



THE
New Era

M A Y

2 0 0 7

COVER STORY:
GOING FOR THE
GOALS, P. 18

AARONIC
PRIESTHOOD:
THE UNSEEN
POWER, P. 2

LEARNING FROM
YOUR PATRIARCHAL
BLESSING, P. 14

WHY I BELIEVE
THE BOOK OF
MORMON, P. 28

BEING A
BROTHER, P. 30

**The New Era Magazine
Volume 37, Number 5
May 2007**

*Official monthly publication
for youth of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints*

The *New Era* can be found
in the Gospel Library at
www.lds.org.

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

E-mail Address:
newera@ldschurch.org

To Submit Material:
Please e-mail or send stories,
articles, photos, poems, and
ideas to the address above.
For return, include a
self-addressed, stamped
envelope.

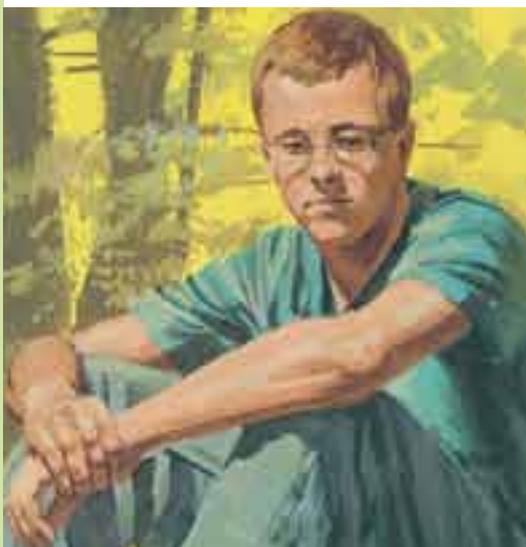
To Subscribe:
By phone: Call 1-800-537-
5971 to order using Visa,
MasterCard, Discover Card,
or American Express. Online:
Go to www.ldsatalog.com.
By mail: Send \$8 U.S.
check or money order to
Distribution Services,
P.O. Box 26368,
Salt Lake City, UT
84126-0368, USA.

To Change Address:
Send old and new address
information to Distribution
Services at the address
above. Please allow 60
days for changes to take
effect.

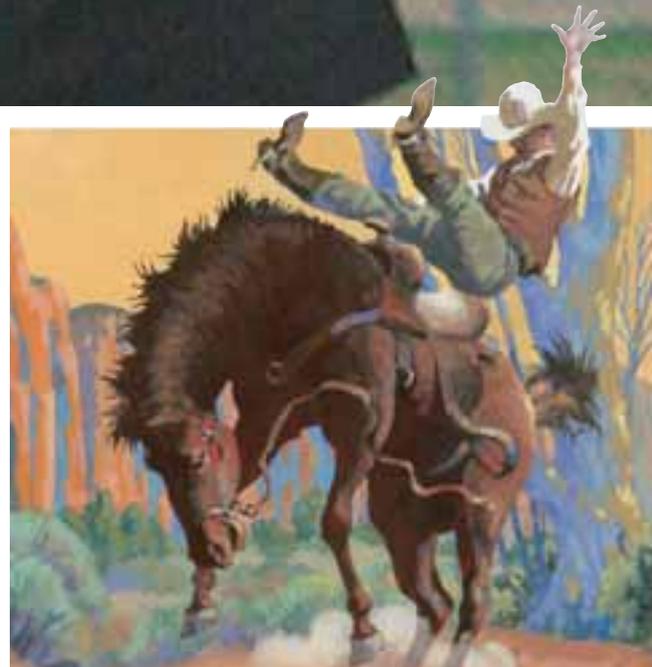
Cover: *Samantha
Southwick of Grand
Blanc, Michigan, found
her sport. See "Play It
Again, Sam," on p. 18.*

*Cover photography:
Janet Thomas (front) and
Bob Stoner (back)*

Succeeding
in a sport
takes
determination to
keep on trying.
See "Play It Again,
Sam," p. 18.



Ponder, Pray, Perform, Persevere, p. 40



Injured and Alone, p. 34

**The Message:
The Unseen Power** 2
President Boyd K. Packer
*The priesthood can be a guiding
and protecting power in your life.*

Knock Again 8
Sedley Parkinson
*Dad and I were the home teachers.
Would this family ever let us in?*

**Idea List:
Priesthood Power** 11
*Here are some ways to support those
who hold the Aaronic Priesthood.*

The Worth of Weeds 12
Riley M. Lorimer
*It took distance to see how beautiful
something as simple as a weed could be.*

**Q&A:
Questions and Answers** 14
*I just received my patriarchal blessing.
What do I need to learn from it?*

**New Era Poster:
Sharing Time** 17

Play It Again, Sam 18
Janet Thomas
*Samantha Southwick learned to
succeed from her failures.*

"This Is Ace" 22
Ace Stryker
*It was just a simple prayer, but the
answer came quickly.*

Right on Key 24
Danielle Nye Poulter
*William Joseph chose not to use his talent
to promote unworthy entertainment.*

**Why I Believe the
Book of Mormon** 28
Don Searle
*It's not enough to know in your mind.
You need to know in your heart.*

Brothers 30
Richard M. Romney
*Matt and Mark Fletcher are great
examples of what brothers should be.*

Injured and Alone 34
Marli Walker
*A family story about prayer continues
to be an inspiration.*

The Extra Smile 37

What's Up? 38

**Ponder, Pray, Perform,
Persevere** 40
Elder W. Craig Zwick
*When we're creating a life plan for
ourselves, we need to allow the Lord
to be the architect of that plan.*

Instant Messages 44
*Feeding the hungry; choosing the Lord's
way; keeping the Sabbath holy; using the
scriptures to get along with a boss.*

What's in It for You 47

We've Got Mail 48

**Poem:
Escape** 49
Sherrie Carter

Photo 49
Steve Tregear

Text and visual material in the New Era may be copied for incidental, noncommercial church or home use. Visual material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the credit line with the artwork. Copyright questions should be addressed to Intellectual Property Office, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150, USA; e-mail: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org.

The First Presidency:

Gordon B. Hinckley,
Thomas S. Monson,
James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve:

Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry,
Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H.
Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,
Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G.
Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey
R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring,
Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A.
Bednar

Editor: Jay E. Jensen

Advisers: Gary J. Coleman,
Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Gerald N.
Lund, W. Douglas Shumway

Managing Director:

David L. Frischknecht

Editorial Director:

Victor D. Cave

Senior Editor: Larry Hiller

Graphics Director:

Allan R. Loyborg

Managing Editor:

Richard M. Romney

Assistant Managing Editor:

Janet Thomas

Associate Editors:

David A. Edwards,

Paul VanDenBerghe

Editorial Staff: Susan Barrett,

Ryan Carr, Monica Dickinson,

Jenifer L. Greenwood, R. Val

Johnson, Adam C. Olson

Publications Assistant:

Sally J. Odekirk

Editorial Intern:

Patricia Auxier

Marketing Manager:

Larry Hiller

Managing Art Director:

M. M. Kawasaki

Art Director: Brent Christison

Senior Designer: Fay P. Andrus

Design and Production Staff:

Collette Nebeker Aune,

Eric P. Johnsen, Jane Ann

Peters, Randall J. Pixton, Scott

Van Kampen

Printing Director:

Craig K. Sedgwick

Distribution Director:

Randy J. Benson

© 2007 by Intellectual

Reserve, Inc. All rights

reserved. Periodicals Postage

Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah.

The *New Era* (ISSN 0164-5285)

is published monthly by The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints, 50 E. North Temple

St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220,

USA.

POSTMASTER: Send address

changes to Distribution Services,

Church Magazines, P.O. Box

26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-

0368, USA.

Canada Post Information:

Publication Agreement

#40017431.

The Unseen POWER

BY PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can feel it, and you can see the results of it.

I want to tell you about the unseen power of the Aaronic Priesthood. Some think that unless a power is visible it cannot be real. I think I can convince you otherwise. Do you remember when you foolishly put your finger in that light socket? While you did not see exactly what happened, surely you felt it!

No one has ever seen electricity, not even a scientist with the finest instruments. However, like you they have felt it. And we can see the results of it. We can measure it, control it, and produce light, heat, and power. No one questions that it is real simply because he or she cannot see it.

Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can feel it, and you can see the results of it. The priesthood can be a guiding and protecting power in your life. Let me give you an example.

After President Wilford Woodruff joined the Church he desired to serve a mission.

“I was but a Teacher,” he wrote, “and it is not a Teacher’s office to go abroad and preach. I dared not tell any of the authorities of the Church that I wanted to preach, lest

they might think I was seeking for an office.”¹

He prayed to the Lord, and without disclosing his desire to any others, he was ordained a priest and sent on a mission. He and his companion went to the Arkansas Territory.

They struggled through 100 miles of alligator-infested swamps, wet, muddy, and tired. Brother Woodruff developed a sharp pain in his knee and could go no further. His companion left him sitting on a log and went home. Brother Woodruff knelt down in the mud and prayed for help. He was healed and continued his mission alone.

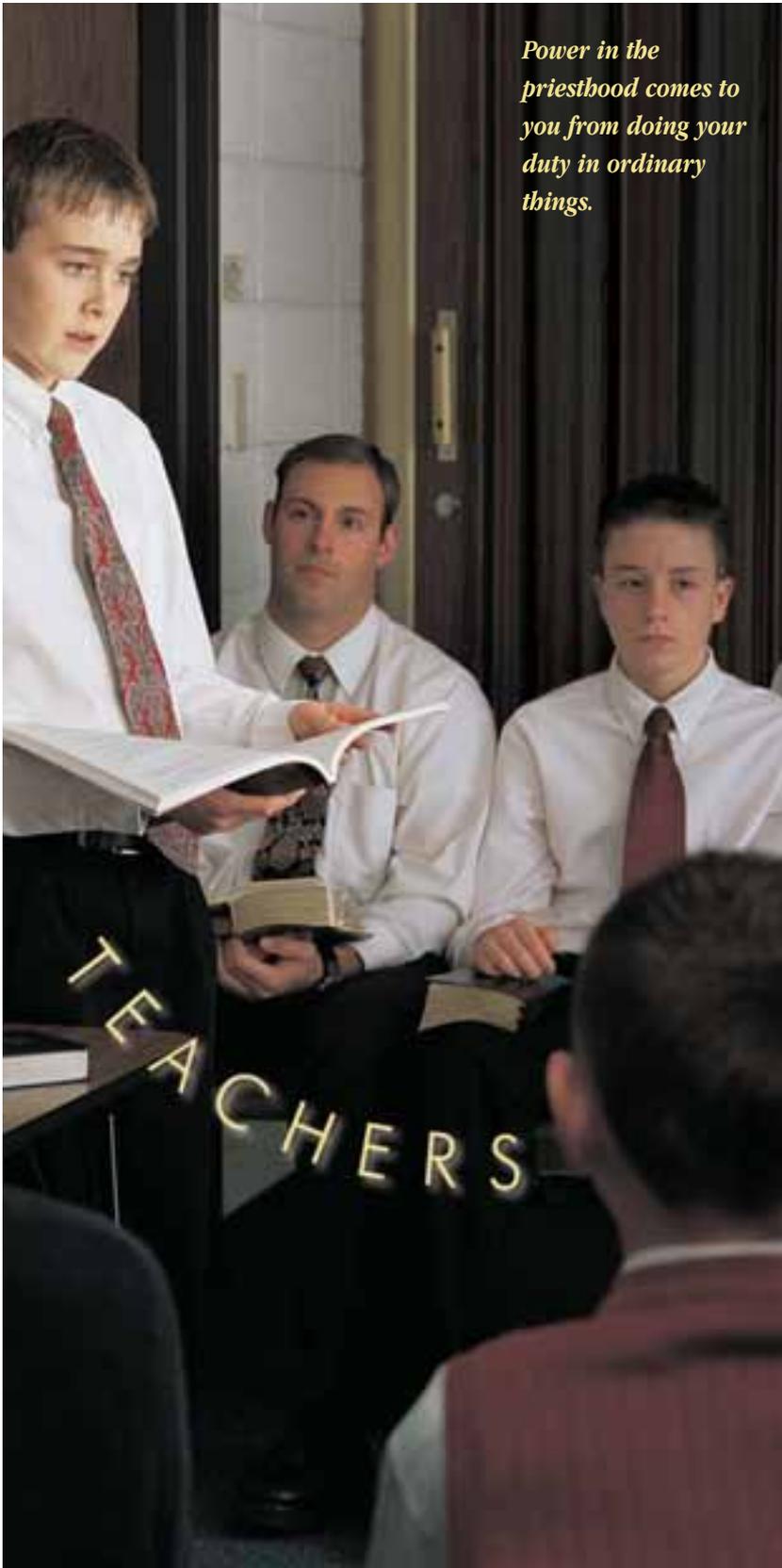
Three days later he arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, weary, hungry, and very muddy. He went to the largest inn and asked for something to eat and for a place to sleep, although he had no money to pay for either.

When the innkeeper found he was a preacher, he laughed and decided to have some fun with him. He offered Brother Woodruff a meal if he would preach to his friends.

A large audience of the rich and fashionable people of Memphis gathered and were



DEACONS



*Power in the
priesthood comes to
you from doing your
duty in ordinary
things.*

quite amused by this mud-stained missionary.

None would sing or pray, so Brother Woodruff did both. He knelt before them and begged the Lord to give him His Spirit and to show him the hearts of the people. And the Spirit came! Brother Woodruff preached with great power. He was able to reveal the secret deeds of those who came to ridicule him.

When he was finished, no one laughed at this humble holder of the Aaronic Priesthood. Thereafter he was treated with kindness.²

He was under the guiding, protecting power of his Aaronic Priesthood. The same power can be with you as well.

Let me teach you some very basic things about the Aaronic Priesthood.

It “is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations” (D&C 107:13).

The Aaronic Priesthood goes by other names as well. Let me list them and tell you what they mean.

The Lesser Priesthood

First, the Aaronic Priesthood is sometimes called the lesser priesthood.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances” (D&C 107:14).

This means that the higher priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, always presides over the Aaronic, or the lesser, Priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, or the presiding priest, of the Aaronic Priesthood. But Moses presided over Aaron because Moses held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The fact that it is called the lesser priesthood does not diminish at all the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord said it is necessary to the Melchizedek Priesthood. (See D&C 84:29.) The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood have great spiritual importance.

I have, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, passed the sacrament. I assure you I have felt honored and humbled beyond expression to do what some might consider a routine task.

The Levitical Priesthood

The Aaronic Priesthood is also called the Levitical Priesthood. The word *Levitical* comes from the name Levi, one of the 12 sons of Israel. Moses and Aaron, who were brothers, were Levites.

Anciently they looked forward to the Atonement of Christ through the ceremony of the sacrifice. We look back to that same event through the ordinance of the sacrament.

Both sacrifice before, and the sacrament afterward, are centered in Christ, the shedding of His blood, and the Atonement He made for our sins. Both then and now the authority to perform these ordinances belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood.

This is indeed a sacred responsibility and includes you in a brotherhood with those ancient servants of the Lord. It is no wonder that we feel so humble when we participate in the ordinances assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood.

The Preparatory Priesthood

Finally, the Aaronic Priesthood is referred to as the preparatory priesthood. This, too, is a proper title because the Aaronic Priesthood prepares young men to hold the higher priesthood, for missions, and for temple marriage.

I have thought it very symbolic that John the Baptist, a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, prepared the way for the coming of the Lord in ancient times. He came also to restore the Aaronic Priesthood to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to prepare for the coming of the higher priesthood. The Lord Himself said that there “hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11).

You would do well to watch your fathers and your leaders, to study how the Melchizedek Priesthood works. You are preparing to join the elders, high priests, and patriarchs and to serve as missionaries, quorum leaders, bishops, stake leaders, and as fathers of families.

A few of you deacons, teachers, and priests will one day preside over the Church as seventies, apostles, and prophets. You must be prepared.

Priesthood Principles

Let me teach you some important principles of the priesthood. When you receive the Aaronic Priesthood, you receive all of it. There are three kinds of authority relating to your priesthood. You should understand them.

1. There is the priesthood itself. The ordination you received carries with it the overall authority to perform the ordinances and to possess the power of the Aaronic Priesthood.

2. There are offices within the priesthood. Each has different privileges. Three of them—deacon, teacher, and priest—may be conferred upon you when you are in your teenage years. The fourth office, that of bishop, may come to you when you are mature and worthy to become a high priest as well.

The deacon is to watch over the Church as a standing minister (see D&C 84:111; D&C 20:57–59).

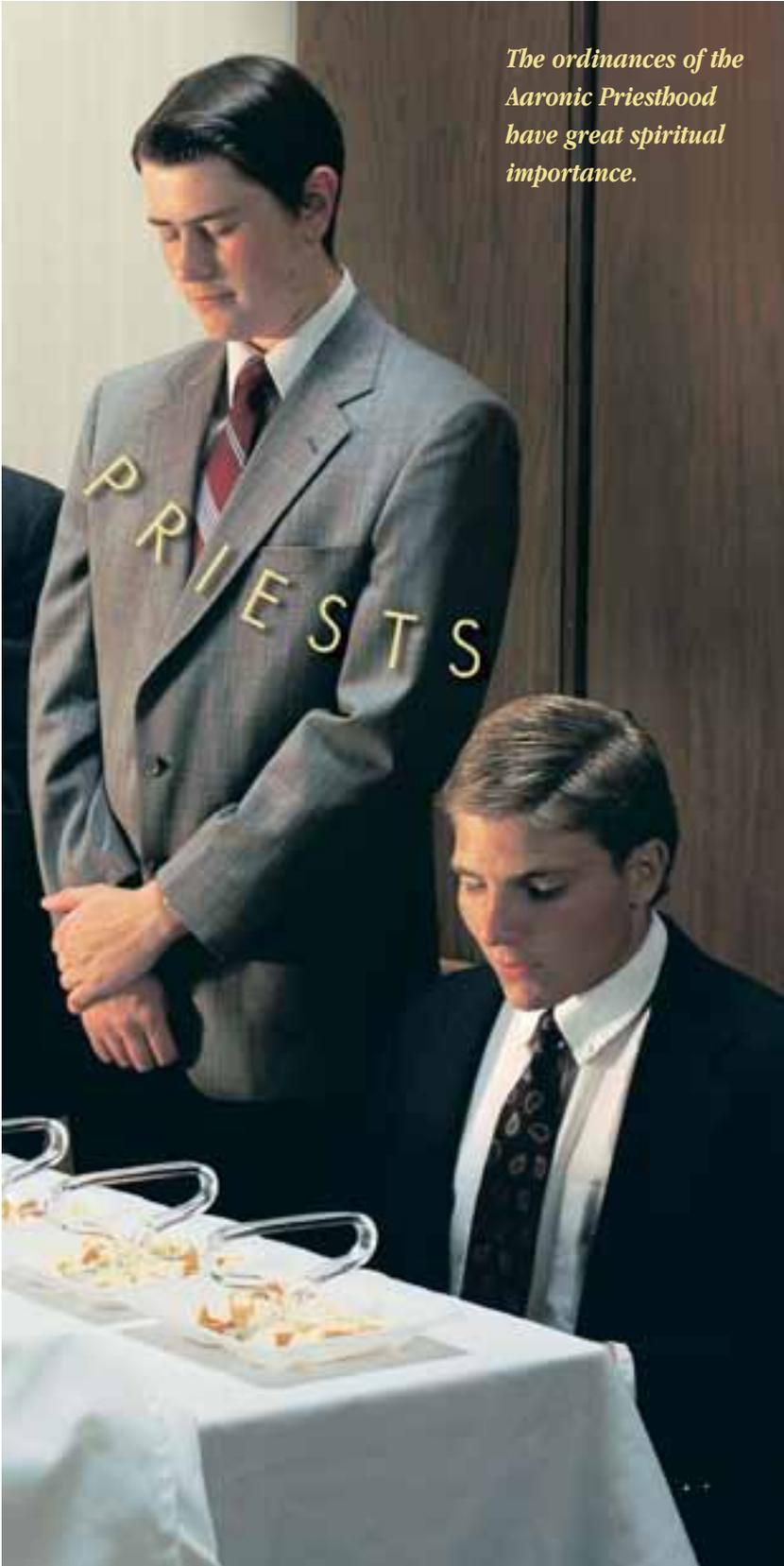
The teacher is to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them” (D&C 20:53).

The priest is to “preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the house of each member” (D&C 20:46–47). The bishop is the president of the priests quorum (see D&C 107:87–88).

You always hold one of these offices. When you receive the next higher office, you still retain the authority of the first. For instance, when you become a priest, you still have authority to do all that you did as a deacon and teacher. Even when you receive the higher priesthood, you keep all of the authority of, and, with proper authorization, can act in the offices of, the lesser priesthood.

The offices are a part of the priesthood, but the priesthood is greater than any of the offices within it.

The priesthood is yours forever unless you disqualify



The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood have great spiritual importance.

yourself through transgression. When you are active and faithful, you begin to understand the power of the priesthood.

3. There is one other kind of authority that comes to you if you are set apart as a quorum president. You then are given the keys of authority for that presidency.

You receive the priesthood, and the office you hold within the priesthood (deacon, teacher, and priest), by ordination. You receive the keys of presidency by setting apart.

When you become a deacon, your father may, and generally should, ordain you; or another who holds the proper priesthood could do it.

If you are called as president of your quorum, your bishopric would set you apart. You can receive the keys of presidency only from those who have received them. Unless your father is the bishop, he would not have those keys.

These keys of presidency are temporary. The priesthood, and the offices within it, are permanent.

One more thing: You can receive the priesthood only from one who has the authority and “it is known to the church that he has authority” (D&C 42:11).

The priesthood cannot be conferred like a diploma. It cannot be handed to you as a certificate. It cannot be delivered to you as a message or sent to you in a letter. It comes only by proper ordination. An authorized holder of the priesthood has to be there. He must place his hands upon your head and ordain you.

That is one reason why the General Authorities travel so much—to convey the keys of priesthood authority. Every stake president everywhere in the world has received his authority under the hands of

one of the presiding brethren of the Church. There has never been one exception.

Remember these things. The priesthood is very, very precious to the Lord. He is very careful about how it is conferred and by whom. It is never done in secret.

I have told you how the authority is given to you. The power you receive will depend on what you do with this sacred, unseen gift.

Your authority comes through your ordination; your power comes through obedience and worthiness.

Power in the priesthood comes from doing your duty in ordinary things: attending meetings, accepting assignments, reading the scriptures, keeping the Word of Wisdom.

President Woodruff said: “I traveled thousands of miles and preached the Gospel as a Priest, and, as I have said to congregations before, the Lord sustained me and made manifest His power in the defense of my life as much while I held that office as He has done while I have held the office of an Apostle. The Lord sustains any man that holds a portion of the Priesthood, whether he is a Priest, an Elder, a Seventy, or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling and does his duty.”³

John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood with these words:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels” (D&C 13).

You—our deacons, teachers, and priests—have been given sacred authority. May the angels minister unto you. May the power of the priesthood be upon you, our beloved young brethren, and upon your sons throughout the generations ahead. I bear witness that the gospel is true, that the priesthood holds great power, a guiding, protecting power for those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. **NE**

From an October 1981 general conference address.

NOTES

1. *Leaves from My Journal* (1882), 8.
2. See *Leaves from My Journal*, 16–18.
3. *Millennial Star*, Sept. 28, 1905, 610.

For more on this topic, look up “Aaronic Priesthood” in the Bible Dictionary.

WORTH CELEBRATING

Many occasions are important to remember, and one of special significance to Latter-day Saint teenagers is May 15, 1829. On that day, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed on them the Aaronic Priesthood.

Today, all over the world, thousands of deacons, teachers, and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood and thousands of Beehives, Mia Maids, and Laurels in Young Women are still blessed by the restoration of that priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood trains young men in leadership, gospel knowledge, and priesthood responsibilities. Young Women receive similar opportunities to learn and grow and to meet with and work with the Young Men. Service given by both organizations blesses the lives of thousands more.

The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood came in response to prayer. Joseph and Oliver were translating the Book of Mormon when they read a passage in 3 Nephi on the subject of baptism. They went out into the woods and knelt down, asking Heavenly Father for greater understanding. Oliver describes what happened: “On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance” (JS—H 1:71, note).

He ordained them, saying, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” (JS—H 1:69; see also D&C 13).

This May, take time to share with us what the Aaronic Priesthood means to you. You could tell us what you do to honor the priesthood, what you did to commemorate its restoration, or how Young Men and Young Women give service to others where you live. Write to us at

newera@ldschurch.org.

KNOCK AGAIN

BY SEDLEY PARKINSON

The Browns knew how to get rid of home teachers, but my dad taught me why we couldn't give up.

I was surprised when the door actually opened! A boy poked his head out, glanced down the street, and then at us. "Please come in," he said.

When I was 17, I was assigned as my father's home teaching companion. We visited a few families in our ward and gave them a message from the bishop or read an article from a Church magazine. Home teaching was actually not so bad. Some of our families really appreciated our company.

We visited an older couple who always looked forward to our coming. They were talkative and gave us cookies when we were there.

Another of our families was actively involved at church. They were easy to home teach. The TV would be turned off, and the family always gathered around, sitting quietly while my dad and I gave our message.

Our ward was spread out over a large area of farms and small communities outside of Pocatello, Idaho. Many of the people had chosen the semi-country life to escape from the city. They liked being away from the traffic noise. Some simply wanted to get away from society. The Browns, a family newly assigned to us, fit right into that last category. As I look back, I wonder at the patience my father showed.

It was my job to set up our home teach-

ing appointments. Brother Brown answered the phone and told me they were too busy this month and to maybe call back later if I wanted to. The same results occurred four weeks later on my second attempt. My father decided we needed a more direct approach.

The next month came, and after visiting our other families, we drove straight to the Browns' house. A pickup truck and a car were in the driveway. Our printout showed a family of three: a father, a mother, and a 9-year-old boy. We went up to the door and knocked. No answer.

A month passed and again it was time for home teaching. Visiting our regulars went smoothly, and then it was time for our not-so-regular.

"Do they really want us to come?" I asked.

"We don't know for sure," was the answer from my senior companion. "They haven't told us to go away, and we haven't done anything they could get mad at, have we? We can't give up so soon."

We drove to their house. This time the cars were switched. They had to be home. There were only two drivers. We went up to the door and knocked. Silence.



“Knock again,” said my dad. I heard some noise inside the house, but the door stood still. From the corner of my eye, I saw motion. I turned to the window and, for a split second, locked eye contact with a brown-haired child, who disappeared. We left. It seemed apparent that this family did not want us around. I did not know if I wanted to be around them. I suggested to my father that we report back to the high priests group leader that this family did not want home teachers and call it good.

“Hm.” My dad was not a man of many words, but I knew well the meaning of this. We would be going back.

The next month came all too soon. It was, again, time to do our home teaching. Our visits with the regular families quickly came and went. I then found myself standing in front of the door with the two cars in the driveway. My dad motioned me, and I timidly knocked. No answer. “There, that’s that. They won’t answer, Dad. Let’s go home.” A nod from my senior companion prompted me to knock again. I reluctantly did so, keeping my thoughts to myself. Then it opened; not the door, but a window. A gruff male voice asked what we wanted. A waft of cigarette smoke followed his question. I was ready to bolt. My dad smiled. He told the voice who we were and why we were there. He explained that we wanted to get to know this family and become friends. Then he asked if we could come back next month. That was all he said, nothing more. Hesitating, the faceless voice behind the window agreed and we left.

“He knew exactly who we were,” my dad said as we drove away. “He gets new home teachers every couple of years. He just knows how to get rid of us.”

The next month was much the same—the same voice from the window, the same brief conversation, and the same hesitation to let us come again next month.

Our third month was not the same, however. The pickup was not in the driveway. We went up to the door and knocked. We both looked toward the window in anticipation. To my surprise, the door opened! That same child I had seen earlier poked his head out, glanced down the street, and then at us. “Please, come in,” he said.

A lady was standing in the front room. “Thank you for coming, we only have a few minutes,” she said. “Do you know when Cub Scouts meet?”

“We will find out for you, Sister Brown,” my dad answered.

This little boy who had opened the door for us began attending Cub Scouts each week. He and his mom even started coming to church on Sundays. I remember some of the families my father and I visited as home teachers better than others, but I will never forget the Browns.

The child was staring at me. I was in shock now that we were standing in the house and not on the porch. Had he said something? “Can you baptize me?” he repeated, with a sincere ring in his voice.

His smile was contagious, but all I could say was “What?”

“He wants to become a member of the Church like his cousins in town. He has been watching you come to the door each month. I told him you could probably baptize him.”

“Can you baptize me into the Church?” he asked a third time.

I was beginning to recover. “Yes, uh, I think so.”

My dad helped me out. “Let’s talk to the bishop,” he said. “He can tell us what you need to do to get ready. Can both of you and Brother Brown come to church on Sunday?”

That was our whole visit. Then we were gone. I contemplated the entire situation

during the quiet drive home. Being a home teacher was something more than cookies and pleasant conversations. Being a home teacher could be seriously important. Why had I suggested we give up on this family? The example my father gave me was beyond my years. I was experiencing guilty exhilaration, guilt because of my murmuring and exhilaration because of the unexpected results of our visit. I glanced at my dad.

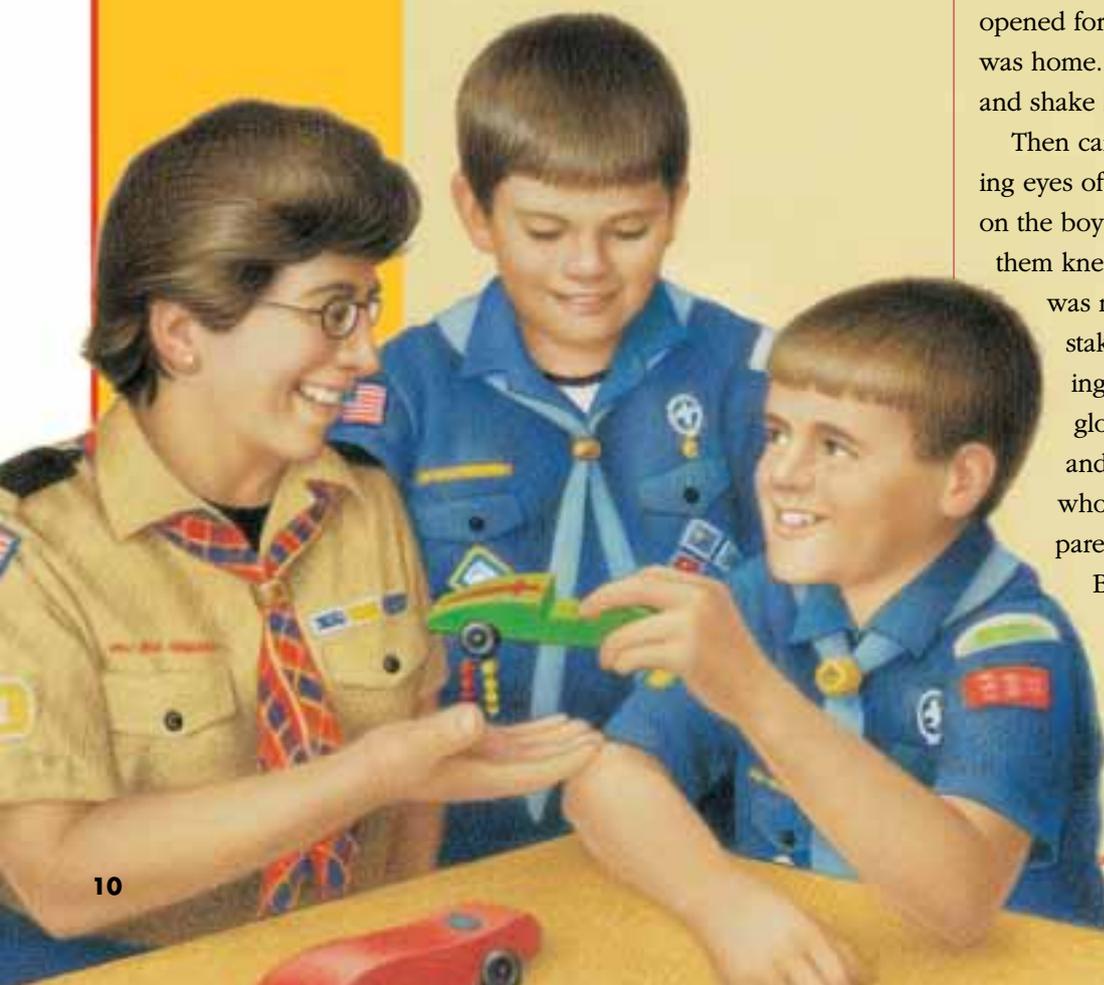
“You did good,” he said, reading my mind. “Let’s watch for them on Sunday.”

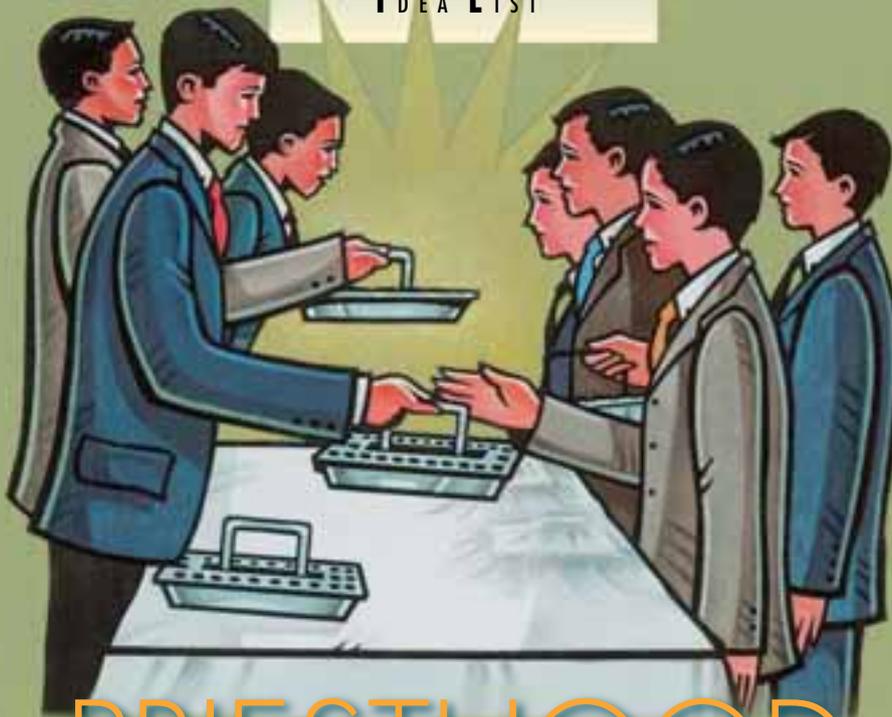
I have always cherished my memories of home teaching with my father. I can remember some of the families we taught better than others. I will never forget the Browns.

We saw the mom and the boy at church that next Sunday and many other Sundays. We saw the boy at Cub Scouts the next week and many other weeks. I’m sure some deep conversations were held at the Browns’ house, because the door always opened for us, even when Brother Brown was home. He even learned how to smile and shake hands.

Then came the baptism. I felt the smiling eyes of the city cousins looking down on the boy and me. The bishop had let them kneel by the baptismal font, which was recessed into the floor at the stake center. A deep, peaceful feeling swept over me as this wet, glowing boy and I stepped up and out. I almost felt that it was I who had been baptized. The boy’s parents were beaming. I saw Sister Brown brush a tear from her cheek. I looked up at my father; he nodded his approval.

Warmth grew inside me as I realized the wisdom of His patience, His patience for this little family and for me. **NE**





W **PRIESTHOOD** P **POWER**

When young men are ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood, they agree to take upon themselves sacred responsibilities. The youth of the Port Coquitlam Ward in British Columbia, Canada, share some suggestions to help young men magnify their priesthood callings and to help young women be supportive.

Young Men

- Understand your calling and make the effort to learn more about it. Be aware that when you perform your priesthood duties, you represent the Lord.
- Stay worthy by studying the scriptures, having regular personal prayer, living the gospel, and following the counsel of your parents and leaders. Keep yourself morally and physically clean.
- Perform your duties reverently. You show reverence through your appearance (including your clothing and hairstyle), the language you use, and the way you behave.
- Show a willingness to fulfill your responsibilities promptly and cheerfully. Be well prepared. For example, familiarize yourself with the sacrament prayers.
- Perform regular acts of service, including your home

teaching assignments, and always be a good example to younger children and siblings.

- Prepare to serve a full-time mission by accompanying the missionaries to teaching appointments and by fellowshipping members.

Young Women

- Be a good example. Dress modestly, use clean language, and act appropriately. Encourage the young men to have high standards of dress and behavior as well.
- Show respect by being reverent when the young men are performing their duties.
- Express your appreciation for them and for the reverent way they perform their responsibilities.
- Encourage them to attend Church activities, and be a good friend to them both in and out of church.
- Take an interest in their priesthood callings by asking them about their responsibilities.
- Keep relationships with young men from becoming too serious. Encourage them to prepare for missionary service.
- Uplift and strengthen the Aaronic Priesthood holders by bearing your testimony. You can also include your testimony in letters to the young men from your ward who are serving full-time missions. **NE**

BY RILEY M. LORIMER

THE WORTH OF WEEDS

Sometimes to really see yourself, you first have to see others more clearly.

The fresh mountain air cooled my lungs as I laced up my boots. Next to me, my horse whinnied impatiently. “I know, girl. I’m coming,” I said soothingly, as I stroked her reddish-brown mane.

I finished fastening the saddle, mounted, and was off. As I rode up the mountain, I thought of all the troubles that were weighing on my mind. I was a junior in high school—worried about friends, sports, final exams, and where to apply for college. Hundreds of thoughts swirled around in my brain. There were simply too many problems; I would never be able to solve them all. That’s really why I had come to the mountains. I needed to escape for a while.

After a time, I arrived at my favorite spot—a small out-of-the-way clearing that overlooks a mountain valley. I stopped my horse and said a small prayer in my heart.

“Heavenly Father,” I prayed, “I am so tired and so overwhelmed. Please give me some comfort. I just need a little peace.”

The answer came almost immediately. “Look up.”

As I raised my eyes, I was met with a scene of such astonishing beauty that I could scarcely breathe. All of my problems seemed to melt away as I soaked up the view. The farms in the valley were laid out like squares in a patchwork quilt, and on that day in May many of the fields had come to life in brilliant shades of green. What struck me most, however, was not the green. Throughout the fields of green were generous smatterings of the most vibrant yellow I had ever seen. The effect was mesmerizing, and it sparked my curiosity because I knew that there weren’t any local crops of that color.

I rode faster on the way down, eager to get to the valley floor and discover the source of that captivating yellow. When I reached the fields, I was astonished to find that the beauty that had so enchanted me didn’t come from anything exotic.

The fields were filled with simple, unassuming dandelions.

I picked one small dandelion and brought it close to my nose. It was amazing to me how much difference perspective had made. From high above, I was quite taken in by the beauty of something that most people on the valley floor would call a weed. I would never have recognized its worth if I had not been prompted to look up and find the beauty in it.

I realized that I sometimes treat people the way most people treat the dandelion I held in my hand. I decide that they aren’t really worth my notice, without pausing to get to know them better or to think of how greatly the Lord values them. God knew that the dandelion was beautiful in its simplicity, even when most people couldn’t see it.

It occurred to me that I was much like the dandelion. Small and imperfect—but important and cherished in the eyes of my Heavenly Father. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1926–2004) once said that “sometimes with smudges on our cheeks, dirt on our hands, and shoes untied, stammeringly but smilingly we present God with a dandelion—as if it were an orchid or a rose! If for now the dandelion is the best we have to offer, He receives it, knowing what we may later place on the altar” (*That Ye May Believe* [1992], 100).

Since that day I have never looked at a dandelion the same way. When I look at those little yellow flowers, I don’t see something to be stomped on, plucked up, or sneered at. I see effortless charm and loveliness. I will be forever grateful for the lesson I learned on that day—never judge someone or something until you have tried to see them from the Lord’s point of view, because the Lord, from His perspective high above mine, has a far better view and can much more easily judge the worth of flowers and of souls. **NE**

Did you know you can read the *New Era* online? Go to the Gospel Library at www.lds.org.



Q & A

*“I just received my patriarchal blessing.
What do I need to learn from it?”*

NEW ERA

Congratulations on receiving your patriarchal blessing. It is like scripture from Heavenly Father to you. There is a lot you can learn from it now, but as the months and years go by, continue to read it, because it can help you in different ways at different times. One day when you’re going through a trial, for instance, it might give you some comfort. Another time it might guide you in making an important decision. Phrases from it can even come to your mind when you need them.

One way to study your patriarchal blessing is to look for warnings, counsel, your strengths, important roles, and promises of blessings. God sees you as you really are and as you can become. He is aware of the challenges you will have and may give you warnings to guide you through some of those challenges. He may also give counsel to help you. If you are humble enough to follow that counsel, you will one day see His wisdom in giving it to you. If your patriarchal blessing mentions some future blessings or events in your life, ponder and pray about what you will need to do to prepare for those events.

■ **As you read your patriarchal blessing, look for warnings, counsel, and future blessings.**

■ **All blessings come by obedience to laws, so live worthy to receive the promised blessings.**

■ **A patriarchal blessing doesn’t describe your whole life. If it doesn’t mention something important to you, that doesn’t mean you can’t accomplish it.**

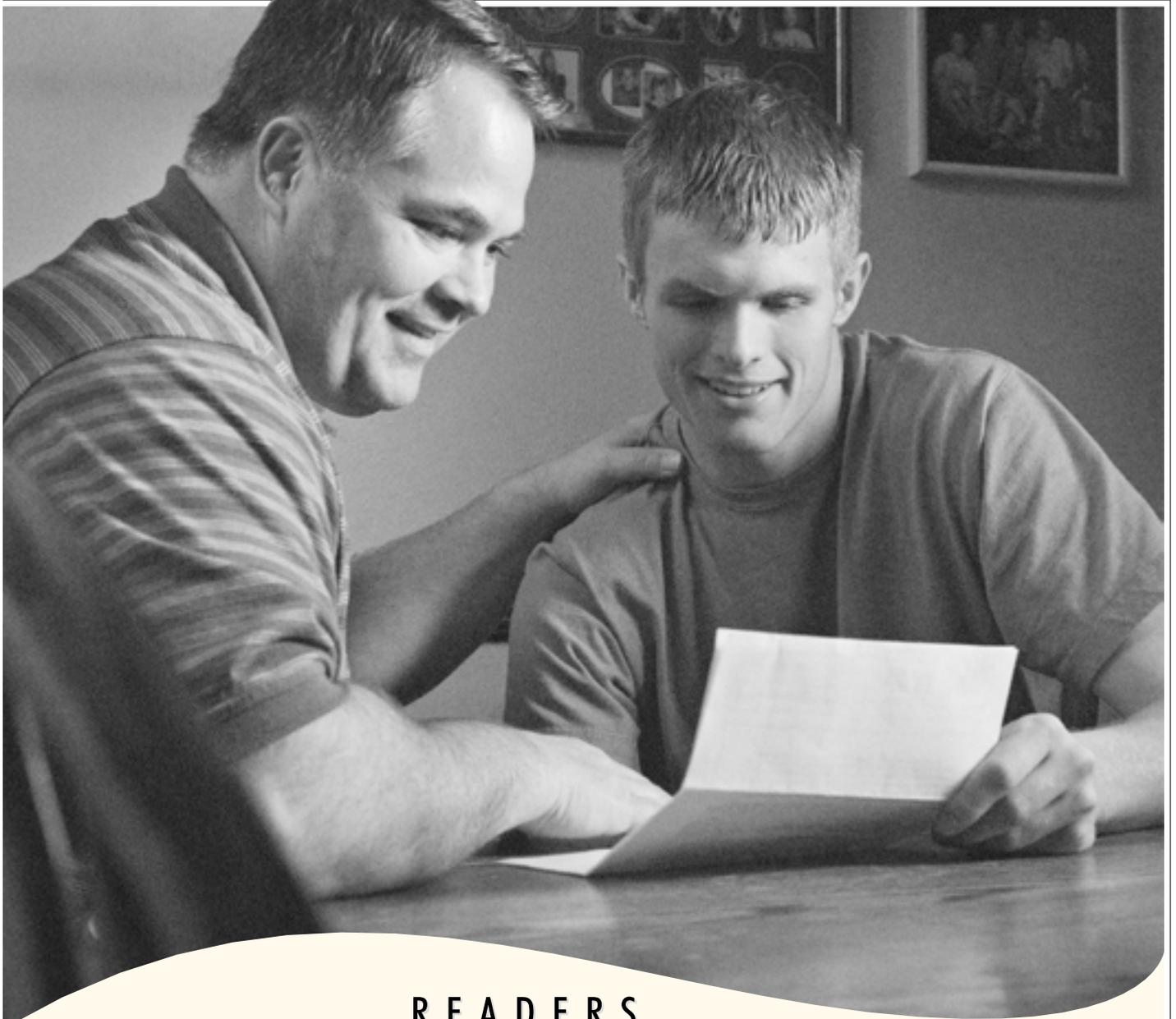
■ **Read your patriarchal blessing regularly throughout your life because it can become more meaningful as you grow older.**

■ **A patriarchal blessing is sacred and not meant to be shared with just anyone.**

Blessings promised in your patriarchal blessing will come after your obedience (see D&C 130:21). So just because your patriarchal blessing says you will receive a certain blessing doesn’t mean that blessing will come to you no matter what. You still need to live worthy to receive it.

As you study your patriarchal blessing, keep in mind that it doesn’t describe your whole life. It is a “[paragraph] from the book of your possibilities.”¹ Even if it doesn’t mention something important to you—like a mission or temple marriage—you can still accomplish these righteous goals. Also, remember that it extends beyond this life, not being limited to mortality.

You might also be wondering what it means to be of the house of Israel. It means you are a descendant of Abraham and have certain responsibilities and blessings. Abraham chapter 2 explains some of those. The tribes of Israel were anciently given certain responsibilities. Some of them carry forward to today. The tribe of Ephraim, for example, has the primary responsibility for leading the Lord’s work in our day.



READERS

Finally, keep in mind that a patriarchal blessing is sacred and personal. Do not share it with others, except perhaps immediate family members.

Like the scriptures, your patriarchal blessing is another way the Lord can guide you. So read it regularly, ponder it, and pray about what it means to you. If you live worthy of the blessings it promises, they will all come to pass in this life or the next. **NE**

NOTE

1. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1975), 117.



This blessing is a map of how your life can be if you are worthy. It isn't a fortune; you have to have a desire and be willing to work for

the sacred promises contained inside. God knows your strengths; magnify them. He knows your weaknesses; heed His warnings. Go through and indentify specific blessings and warnings He has given; write them down, and refer to them often. Your blessing will guide you through the darkest of times to the joy and eternal happiness that only the Lord can provide. Above all,

read it and realize how much He loves you.

Rachael R., 19, Tasmania, Australia



Your patriarchal blessing is like the scriptures: every time you read it, there's a different meaning. It does not necessarily tell you what you're

supposed to do, but it's like a compass and points you in the right direction. As long as you read it often and truly reflect upon it, the Lord will bless you and guide you to the path of eternal happiness.

Brianne W., 17, Colorado



Reading your blessing can give you eternal perspective and help you see some of the great things that will happen in your life. You can learn of the great love Heavenly Father has for you. Your blessing can bring you the comfort that all trials will pass. It can also help you make decisions for your life. You can learn to trust the Lord.

Shalyn S., 16, California



When I received my patriarchal blessing, I was so excited. There are so many great things in my blessing that I can achieve. I think of my blessing as guidelines for my life.

It tells me what I need to improve on and what I'll accomplish by following those guidelines.

Hilary T., Utah

Patriarchal blessings are given to us from God. From them we can receive warnings, counsel, comfort, and other guidance our Heavenly Father has reason to place before us to help us along the path of making it back to Him. Many of life's important, as well as difficult, decisions are made easier when you have a patriarchal blessing as a guide. As you read your blessing, ponder the words given to you through the power of the priesthood. Just the fact that you have a blessing shows the great love and care our Heavenly Father has for each of us.

Tyler G., 16, Utah



Your patriarchal blessing is a map so you can better prepare yourself. Start preparing now for what it says you could do, like a mission, temple marriage, family, and so on. The best thing

to do is listen to what Heavenly Father is saying in your blessing and do your best to be prepared. Also, a patriarchal blessing is between you and Heavenly Father and should be private. Don't go around telling everyone what blessings you are going to get or what great things you are going to do. You can discuss it with your parents and pray for understanding.

Diedra H., 13, Tennessee



“Receive a patriarchal blessing. Study it carefully and regard it as personal scripture to you—for that is what it is. A patriarchal blessing is the inspired and prophetic statement of your life's mission together with blessings, cautions, and admonitions as the patriarch may be prompted to give. . . . Receive your patriarchal blessing under the influence of fasting and prayer, and then read it regularly that you may know God's will for you.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “To the Youth of the Noble Birthright,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 44.

From a patriarchal blessing I learn that I am a child of God. It is Heavenly Father's blueprint for my life. If I follow it, it will help guide me back to Him. It tells me what Heavenly Father expects from me, and it motivates me to live for the promised blessings. It also teaches me a valuable lesson that even though many blessing are promised, for me to receive them I must be willing to work according to Heavenly Father's will.

Elicia M., 14, West Indies



Your blessing will tell you talents you possess, characteristics you have, and it will give you specific warnings. Before you read it, you should pray for the Spirit to help you understand what

to do. Read it often. I read parts of my patriarchal blessing every week. Your blessing might tell you what qualities you had in the premortal existence, and it might promise blessings that lie in the future. With this knowledge you will better understand yourself and be able to prepare more effectively. The most important thing is to keep yourself worthy so you will be able to receive those blessings.

Colin M., 18, Arizona

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

NEXT QUESTION

“My friends like to hang out at a coffee house. Is it OK if I go with them and just drink decaffeinated coffee?”

SEND US YOUR ANSWER, along with your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo, if you are under 18) to:

New Era, Q&A, 6/07

50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420

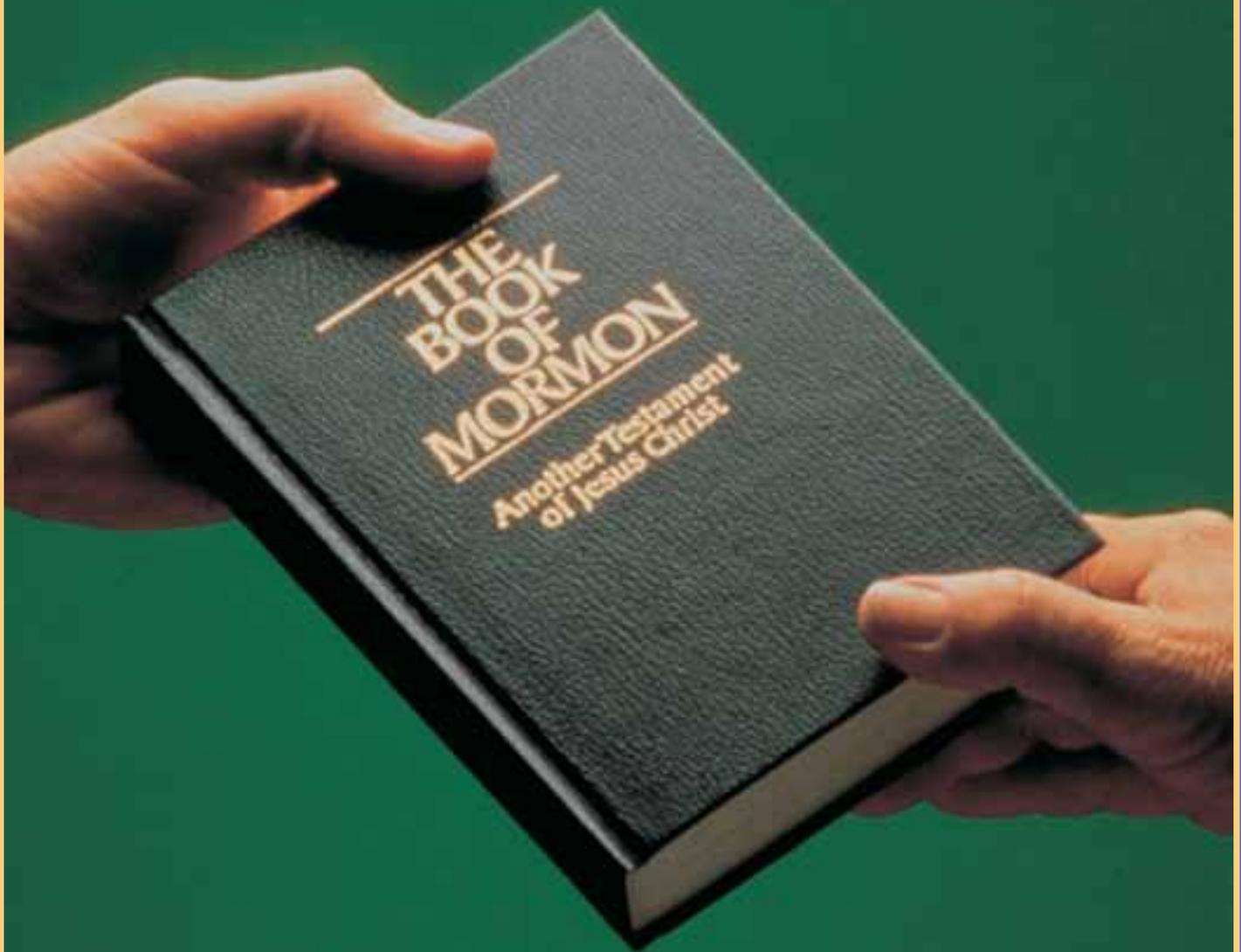
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by June 15, 2007.

For more, read President James E. Faust's article “Your Patriarchal Blessing,” *New Era*, Nov. 2005, p. 4.

SHARING TIME



(For ideas, see *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 5.)



PLAY IT AGAIN, SAMM

Playing goalie was one way Sam learned how to set goals.



When Sam (short for Samantha) Southwick started high school in Grand Blanc, Michigan, she wanted to be involved. She knew that the secret to having

a lot of fun in high school is to participate. She thought it would be either in cheerleading or playing on a sports team, but her plans didn't work out easily. "I tried out for basketball. I tried out for cheerleading. I don't know how many times I tried out for cheerleading, but finally I just stopped. Then I tried out for volleyball. It was fun, but I didn't even make the first cut."

Even in those moments of disappointment, Sam was a little bit proud of herself for following through and not quitting. But which was her sport? Where was she going to succeed? Repeatedly not making the team could have made her want to quit trying. But she kept on. Only now can she look back and see clearly what she needed to understand. "When you go into something with a positive attitude

and the will to do it, then it actually becomes a lot easier. I was going through some of this for the wrong reasons."

In Sam's junior year, some of her friends were playing lacrosse. Because she was always willing to try something new, she started learning about the game and began the conditioning. "My friends helped me, and I've loved lacrosse ever since. We joke that it's soccer in the air."

Even after making the lacrosse team, Sam still had some learning to do. At first, she wanted to play offense. "It's really fun to shoot on the goal and to make it. Everyone gets really excited. Offense is the glory place." But her team needed her on defense—in the goal in fact.

Playing goalie is a scary position. To block a shot, she would get hit hard by a small rubber ball. Sam freely admits that she wasn't

Sam had to brave hard shots from opposing offensive players. But success was sweet after learning how to deal with defeat.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHRIS SOUTHWICK

Sam's lacrosse team became some of her best friends. Mixing school friends in with her Church friends gave her a great deal of satisfaction as both sets learned to appreciate the good they found in each other. (Above right) Sam with her dad, Chris. (Below right) In the excitement of playing, Sam has come to appreciate the fun and friendship of being on a team as much as winning.



very aggressive when she started out. "And on defense you're trying to make sure the other team does not score, so you feel worried and responsible."

Sam can still give you a blow-by-blow account of her first game as the goalie. "I was standing there thinking, What have I gotten myself into? Then they came down, running straight at me. Our defense didn't really know what they were doing because we were new. I just stood there gripping my stick so hard. I was saying to myself, Just move, just move. It was really nerve-racking. I don't think I blocked the first shot, but after that it got easier. I learned that when those balls hit you during the game, it doesn't bother you because you're just so intense. But after the game, you really feel it. You get hit everywhere."

The team tied that first game. But two games later, after their first loss, Sam took it hard. She appreciated her team's being supportive because they knew she felt responsible. "Losing takes an emotional toll on the goalie," says Sam.

How does she deal with the pressure? Sam says, "I've actually said prayers in my head. I'll ask myself, 'Why am I praying about a sport when there are other things you should be praying for?' But when I'm in those moments, I know that God really will help me."

Losing is not fun, but Sam has learned that the old saying "Winning isn't everything," is actually true. Her philosophy is that sports are for fun and for learning how to deal with other people. "You learn how to communicate better with people and how to talk with them and get along. What I have learned playing goalie has helped me at my job." Sam works as a waitress and sometimes has to deal with difficult people.

Even when you lose, Sam says, you can still feel great. "If you lose and you played as well as you can, you feel good because you feel like you actually did something. Winning looks good on your record, but it's all about what you learn and how to deal with it."

For Sam, high school isn't just about sports. She likes going to school and learning.

She confesses she actually likes chemistry, something she won't say out loud in the halls. And she loves starting her day in seminary. When her friends ask her what time she gets up and they hear her say, "Oh, 4:30 or 5:00," they're surprised. But for Sam, early-morning seminary is the best. "There are about eight different high schools in the Fenton Ward, so my Church friends are all spread out. When we get together, it's fun. We joke and laugh and have a good time. By the time I get to school, I'm wide awake.

"I'm actually trying to bring my school friends and Church friends together," she says. "At first they were hesitant about meeting, but now my school friends tell me that they like my friends. They like the wholesomeness about us. They just like the things we talk about."

During one game, Sam looked up into the stands and saw her parents sitting by her Young Women leader with two of her best friends from school and one of her friends from the ward. They were laughing, and Sam remembers being amazed and pleased. "The next day at school, that's all my friends could talk about—how nice this girl was and how she didn't use inappropriate language and didn't talk about vulgar things. I'm glad my Church friends can leave an impression like that. They'll remember that."

The hardest thing Sam had to learn in lacrosse was to cradle the ball, rocking the stick so the ball stays in the head, while running without dropping it. "The movement of your hands contradict each other, but after you get used to it, it just flows." For Sam, her experiences dealing positively with her friends, her schoolwork, and her sports have started to flow. Looking to the future, she won't drop the ball. **NE**

Find advice on self-confidence in Q&A, *New Era*, Mar. 1996, p. 17.



SAMANTHA'S PEBBLES

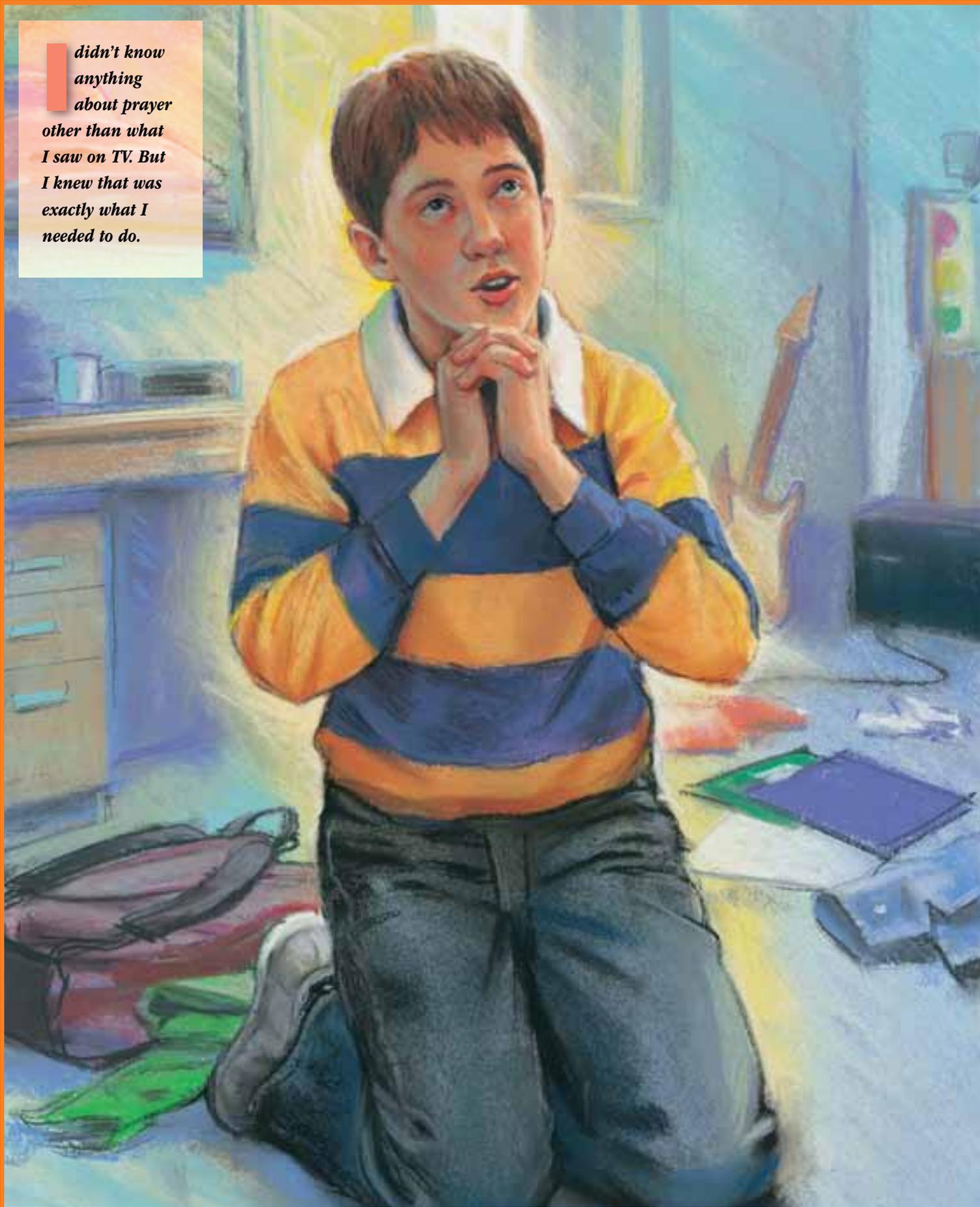
Sam's dad, Chris, has some precious possessions—six ordinary grey pebbles given to him by his daughter when she was little. Sam tells the story:

"I was about seven when my dad was going on a business trip for three days. He didn't travel often, and I was nervous that while he was gone he would forget us. I wanted to give him something to remind him of his wife, my two older brothers, me, and even our dog. I don't know what made me get the pebbles. I guess since I was in Primary, they taught me about the brother of Jared and his stones.

"I went outside and picked up six pebbles. I cleaned them off and put them in a paper towel. I took them upstairs and told him not to forget us while he was gone. I told him that each one was for a family member. It's a good thing I gave him six, because my youngest sister was born after that, and she took over the dog's pebble. I didn't think he would keep them forever. Now he talks about them all the time. He was excited that his little daughter understood the importance of families and how the Church is based on family. He still keeps them in his trinket box and takes them with him whenever he has to travel. I didn't know that as a seven-year-old I would have such an impact. It makes me feel kind of special as well."



I didn't know anything about prayer other than what I saw on TV. But I knew that was exactly what I needed to do.



"THIS IS ACE"

BY ACE STRYKER

When I was seven, I learned one of the greatest lessons of my life. We were studying the environment in school. We discussed pollution and ways we could help decrease its terrible effects on the world. We talked about the oceans and how, even in little ways, we could change some of the things we do at home to make the world safer for all creatures.

I was still pretty young then, but I really took what we had been learning to heart. To me, the environment is a very important thing. The more I learned about why we should conserve our natural resources, the more I wanted everyone else to know the same things and think they were just as important as I did. I became a seven-year-old warrior fighting in the everyday battle to save Mother Nature.

One day, I came home from school having just finished drinking a soda. We had a recycling bin, which we used regularly, and with my newfound enthusiasm for caring about the environment, I went straight to toss my empty bottle in.

"Stop," my mom said over her shoulder. "Our recycling company doesn't allow us to recycle green plastic."

I was shocked. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The recycling companies were supposed to be the heroes; why would they say we could recycle some things and not others? It didn't make any sense to me. Disappointed, I dropped my bottle in the trash and headed back toward my room.

At that moment, I had an impression I'd never had before. Coming from a family that was not very religious, we had never had family prayer or even knew what prayer was, other than what



we had seen on TV. But right then that was exactly what I felt I needed to do: get on my knees by my bed and pray about it. So I slipped into my room and, not really knowing how to begin, gave it a simple try.

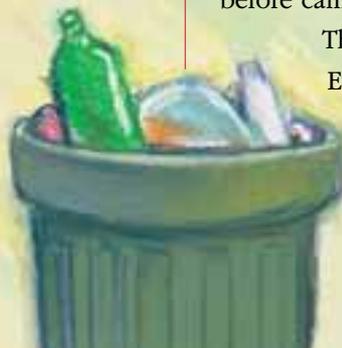
"God," I started quietly, "this is Ace. Thank you for the environment. Please let us recycle green plastic bottles in this area. It's really important." I closed with an "amen" and waited. I didn't know what to expect. Although I wasn't visited by angels or struck by lightning, I did feel something I had never felt before. As I sat there, I felt good. I felt like I wasn't alone in the room anymore, although there clearly wasn't any other person I could see. Something told me that what I had just done was right.

Life continued the same as it always had. In fact, by the next afternoon I had been so involved in usual things at school that I had mostly forgotten about the green bottle episode and the prayer.

When I got home, I went back to my room, but before long my mom called my name and asked me to come to the kitchen. When I did, I saw that she had a letter in her hand. She explained that it was from the recycling company stating that now we could recycle green plastics in addition to other things.

She handed me the letter. I looked it over, but I couldn't believe it. The same feeling I had had the day before came rushing back to me. It was an answer.

That was an experience that has never left me. Every time I think about it, I'm still amazed that it could have happened at all. And it was this experience that, three years later, helped me to feel the truth of the gospel when the missionaries came knocking at our family's door. It was the same feeling. **NE**





RIGHT



BY DANIELLE NYE POULTER

Standing tall while sitting at the piano, William Joseph shares his testimony through music.

Imagine being offered an appearance on the hottest prime-time television show in the country. Millions of people will see your face and hear your name. This appearance could catapult you to worldwide fame.

Now imagine turning it down.

For pianist William Joseph, this wasn't an imaginary test. The show would have given him the opportunity to play his music for his biggest audience yet. Unfortunately, this show also promoted immorality, deceit, and other things William didn't want his name associated with. What would you do?



ON KEY

“I was totally torn,” says William. “I knew what the right thing to do was, but it was literally a choice in front of me of riches and fame or choosing the right.”

This wasn't the first time William faced such a choice. Just a few years earlier, when he was 18, William's music career was just taking off. Then came the choice to set it aside for two years to serve a mission. For William, standing up for the right plays an even bigger role in his life than music—and that's saying something.

Trained as a classical pianist, William displayed incredible talent as a performer and composer early on. He didn't come from a musical home, but his parents recognized his interest in piano at the age of four, and from then on music became his refuge, creative outlet, and almost constant companion.

He began performing publicly at age 12 and was well



Whether he's playing on a national concert tour or with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (see photos) William says he has opportunities to share the gospel every day.

known for his talent in his hometown of Phoenix, Arizona, by the time he was 18. That's when William faced his first major choice between right and wrong.

"I was very into music in high school, and I always just thought a mission was not for me," William says.

Then he was asked to play the piano in sacrament meeting at his cousin's ward. He says at the time he wasn't feeling the Spirit strongly in his life and was only going to Church out of respect for his parents. He says, "I showed up, and I remember seeing a couple there, and they were just glowing. I couldn't stop looking at them, they were so happy."

William overheard the couple discussing how they had just been sealed in the temple the day before. He says, "I was just awestruck by how happy they seemed and how righteous they looked. I thought to myself, 'I want that; I want to marry a righteous girl in the temple.'"

But given the current strength of his

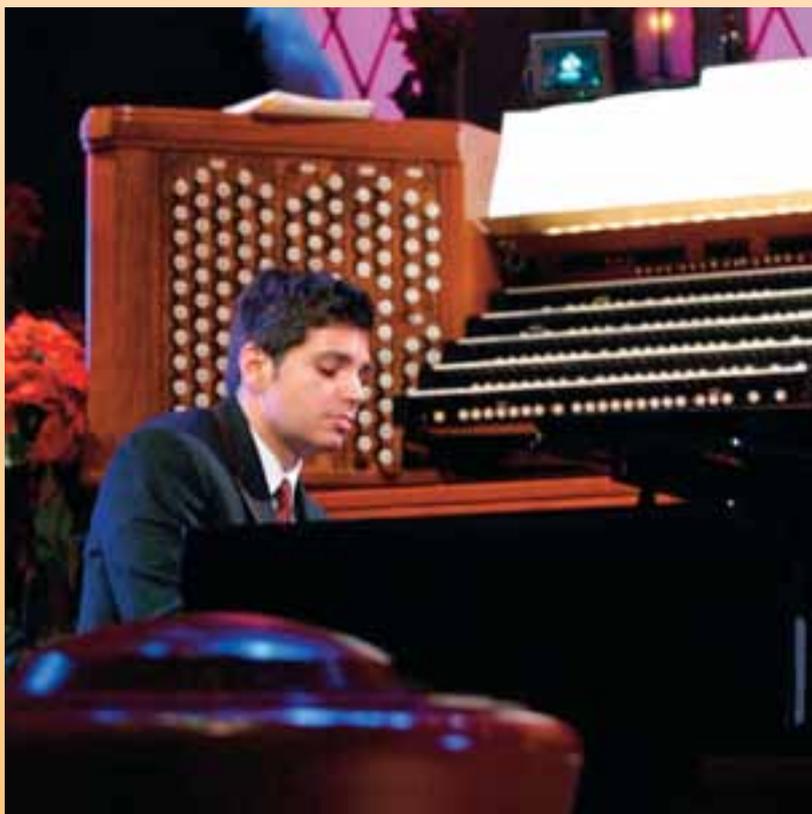
testimony, William had doubts about the possibility of his goal. "I thought, 'How will I ever do that? Someone like that would only want a returned missionary.' And right when I thought that, it hit me. It was overwhelming. All of a sudden, music didn't matter; my career didn't matter; nothing mattered. And I knew for sure that's what I had to do. I needed to go on a mission, and I'd be blessed if I did."

William says he recognized the change that had taken place in him by the music he was drawn to. "After that meeting, after that incredible, spiritual experience, I got in my car, and I had this rock music blasting. That music felt so disruptive, so loud and just ugly and wrong. That was the experience that changed my life."

After receiving a call to the Australia Perth Mission, William faced another dilemma—not only would he be giving up his music career, but he learned that very little music of any kind would be permitted on his mission. Two years without music seemed impossible for William, who hadn't gone a day without music in 15 years. But his testimony of the gospel was now firm, and he trusted in the Lord's wisdom in sending him to this mission.

Fortunately, William's mission president recognized his special talent. Over the course of his mission, William had the opportunity to both write and perform music. He says, "I was a missionary first and a musician second." He performed at special firesides, where investigators were touched by the Spirit and doors were opened for the missionaries. William never regretted the choice he made to accept a call to serve a mission.

When he returned home, William picked up his music career where he had left off, gaining a strong fan base through self-released albums. His incredible talent with the piano enabled him to compose his own



New Age-style pieces, while at the same time performing classical pieces to perfection. His unique style soon caught the attention of producer David Foster, senior vice president of Warner Brothers records, who happened to be in Phoenix for a charity event.

“I was introduced to David four hours before the event, during sound check. The person who introduced me asked, ‘Could he play your piano?’ and David said, ‘Yeah, yeah, bring him up.’ ” David put William on stage and instructed him to “play something.”

“I definitely felt like this would be a good time to not mess up,” William says. He began to play a song he had written called “Within.” After just a few seconds, David led the band on stage to play along.

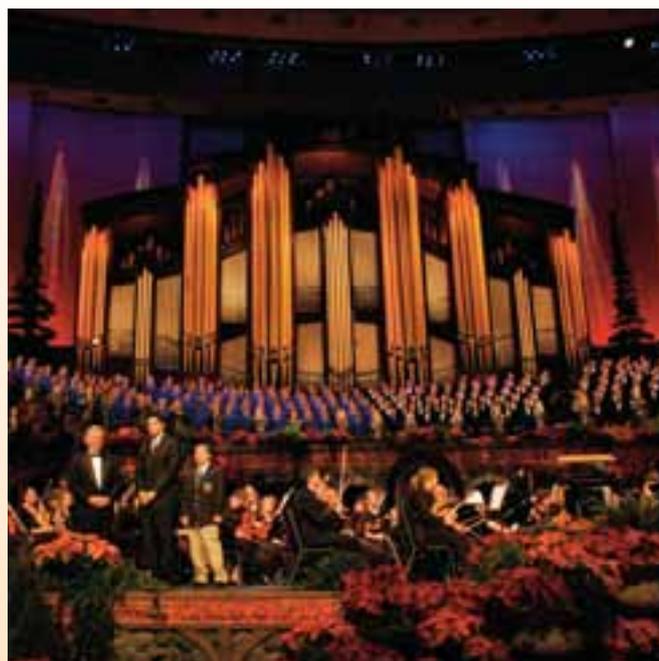
“I’m totally playing my heart out, and the next thing I know I’m playing with this world-class band, and they join in on the spot, while David’s conducting over me. And, when I finished, everyone in the room was clapping. He gave me a high-five and said, ‘What was that song?’ I said that it was a song that I wrote, and he said, ‘I want you to come back tonight for the show.’ It was the biggest show of the year in Arizona, and he said, ‘You’re going to open the show.’ ”

After a successful performance at the concert, David Foster signed William to a record deal, and they produced an album in only two months. He opened for Josh Groban’s 2004 tour, and toured with Clay Aiken in 2005.

With so much fame coming so quickly, William has had to keep his focus firmly on the gospel to guide his choices. But even in Hollywood, his commitment to choosing the right has gained him respect.

When William decided to turn down the television appearance, he explained his decision to his producer by saying, “‘The things that are on this show make a mockery of everything that I believe.’ That’s all I had to say, and he just said, ‘Then don’t do it.’ And he said, ‘Your morals will serve you well.’ ”

So far, though, William’s moral standards have been a positive influence on others. “I have opportunities to share the gospel every day,” William says. “When I’m performing, and I use clean humor, people ask questions.” While on tour, William will get up early Sunday morning after a performance Saturday night and take a taxi to church. “That always leads to opportunities to talk about the gospel,” he says.



While his example doesn’t go unnoticed, perhaps William’s greatest missionary tool is his music.

“When people hear my music, they can feel something in it. They want to know what it is. They can just feel a difference.”

William has seen people react to his music in all kinds of places—from firesides on his mission, to Hollywood benefit concerts, and even playing his music in malls.

“In a mall you have all walks of life, and I remember seeing the roughest people. But they’d come up to me in tears, saying how beautiful the music was.”

William says good music speaks to everyone’s spirit. “Music breaks down barriers; it softens people. It’s opened so many doors for me, as far as being able to talk to people and relate to people. I’ve just seen it prepare people.”

William says he is grateful that he was born with a love and a passion for music. Through his incredible talent, he has been able to bless the lives of others and to stand as a witness of Christ against the pressures of the world. But in the end, William says everything he does is to glorify God.

“I’m not a man of many words; I’m not an elaborate speaker. But I absolutely have a testimony. I love the gospel.” And that love speaks through both his music and his example. **NE**

Are you into music? For Church music resources, go to www.lds.org/churchmusic.

I have never known more surely than the day I put Moroni's promise to the test.

WHY I BELIEVE

THE BOOK OF MORMON

BY DON SEARLE
Church Magazines

My best friend in high school was an agnostic. My friend said he didn't know if there was a God, but if a God created us, He must have gone far away and left us all alone. Why else would so many bad things happen in this world? How could a God who watched over His children let them be hurt so much?

I understood why some people did bad things. I knew about agency and the effects of choices we make. My widowed mother had taught me about those things at home. I knew the gospel was the right way to live. I saw it work for my mother in her life, and I knew in my mind that it was the way Heavenly Father wanted us to live.

But I didn't know this where it really counted—in my heart. I thought I was sure of the truth, but sometimes I had my own "why" and "what if" questions about God and His plan for us. I wasn't so sure of what I "knew" that I could tell my friend and mean it with every part of me.

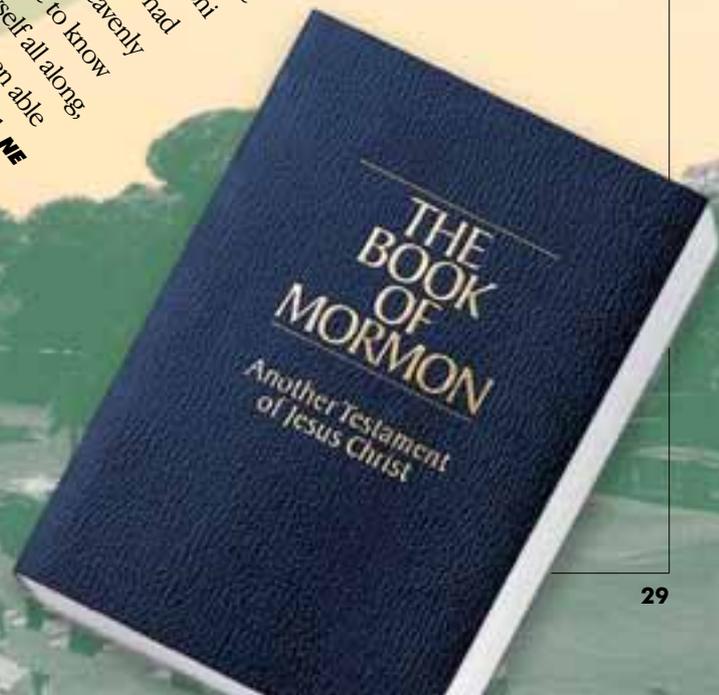
That kind of knowing did not come until I took a Book of Mormon class while I was in college. Sister Irene Spears taught the class as if the Book of Mormon were completely new to us. In a way it was for me; I had never read the book all the way through.

When I reached the end, I found Moroni's promise to readers: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4). I knew this promise was

Since my mission, I have had the opportunity to visit many of those ruined cities in Mexico and Central America. I have read what experts say about those places and about the history and greatness of their people. I am very grateful for the added knowledge I have received. But I have never been more sure of the Book of Mormon than I was that day when I asked the Lord if it was true and He answered me just as Moroni promised. I only wish I had asked sooner. My Heavenly Father wanted me to know the truth for myself all along, and I might have been able to share it with my friend. **ME**

Why do you believe?
Send us your story at
newera@ldschurch.org

to me. I got on my knees beside my bed to ask. I didn't expect an answer to be so strong or to come so fast. Before I could finish the words of my prayer, I knew that the Book of Mormon was the word of God and that Joseph Smith was a prophet. If those things were true, then David O. McKay was also a prophet, and he had said that every young man who was able should go on a mission, so I was going on a mission. I was called to Central America. After several months in the mission field, I realized what a blessing had come to me in that call. While I was helping to find people who loved the Lord, I was also walking in places where much of the Book of Mormon may have happened. This was a second witness to the testimony of my grandfather, who had learned to love the Book of Mormon on one in the 1920s. His father was a salesman and trader who traveled widely in Mexico. My great-grandfather had told his children stories of ruined cities and highways in the jungle, and my grandfather had always wanted to know who the people were who built them.



BROTHERS

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

For Matt and Mark Fletcher of Phoenix, Arizona, brothers is more than a description of how they fit into a family. It's an explanation of how they live their lives.



From sports, their sisters, and each other, Matt (with the basketball) and Mark (with the volleyball) have learned a lot about how to be good brothers.

What do you think of when you think of a brother? If you're from the Lakewood Ward of the Tempe Arizona West Stake, or if you attend Desert Vista High School in Phoenix and you're into sports, Matt and Mark Fletcher come to mind. Matt, 19, and Mark, 17, are well known among their family and friends because their example shows what it really means to be brothers.

"One of the big things about Matt is how well he has kept Church standards," Mark says. "You see some of the bad stuff other people do, but it doesn't influence Matt. If something's not right, he tells them, 'I'm not going to do this,' and he sticks with it. He *prefers* to do what is right. His example influences me. It's been a real advantage to have a good older brother."

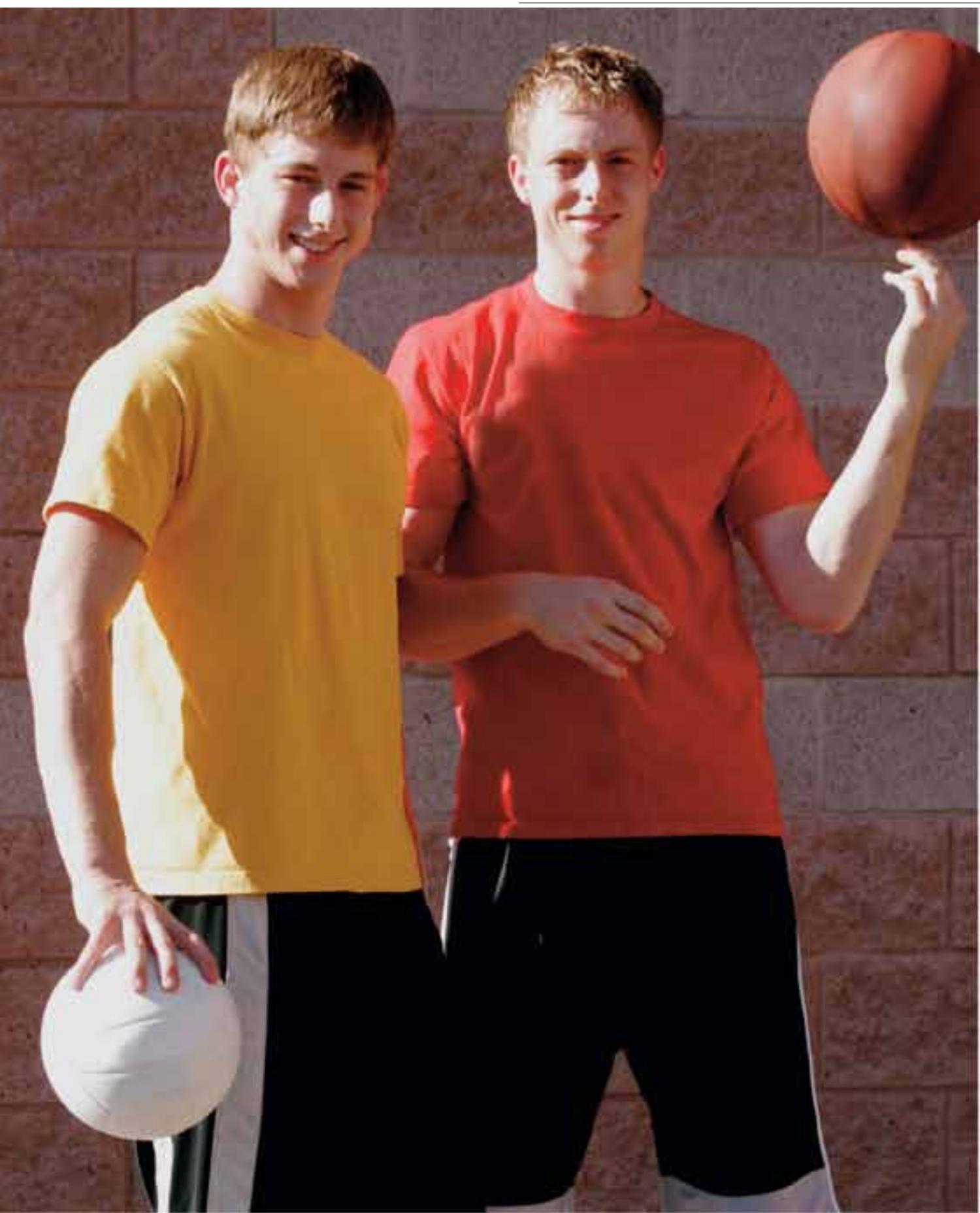
Matt is equally impressed with Mark. "He's a better brother than I am," he says. "We have a common interest in a lot of things, like missionary work and sports, and we love to motivate each other."

Motivation

Much of that motivating has been obvious over the years—going to Church activities and seminary together; hiking the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim and trekking to Havasupi Falls with Dad and other relatives; earning Duty to God awards and organizing Eagle Scout projects; working with a group in Mesa that builds homes for poor families in Mexico; planning group dates and staging impromptu basketball games that are legendary with their friends.

But there's another motivation for these two brothers that most people don't know about—each of them has overcome a learning disorder. "Matt struggles with comprehension and short-term memory, with applying what he's learned to solving problems," explains his mother, Christine. Mark, on the other hand, has







Their family (above) and their coach (below) have taught the Fletcher brothers that they can have a lot of influence for good simply by living the gospel and setting a good example. Both Matt and Mark have made extra efforts to watch out for members of their priesthood quorums and to reach out to those who have drifted away.

central auditory processing disorder, which means he “has to have things explained several times to understand, but then once he gets it, he’s got it.” For both young men, that means spending three or four times as much effort on homework as other students. However, they have each achieved nearly flawless grade point averages.

It also means the quick thinking required in sports can be particularly challenging. Fortunately, the Fletchers have been blessed with compassionate coaches. One of them, Ryan Tolman, coaches junior varsity basketball and varsity volleyball at Desert Vista High. He recalls when Matt was cut from the basketball team his sophomore year, partly because he couldn’t keep track of all the plays.

“Instead of giving up, he put together his own playbook, and then he would sit and draw diagrams, map out the X’s and O’s on little note cards, and go over the plays again and again,” Coach Tolman recalls. Matt also practiced night after night and morning after morning at a local gym. He never became a star, but through hard work he did make the team. He also convinced one of the star players to stop using foul language. As a senior he received the Joe Selleh Award, given to the team’s “outstanding contributor.”

Dedication

Mark’s sport was volleyball, and he was cut from the freshman team about the same time Matt was cut from the basketball team. Following his brother’s example, he decided not to quit but to work harder. “That’s another common ground we have as brothers; we’ve learned the value of work,” says Mark. And Mark had his work cut out for him. “I’m six feet, one inch, and as a middle blocker, I was up against a senior who is six feet, seven inches.” To compensate, he decided to become one of the best jumpers on the team. Like Matt, he trained incessantly. In fact, they worked out together.

Mark made the team. Then, during his junior year, “The coach told me I probably wasn’t going to get much varsity playing time, so he wanted me to play junior varsity as well. That way I’d get experience instead of just sitting on the bench. It helped a lot. By keeping my form right, I increased my vertical leap, and I got to work on it during actual competition.”

Mark also found another way to contribute. “I wanted to get the rest of the team to be more enthusiastic from the bench,” he says, “so I came up with lots of positive things to say and encouraged everybody to do the same thing.” Guess who won the Selleh award for the varsity volleyball team? The trophies sit side-by-side on a shelf in Matt and Mark’s bedroom.

Reactivation

But there’s more to these brothers than sports. Their father, Don, recalls that “when Matt was serving as teachers quorum president, he took

his calling seriously. He identified quorum members who didn’t attend regularly and



A BROTHER'S EXAMPLE

Imagine having the opportunity to share the gospel with people from 11 different countries at the same time!

That's what Mark Fletcher was able to do during the summer. He was selected as a youth ambassador for the city of Phoenix and given the opportunity to visit Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Everywhere he went, with city officials, at camps, and in social gatherings, Mark was recognized as a Latter-day Saint and often answered questions about his standards.

Then similar youth ambassadors from 11 countries gathered in Phoenix, and Mark was able to talk about the Church with them as well. It was great to follow his brother's example of missionary work in Brazil by sharing his testimony with youth from all over the world.

prayed about what to do. He worked with adult leaders to organize an overnight campout he thought they would attend. One young man said he would be interested, and Matt followed up with him almost daily at school. In the end, three less-active boys came, enjoyed the association with the others, and heard the bishop make a presentation about Joseph Smith and bear testimony of the Savior.”

Later, when Mark was teachers quorum president, he had a similar experience. He found a young man who had not attended in some time, and went after opportunities to invite him to come back. The young man came out to an activity and felt welcome at church again.

Today, Matt, as an elder, and Mark, as a priest, continue to watch out for less-active quorum members—they send birthday greetings and make visits. Sometimes they just sit and talk. “It's like the Savior said,” Matt comments. “Leave the ninety and nine and find the one who has wandered away.” (See Matthew 18:12–13.)

Appreciation

Matt and Mark also know that brothers can do a lot to strengthen the family. They spend time helping their sisters, Sarah and Catherine, with their homework. They also play games—sometimes it's checkers or ping pong, but often it's a variation of dodge ball, with soft, puffy balls grandma made just for that purpose. They also enjoy home evening, reading scriptures together, family prayer, and listening to grandpa talk about his service

as a mission president. Matt expresses his admiration for his father: “He always talks about people in a positive way, especially Church leaders. He inspires me to want to be that way, too.” Mark remembers the many times he worked side-by-side with his mother as she ran a small business mowing lawns, weeding, trimming bushes, and picking up leaves. “She never took money from those in need,” he explains. “That taught me a lot about serving other people.”

Music has also been a large part of Matt and Mark's family participation. Both play the piano and encourage each other to learn new songs the same way they challenge each other athletically. Both have served as priesthood meeting pianists and have played in sacrament meetings and other settings. Mark particularly enjoys performing duets with Sarah, who plays piano and flute.

Anticipation

It's a hot day in Phoenix. Aren't most of them? But it's worth braving outdoor temperatures near 110 degrees to enter the cool chapel and hear Matt—now Elder Fletcher—speak in sacrament meeting prior to his departure for the Brazil Porto Alegre North Mission. He talks about his experiences as a deacon, teacher, and priest; about the ministering of angels; about an experience his father had that taught him that the Lord is watching over us; about the determination it took to succeed in a difficult class at BYU-Idaho that required him to learn to study in a new way; and how he will use that same determination, coupled with faith, to succeed as a missionary.

It is a memorable talk, and the family is still discussing it when a relative reminds Mark that because of their ages, the two brothers will go for three and a half years before they see each other again. Mark recalls what their stake president Karl Tilleman said. He told them that if they serve with integrity, their reunion after their missions will be similar to the joyful reunion experienced by Alma and the sons of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon. (See Alma 17:1–3.) After all, Matt went away to college, and when he came home, that reunion was sweet.

Besides, Mark and Matt know that they are not only brothers in their family, but brothers in the priesthood and in eternity. And that means they not only have each other but thousands, even millions, of brothers all over the world. **NE**

INJURED *and*

BY MARLI WALKER

He couldn't walk and was miles from help; there was only one thing he could do.

The spooked horse jerked to the right, smashing James's leg against a tree. Then he fell to the ground, and the horse dashed away, leaving him helpless.

As a youth I learned that prayer sustained me when I was faced with the adversity teenagers often encounter. My testimony of prayer was strengthened one day when I was reading in my family history.

I came across a story about my great-great-great grandfather James Little, who often looked back on an experience he had as a teenager as a powerful testimony of prayer. Here is his story:

The morning had started out with a beautiful sunrise as 17-year-old James Little and his father went about their morning chores. In 1869 there was always plenty of work to do on the farm. Horses, cows, and other animals needed to be fed, stalls cleaned, and the cows needed to be milked. But today, instead of going through the same old routine, James's father had asked James to go out on the desert where their cattle grazed and round up an old steer that was ready to butcher. James eagerly packed a coat, a canteen of water, and a light lunch his mother had prepared for him.

A newly broken young horse paced in the corral. After several attempts at trying to

catch him, James was finally able to slip a bridle around his head and saddle him. He wrapped his lasso around the saddle horn and set off to find the steer.

James traveled until mid-afternoon without stopping. He gazed across the barren, dusty landscape of southern Utah. Dry desert grasses and scrub-brush dotted the ground. James could see no sign of the old steer.

The horse was restless and tired, and James knew they both needed a rest and some food. About a mile away he could see a small grove of trees and decided that it would be a good place to stop.

The young horse loped over to the grove of trees, eager to be relieved of his burden. He pranced and shied as they neared a large tree. Suddenly a rabbit dashed out from behind the tree, spooking the horse. The frightened animal jerked to the right, smashing James's knee against the trunk of the tree. He fought to control the horse as it reared and jumped, again battering James's leg against the tree. James yelled in pain and surprise as the reins slipped from his grasp, and he fell to the hard ground. Freed of its rider, the horse took off at a dead run across the desert.

James lay in a daze. Then his leg started throbbing, bringing him back to consciousness. He realized his horse was long gone



ALONE



James didn't know what else he could do, so he offered a heartfelt prayer. No sooner had he finished when he heard a horse approaching.

and with it the food in his saddlebag, the canteen of water, and his coat. Darkness was falling, bringing a chill that comes with desert nights.

James looked around him, trying to decide what to do. To his left, he saw a limb of a tree hanging within his reach. Carefully he grasped the branch and then slowly put some weight on his damaged leg and tried to stand. But the pain was instantly agonizing, and he collapsed on the ground. James looked at his injured foot, and realized that it was swelling rapidly. Taking his knife out of its scabbard, he carefully cut the boot off his swollen foot. His leg was bruised and misshapen, and with gentle probing, he knew that it was also badly injured.

James then did the only thing he knew he could do. He took his hat off, closed his eyes, and offered up a heartfelt prayer to his Heavenly Father for help.

No sooner had he finished his prayer and

opened his eyes when he heard a horse approaching. A minute later, his horse was standing next to him. James stared in astonishment at the lasso that had somehow become unwrapped from the saddle-horn and was dangling within his reach.

Slowly and painfully, James grasped the lasso and began pulling himself up into the saddle. The newly broken young horse stood patiently until its rider was seated in the saddle and then set off for home.

Throughout his life, James never doubted that his Heavenly Father knew him and had heard his pleas for help one day in the desert. His story has touched me and strengthened my testimony. As I have gained experiences of my own during my teenage years and beyond, I have learned that my Heavenly Father is near and listens to me when I pray. **NE**

Do you have a story from your family history that ought to be shared? Send it to us at newera@ldschurch.org.



THE EXTRA SMILE



RYAN STOKER

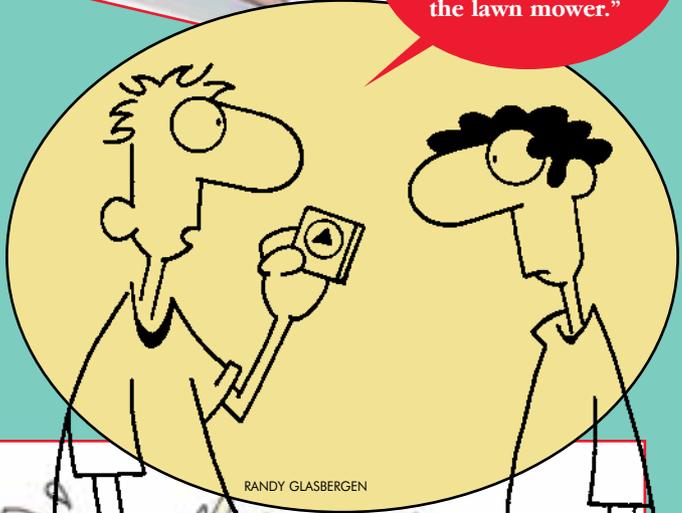


RYAN STOKER

"So, what happens if I don't get you home by midnight?"

"My dad turns back into the bishop!"

"My dad got me this for my birthday. It's a compass that always points to the lawn mower."

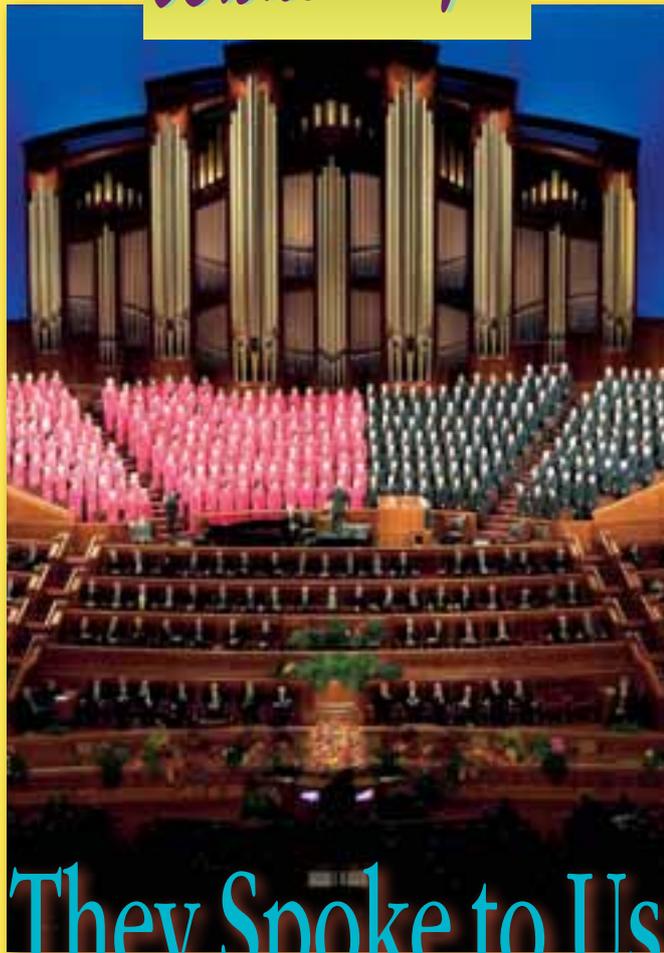


RANDY GLASBERGEN

"Happy Mother's Day, Mom! We're making you breakfast in bed!"



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



They Spoke to Us

Many of the general conference talks have messages directed to you, the youth of the Church. Here are just a few ideas of ways to apply the messages to your life. You can read all the conference talks in the *May Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines.

➡ President Hinckley tells about a dream Joseph F. Smith had when he was 15 years old. It changed young Joseph's life, and it can change yours too. See "I Am Clean."

➡ Read about some of the things Elder Joseph B.

Wirthlin learned through playing football in "Life's Lessons Learned."

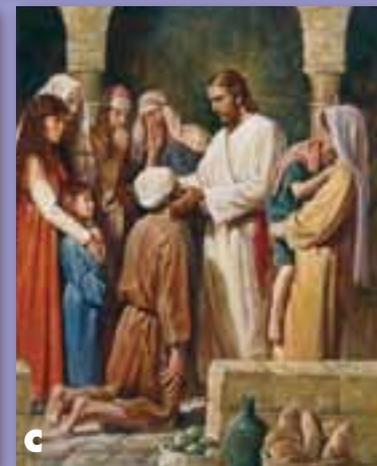
➡ "Now is the time to prepare for your decade of decisions," says Elder Robert D. Hales. He gives a lot of great ideas that will help you make the decisions now that will shape your future.

To find more conference stories and quotes for youth, go online to the *New Era* in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org. You can also read, listen to, or watch conference talks online at www.lds.org.

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF GOD

The scripture passages below illustrate examples of the power of God and show what the priesthood can do. Read each passage and match it to the correct picture.

- Genesis 1:1 _____ Mark 14:22–24 _____
 John 11:39–44 _____ John 9:1–7 _____
 3 Nephi 11:21 _____ Helaman 12:9–17 _____





Keys to Success

Years of practicing the piano paid off for Stephen Beus when he took home first prize in the Gina Bachauer International Artists Piano Competition last September. His performance of Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto secured him the first-place award.

Stephen, who grew up in Othello, Washington, had to compete against people from all over the world, including Japan, Russia, and Germany, in this international competition, which is held in Salt Lake City.

However, this was not the first time Stephen has competed in the Bachauer competition. When he was 11, he took part in the junior division and placed fifth. Three years later, in 1996, Stephen competed again in the junior division and took first place. A few years later, Stephen put his piano career on hold for two years to serve a full-time mission in Finland. Read about why he did it in "Playing a Different Tune" from the August 2001 *New Era*.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE VAN CLIBURN FOUNDATION

Hardworking Texas Teens

More than 35 youth from the Austin Texas Stake recently joined forces with other youth from the Austin area to complete a beautification project at Pioneer Farms, a living history museum. As part of a service project organized by the stake, the teens planted 116 trees and shrubs and cleared away seven tractor-trailer loads of brush and debris.



"The teens worked hard and kept asking what more they could do to help," said Angela Walters, the museum's volunteer coordinator.

"It really felt like we helped to transform the farm," said

Rachael Long, a Laurel from the Pflugerville Ward who worked to plant trees. "After we planted the trees, it really changed the look of the park. It was hard work, but really fun at the same time."

Sister Margaret Easthope, Young Women president of the Pflugerville Ward, said

the youth had a good time working together and were excited to see the difference their efforts made. "The youth gained a greater appreciation of what hard work means, and what it takes to plant so many trees!" Sister Easthope said.

**“
MODESTY
IN DRESS
AND MANNER
WILL ASSIST
IN PROTECT-
ING AGAINST
TEMPTATION.
”**

**President Gordon B. Hinckley,
"Stay on the High Road,"
Ensign, May 2004, 114.**

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUSTIN TEXAS STAKE

PONDER, PRAY, PERFORM, PERSEVERE

BY ELDER W. CRAIG ZWICK

Of the Seventy

Four elements are vital to gaining spiritual strength.



I found that when we're earnest in creating a life plan for ourselves, we need to allow the Lord to be the architect of that plan.

An underlying foundation of scriptural strength comes when we ponder and pray for guidance. I discovered this strength when I was getting ready to serve a mission.

When I was preparing for a mission, there was a quota in the United States on religious deferrals granted to the Church, affecting how many could serve because of the Vietnam conflict. Only two young men per ward were allowed to serve missions, and there were 17 eligible priests in our ward. The quota was filled by chronological age, and I was number 14 of 17. I learned about pondering and praying when I wondered how I was going to fit into this quota. I thought I would go on a mission within the next couple of years, or wait until either the Vietnam conflict was over, or go when I was 25 years old and no longer subject to the draft or the quota system.

Turn to Wise Leaders

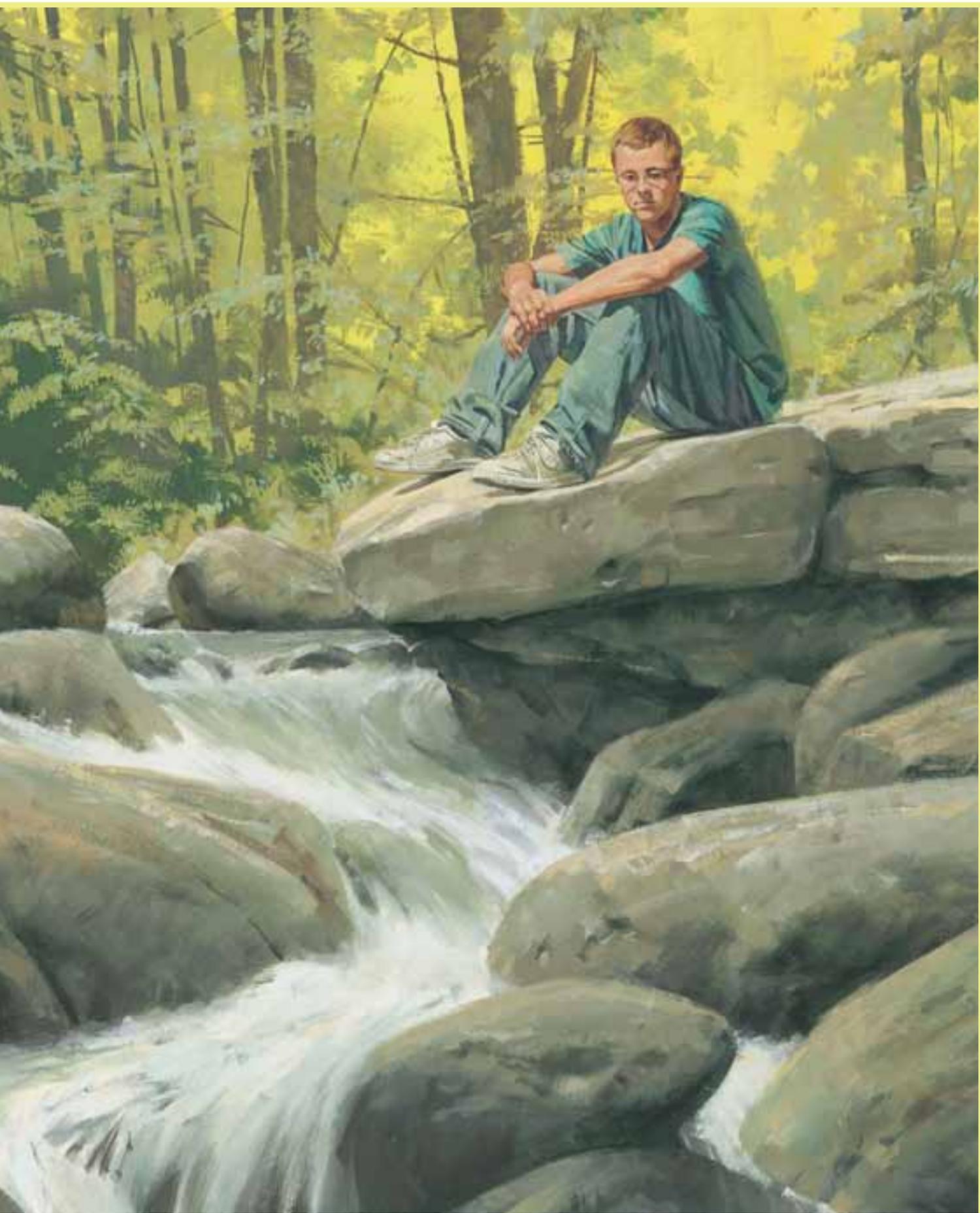
I received some wise advice from my bishop, who advised me to “pursue a mission now.” The only way I could do that was to enlist in the military and receive a change of status, but I pondered and prayed about it because I knew that conflict was imminent, and I wasn’t sure that

would really be the best direction. I had to ask myself some hard questions. I had been accepted into a master’s program in architecture at the University of Utah for a five-year course that I did not want to interrupt. But it didn’t feel right to postpone my mission, so I had gone to the bishop and asked for his suggestion. He said, “Prepare and go now.”

Deciding to serve a mission was an expansion of faith driven by two possible options: “Do I do it now?” or “Do I do it later?” I had worked through the decision to go on a mission now, and a good bishop advised me to persevere toward a solution that would allow it to happen.

That solution came when I enlisted in the Air Force Reserves. After serving for one year, I was able to reclassify my status and thereby avoid being part of the mission quota. This change allowed me to go on a mission when I was almost 20. My mission was a wonderful experience that would not have happened had I not pondered, prayed, performed by seeking good guidance, and persevered.

Most of the group who went into the Air Force Reserves that year were a little older than I was, and I learned a lot from them. I remained worthy, and it was a wonderful



My assignment from the mission president was to help build a chapel in Quiriza, Bolivia. It required pondering, praying, performing, and persevering, and was a labor of love.

thing to know that those who were with me recognized and appreciated my standards. Associating with those good people helped me to be a better missionary.

I found that when we're earnest in creating a life plan for ourselves, we need to allow the Lord to be the architect of that plan. When the Lord is the architect, long-term benefits result and connect us to additional opportunities and experiences that accelerate our capacity for growth.

Spiritual Preparation for a Mission

Preach My Gospel is a marvelous tool to gain a testimony of the principles of the gospel. It's important to understand that inspiration comes from a connection to doctrine that strengthens good behavior and allows us to overcome whatever challenges we face.

When I was struggling with my decision about whether to serve a mission, I spent some time every day by myself reading and studying, pondering and praying, and gaining a witness that what I was about to do was right.

I remember being alone in a peaceful setting. I knelt down and prayed to know if going on a mission was the right thing to do. It felt good to me. I had been through a period of personal torment on what to do, and after the cumulative effort of pondering and praying, I received a feeling of peace in my mind and heart. It was like the counsel that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received from the Lord, "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter" (D&C 6:23).

We didn't have *Preach My Gospel*, but I read the Book of Mormon cover to cover and gained a personal witness of my Savior Jesus Christ. I also had the old basic missionary outline of seven discussions, and I decided to commit those principles to memory. I wanted to connect the doctrine

to the principles in the discussions, and I found it was easier to do if I had a foundation of scriptures to rely on. I realized that four elements are vital to gain spiritual strength: ponder, pray, perform, and then persevere.

Performing and Persevering

I learned about performing and persevering on my mission. I served in a little dusty village, Quiriza, Bolivia, near the Argentine border. We traveled by horseback in those mountain villages of Bolivia and lived at a high altitude in dusty, dirty conditions. I felt at times like Ammon and the sons of Mosiah when the Lord told them, "Be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:11).

My assignment from the mission president was to help build a chapel. It was a wonderful experience building that chapel, using adobe bricks, and bringing lumber, metal decking, and other building materials over a 20-mile, steep mountain pass. It required the same level of pondering, praying, performing, and persevering as we built the Quiriza chapel. I found that it was a labor of love, and because of that love gained by serving those people, it was far more difficult for me to leave Bolivia than it had been to leave home to serve my mission.

Being Steadfast and Immovable

Sometimes we need a tangible way to measure success. If we can feel good about our efforts every day, then even in the most difficult circumstances we can have that tangible feeling of success. Being "steadfast and immovable" and not letting anything get in our way "in keeping the commandments of God" (Alma 1:25) is a tangible

outcome that provides an enduring foundation to grow on. We grow when we have to overcome pains of endurance—that's perseverance. Impressive results may not come every day or even every week, but we need to hang in there. That's the steadfast and immovable side of it. Great rewards will come when we persevere.

These words of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, give us

hope: "Be patient in afflictions. . . . Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast. . . .

". . . It shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and wither you shall go.

"Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.

"Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you"
(D&C 31:9, 11–13). **NE**



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

BY ANDREA CARTWRIGHT

For a school project, my friend was assigned to perform an act of kindness. Rather than doing something quick or convenient, my friend wanted to serve those around her



in a real, meaningful way. She organized a group of us to make hundreds of sack lunches and distribute them to the homeless.

We stayed in groups for safety and walked around downtown San Diego with armfuls of bags. Some people were so anxious for food that they'd run across the street to take a bag. Most people we found were out on the sidewalks, sitting on piles of dirty sleeping bags and pieces of cardboard—all they owned sitting under or around them.

Oftentimes there would be an empty sleeping bag next to someone, and they would take an extra bag for their friend. These people, in all their need, were still thinking of others. I'll never forget the look in one lady's eyes when she pleaded, "Pray for us." This humble woman had not turned her back on the Lord. She recognized, in all her despair, that the Lord had not forgotten her.

That night, I thanked Heavenly Father for all I had and sincerely prayed for those people—children of God who are often overlooked in the hustle and bustle of daily life. I realized that day that these were my spiritual brothers and sisters. And I was blessed to see others a little more as our Heavenly Father does.

I can't change a world of hunger, but I can change myself. I made it a goal to pay more attention to others. Everyone around us needs nourishment—physical, spiritual, or otherwise. We can be instruments in the Lord's hands to help fight that hunger, whether it's with our food or with our love. **NE**

LEAD THOU ME ON

BY ALEENA RICKS

Lead, Kindly Light" (*Hymns*, no. 97) is one of my favorite hymns because it continually talks about how we should let the Lord lead us. It teaches that God will never lead us astray, and He can certainly help us find the light when we are in darkness. Part of the second verse reads: "I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that thou / Shouldst lead me on. / I loved to choose and see my path; but now, / Lead thou me on!" I like this part because sometimes we don't want Heavenly Father to guide us, and we want to do it on our own, but in the end we find out that we really do need the Lord's help! We realize



that even though we thought we could do it alone, we need Him. I know that God is always there to help us if we will ask, then listen and act upon the promptings He gives us! **NE**

NO MATCH ON SUNDAY

BY DAVID M. SMITH

A few years ago our son Russell was the USA Missouri State Wrestling Champion at 150 pounds. The finals were held on a Sunday. Russell was not a member of the Church then, and he had not had much formal Christian teaching. In the year after he won the championship, however, he joined the Church. During the championships that next year he won the semifinal match at 165 pounds on a Saturday evening and offered to wrestle his

last opponent for the championship that same evening. His opponent refused to do so, and Russell walked away from the championship so that he could be in church, keeping the Sabbath holy, the next morning. Many people have told me that he shows exceptional character and devotion to his Heavenly Father. Russell has won many first-place medals, but for us, his second-place award for the state championship is by far his finest. **NE**

THE ANSWER IN ALMA

BY DAVID REMMINGTON

One day while at work, I had a big argument with my manager. I felt really bad about it. From day one, I have not got on well with the manager. So I turned to the Lord and the scriptures for help and guidance.

I turned to Alma 26:27. I read Ammon's words over and over to help me overcome these challenges that had me depressed about life and work.

"Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren . . . and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success."

After telling my manager about my beliefs, I told her that I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My manager told me about her beliefs, and we have been able to respect each other. Because of that experience, my testimony has been so strong. **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 84150-3220, USA*

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

Mutual Activity Idea

• Spring feels like the right time to clean up and fix up. With the permission of your bishop and under the supervision of your youth leaders and Primary president, offer to sanitize the nursery toys and repair the hymnbooks. Use safe, anti-bacterial cleanser and go over all the toys and furniture in the room used as the nursery. Using proper book repair tape, gather up all the hymnbooks and erase marks and repair tears or the bindings of the hymnbooks.

Personal Progress or Duty to God

• If you have been taking piano lessons but are not yet accomplished enough to play from the regular hymnbook, try learning to play hymns in a simplified version. The book *Hymns Made Easy* has 60 hymns

that are a good starting place for beginning pianists. Check with your ward music director or the meetinghouse library for a copy. Or the book can be ordered online through www.ldscatalog.com or Distribution Services.

Family Home Evening Idea

• Suggest to your parents that it might be fun to learn how to make do and use up ingredients in your refrigerator for dinner and for family home evening. You can all talk about being wise in using the family's resources. Prepare by finding a recipe for pizza dough and sauce. Have each family member roll out a small piece of dough for an individual pizza. Top with vegetables or ingredients from the refrigerator. Share slices.

SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 18–22.

Young Women Manual 2

Lesson 18: A Heritage of Righteous Traditions

Marli Walker, "Injured and Alone," this issue, 28.
"Count the Ripples," *New Era*, Feb. 2005, 26.

Lesson 19: Preparing to Teach Others

Shanna Butler, "You're a Teacher Too," *New Era*, Sept. 2006, 44.
Idea List: Preparing a Lesson, *New Era*, Aug. 2004, 15.
Idea List: Ten Terrific Teaching Tips, *New Era*, Sept. 2004, 44.

Lesson 20: Sharing the Gospel

Q&A (friend more interested in me than the gospel), *New Era*, Aug. 2004, 16.
The March 2007 *New Era* is dedicated to missionary work.

Lesson 21: Sustaining Missionaries through Letters

Connie Myers, "Missionary Mail," *New Era*, Mar. 2007, 58.

Lesson 22: Counseling with the Lord

Line upon Line: Matthew 6:9–11, *New Era*, Mar. 2006, 11.
Idea List: Pray with Power, *New Era*, Aug. 2006, 7.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 2

Lesson 18: Duties of a Teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood

Caroline Benzley, "Watching over the Church," *New Era*, Feb. 2005, 30.
Sedley Parkinson, "Knock Again," this issue, 8.

Lesson 19: A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

Elder Spencer V. Jones, "The Stench of Sin," *New Era*, Aug. 2004, 26.
Q&A (how do I know if I'm forgiven), *New Era*, Feb. 2003, 16.

Lesson 20: Administering the Sacrament

Ron Frandsen, "Passing Up Passing the Sacrament," *New Era*, May 2006, 30.
Matthew Baker, "Sacrament Service," *New Era*, Oct. 2002, 20.

Lesson 21: Preparing for the Melchizedek Priesthood

Q&A (preparing for Melchizedek Priesthood), *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 16.
"Your Next Step," *New Era*, Aug. 2004, 10.

Lesson 22: Patriarchal Leadership in the Home

Q&A (staying close to Dad), *New Era*, Feb. 2004, 16.
Shanna Butler, "What Abraham's Covenant Means to You," *New Era*, Apr. 2006, 32.

TEMPLE QUIZ

I had my very first experience doing baptisms for the dead, and ever since then I have been doing research on temples. My favorite temple is the Salt Lake Temple. It stands out in the Salt Lake City skyline, and I was sealed to my family in this temple. Your temple quiz (Jan. 2007) was the perfect thing to test my knowledge; I still have a lot to learn.

Jake H., Utah

SURFING

I love the story, "Surfing in the No Swim Zone" (Aug. 2006), which included the scripture Mosiah 4:30. It got me thinking about agency and how we can use it in our everyday lives. It shows how to resist peer pressure. I think this can be a lesson for all of us.

Travis N., Utah

TEACHING

I was glad that you put the "Tips for Teaching" section in the September 2006 *New Era*. It helps me to know that we are all teachers when it comes to teaching the gospel and that we can always learn more about how to teach.

Ryan B., Michigan

JOSEPH SMITH EXHIBIT

In the December 2006 *New Era* is a picture on page 22 of some items from the Joseph Smith log cabin. Along with several nails, there is an item listed as a "horseshoe." However, this is one-half of an ox shoe. Since oxen have split hoofs it was necessary to have two parts of the shoe for one foot. Oxen were the real work animals for freight wagons in the pioneer days.

Elder Bryon Knutsen, Idaho

Editor's note: You're right! Thanks for the correction.

"I really liked the article 'Faith in His Plan'... No matter what happens in this life, we can rejoice and have happiness by having faith in [the Lord's] plan."

SUGGESTION

I really like the *New Era*; there are some very good stories. I really like the posters, too. I think that you should include more stories about the lives of our prophets. That way youth can know more about the latter-day prophets. I also think it would be a good idea to talk more about Book of Mormon heroes and scriptures that are good to memorize.

Jaron G., Oregon

Editor's note: We are always happy to get suggestions for the magazine. Please send them to the address on the inside front cover of the magazine or to newera@ldschurch.org.

PRAISE TO THE MAN

My sister and I read "Praise to the Man" (Mar. 2006) and were surprised when it said the tune's origin is unknown. The tune of "Praise to the Man" is a Scottish bagpipe song called "Scotland the Brave." It is one of the most well-known bagpipe songs and is also very patriotic. Since W. W. Phelps came to the United States from Scotland, it was probably a very special song to him, and using it to write a song in honor of his beloved Prophet would have signified how close the Prophet was to his heart.

Preston S., Oregon

Editor's note: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We should have more clearly stated that the tune is a traditional Scottish folk song by an unknown composer.

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

*New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA*

Or e-mail us at newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



ESCAPE
BY SHERRIE CARTER

A thousand parts of me,
Waiting for release
From their own ignorance.
For years they have waited—
 The French artisan
 The English scholar,
 The Native American—
Together, waiting
For me to make them free.

I think of everyone I never knew
And guess how their laughter would sound,
But all I have is pieces of paper
With names, places of birth and deaths,
Dates that never meant anything to anyone,
Except them—
And now me,
The one who will master their escape.



COMING NEXT MONTH

- *See highlights of a theater production about a Book of Mormon woman named Abish.*
- *Come back to church for a fresh start.*
- *Find advice on staying healthy and happy.*
- *Read about a small person who learns a big lesson.*
- *Learn how to love washing dishes.*

These articles will be featured in the June 2007 issue of the New Era.