Beauty" Elder Robbins said that "we have far more control over our happiness than we sometimes think we do." This gave me reason to work toward being more optimistic. Thank you for the suggestions.

Felicia J., Idaho

Thank you for putting "True Beauty" in the November 2008 *New Era*. I have been struggling with my self-image lately, and I desperately wanted to know how I could be attractive to others. When I read this article, I was enlightened and renewed. It helped me to see that being beautiful is not just about cosmetics and clothes, and it also helped me to realize that my inner beauty is what counts the most.

Karissa S., Idaho

HELP FOR PROBLEMS

I have had a lot of problems, but reading the *New Era* stories and thinking about what they mean helps me overcome them. It helps me realize my worth and come closer to understanding the scriptures.

Richeward H., Samoa

FEELING THE SPIRIT

Thank you for putting together a magazine for the youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The

I am grateful that the New Era encourages us to make good choices and stand up for what we know is right.

articles are often very good, and I love reading the cartoons. I can learn a lot from the articles. When I was waiting to do baptisms for the dead, I picked up a *New Era* in the temple, and it helped me to feel the Spirit.

Jacob W., Ohio

I just wanted to write and say how much I enjoy having the *New Era* around the house. It is uplifting to read, and there are always good articles. My Sunday School teacher challenges us to read it every month, and it makes me feel good to read it.

Noah B., Utah

STANDING STRONG

I frequently read the *New Era* and am always encouraged with the stories and messages in it. I especially enjoyed the October 2008 issue, "You Can Stand Strong." I believe that a lot of the problems in our world today exist because of the many ways youth are lowering their standards and values. I am grateful that the *New Era* encourages us to make good choices and stand up for what we know is right. Reading the magazine helps me remember the things I learn from my parents and Church leaders and makes me want to be a good example to those around me.

Jesse G., Utah

The article "A Night to Remember" (Feb. 2007) helped me through an experience with standards. I was invited to a party by one of my non-member friends. I was presented with a choice to either wear something inappropriate or dress in a way that a Latter-day Saint should. This article came to mind, and without hesitation I made the decision to wear what I knew was modest.

Roechelle S., Samoa

To read more letters, go to newera.lds.org.

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THE PIANO

BY SEAN JOHNSON

Exotic black elephant
hunkered down in the living room corner,
snoring blues scales and Beethoven sonatas.

Jukebox of jazz.
Hummer of hymns.
Ton of tunes.

My fingers stroll along
the promenade of your keys,
ambling in and out melodies—

now “Waltz in G,”
now Chopin,
now “Chopsticks.”

No matter how badly I play,
you can’t help but show
your gap-toothed grin, from high C to low.

No wonder they call you grand.



COMING NEXT MONTH

- *Getting a real-life education.*
- *Five easy ways to make school hard and five hard ways to make school easy.*
- *Find out about more than one way to learn.*
- *Taking seminary the extra mile.*
- *How to go about getting a great job.*
- *Valuable lessons to learn while still in high school.*
- *What to do to prepare to leave home.*

Just a few of the articles in the upcoming special issue on education in April 2009.

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