



THE New Era

OCTOBER

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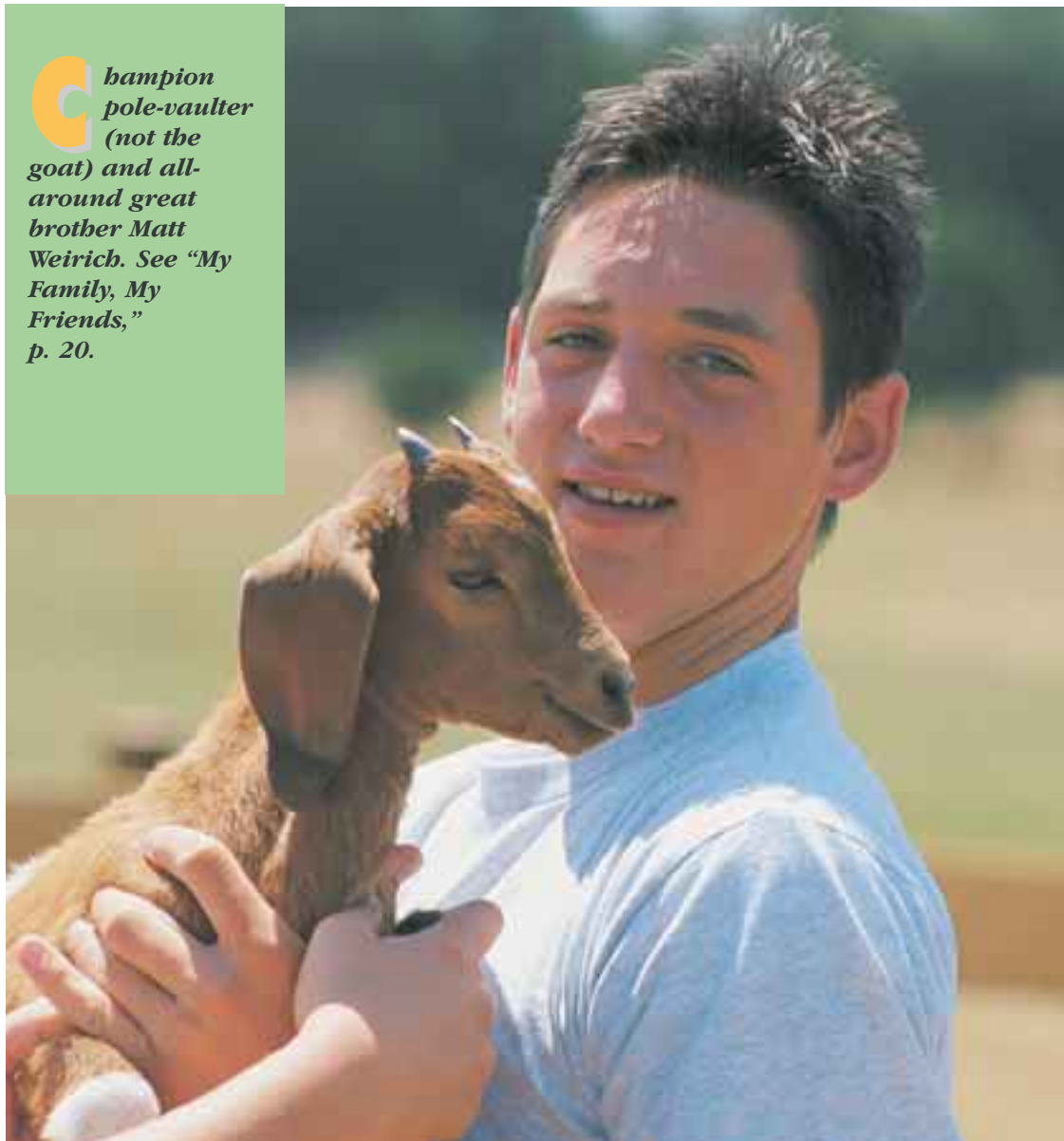
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Cover: Victor Weirich of
Fredericksburg, Texas,
takes care of the puppies
his family raises together.
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Friends" on p. 20.

Cover photography:
Janet Thomas (front),
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Champion
pole-vaulter
(not the
goat) and all-
around great
brother **Matt
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You Can Be Forgiven



by President
Gordon B. Hinckley

We are all prodigal sons and daughters who need to repent. Our Redeemer reaches out to us in forgiveness and mercy.

I know of no more beautiful story in all literature than that found in the 15th chapter of Luke. It is the story of a repentant son and a forgiving father. It is the story of a son who wasted his inheritance in riotous living, rejecting his father's counsel, spurning those who loved him. When he had spent all, he was hungry and friendless, and "when he came to himself" (Luke 15:17), he turned back to his father, who, on seeing him afar off, "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

I ask you to read that story. It is large enough to encompass every household,

and enough larger than that to encompass all mankind, for are we not all prodigal sons and daughters who need to repent and partake of the forgiving mercy of our Heavenly Father and then follow His example?

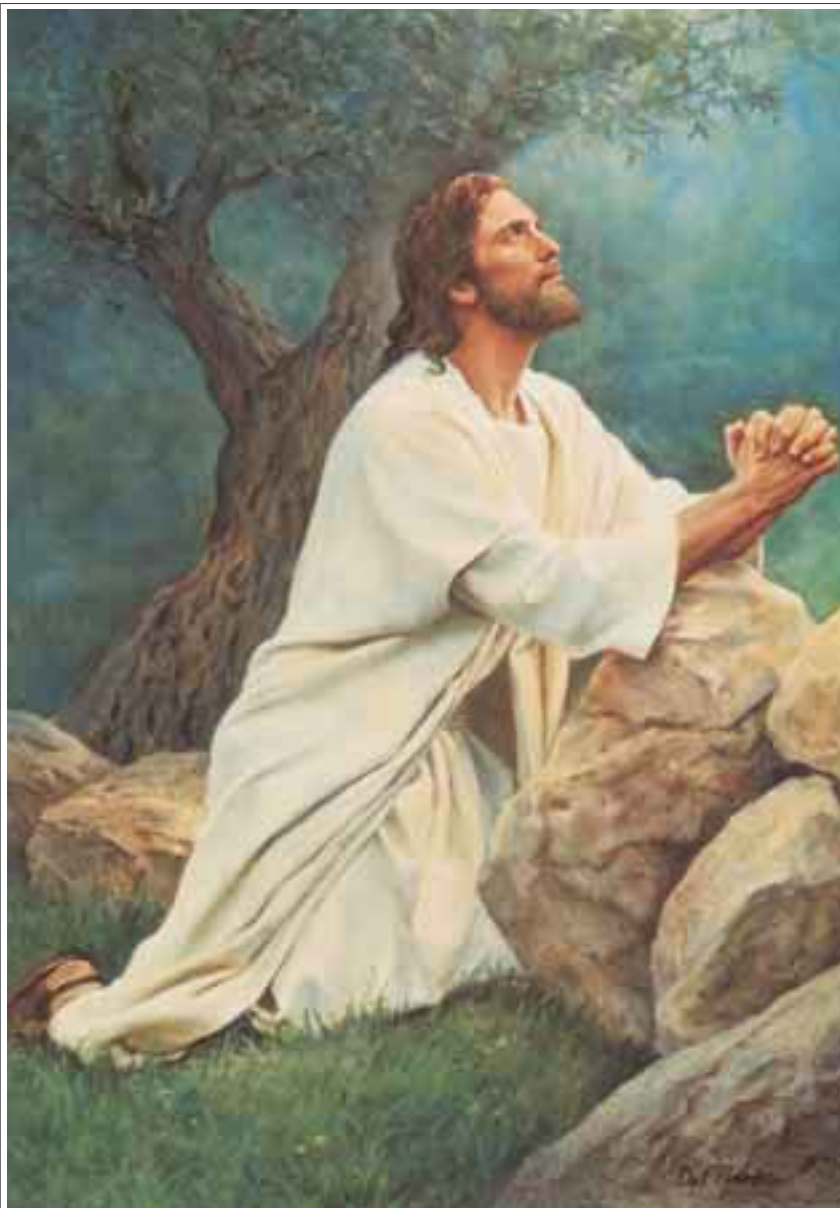
His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, reaches out to us in forgiveness and mercy, but in so doing He commands repentance. A true and magnanimous spirit of forgiveness will become an expression of that required repentance. Said the Lord—and I quote from a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph:

"Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"Which suffering caused myself, even





Behold, I God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . . Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me” (D&C 19:16, 23).

God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit. . . .

“Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me” (D&C 19:15–18, 23) (from *Ensign*, June 1991).

Are you beset with doubts and fears? Has discouragement pulled you down? Do you need added wisdom and strength to go forward with your life?

I call to mind the words of Tennyson’s Sir Galahad, “My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure” (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Sir Galahad”).

Everything looks better when there is cleanliness (from *Ensign*, May 1996, 48).

Be true and faithful

You are so very important. This work is so much the stronger because of you. Whenever you step over the line in an immoral act or in doing any other evil thing, the Church is that much weaker because of what you have done. When you stand true and faithful, it is that much stronger. Each one of you counts.

If any of you has stepped over the line, please do not think all is lost. The Lord reaches out to help you, and there are many willing hands in the Church also who will help. Put evil behind you. Pray about the situation, talk with your parents if you can, and talk with your bishop. You will find that he will listen and do so with confidentiality. He will help you. We all stand ready to help you (from *Ensign*, May 1996, 94).

You constantly are faced with difficult choices. Your problems are not new, but they are intensified. You are subjected to temptations that are attractive and appealing. You represent the future of this Church, and the adversary of truth would like to injure you, would like to destroy your faith, would like to lead you down paths that are beguiling and interesting, but deadly.

I wish to talk with you about being true to the faith, about being true to yourselves and your associates, about being true to your parents and your heritage, about being true to the Church and to our Heavenly Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in being true. How very important it is to be true to ourselves. Each of us has a thing we call conscience. We know the difference between right and wrong. We do not have to be instructed concerning what is good and what is evil. I think we know that. We know when we have done the wrong thing, and we suffer pangs of conscience. We know when we have done the right thing, and we experience a sense of happiness. To be true to ourselves means being an example of righteous living in all situations and circumstances (from *Ensign*, May 1996, 91–92).

You can change

Said the prophet Isaiah in another age, with words that fit our own:

“Wash you, make you clean; put away

the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

“Learn to do well. . . .

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isa. 1:16–19).

This, my beloved friends, is what the gospel is all about—to make bad men good and good men better, as President David O. McKay was wont to say. There is a process of change, a procedure in the Church by which even those who have sinned seriously may come back.

Do not let pride stand in your way (from *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 96).

Find peace

Come back, my friends. There is more of peace to be found in the Church than you have known in a long while. There are many whose friendship you will come to enjoy. There is reading to be done, instruction to be received, discussions in which to participate that will stretch your minds and feed your spirits.

The quiet longings of your heart will be fulfilled. The emptiness you have known for so long will be replaced with a fulness of joy (from *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 96–97).

Have I belabored the point? I hope not. If so, it is only because I feel so strongly concerning the obligations placed upon us by the Lord. He expects His people to be clean from the sins of the world.

If any here have been guilty of any of these, let us repent forthwith. Confess to the Lord, and if the sin is egregious, confess to your bishop. He will help you. There can be repentance and there can be forgiveness. The Lord has stated, “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5) (from *Ensign*, May 1996, 49).

This is the time

Repentance is one of the first principles of the gospel. Forgiveness is a mark of divinity. There is hope for you. Your lives are ahead, and they can be filled with happiness, even though the



past may have been marred by sin. This is a work of saving and assisting people with their problems. This is the purpose of the gospel.

This is the time, this is the very hour, to repent of any evil in the past, to ask for forgiveness, to stand a little taller and then to go forward with confidence and faith.

And, finally, in all of living have much of fun and laughter. Life is to be enjoyed, not just endured.

I leave my blessing upon you. Please know that we do love you. Please know that we have confidence in you. Live the gospel, be true to the faith, cling to the Church, honor your parents, love the Lord, and walk as a child of God (from *Ensign*, May 1996, 94). **NE**

The Lord reaches out to help you, and there are many willing hands in the Church also who will help. We all stand ready to assist you.



Spiritual



**by President
Boyd K. Packer**
Acting President of the
Quorum of the Twelve

“Nonsense,” I said. “There are no crocodiles out there.” Then all at once I saw it!

I have always been interested in animals and birds. When I learned to read, I found books about birds and animals and came to know much about them. By the time I was in my teens, I could identify most of the African animals. I could tell a klipspringer from an impala, or a gemsbok from wildebeest.

I always wanted to go to Africa and see the animals, and finally that opportunity came. Sister Packer and I were assigned to tour in South Africa. We had a very strenuous schedule and had dedicated eight chapels in seven days.

The mission president was vague about the schedule for September 10th. (That happens to be my birthday.) I thought we were planning to return to Johannesburg, South Africa. But he had other plans. “There is a game reserve some distance from here,” he explained, “and I have rented a car, and tomorrow, your birthday, we are going to spend seeing the African animals.”

Now I might explain that the game reserves in Africa are unusual. The people are put in cages, and the animals are left to run free. That is, there are compounds where the park visitors check in at night and are locked behind high fences until after daylight. They are allowed to drive about, but no one is allowed out of his car.

Because of a delay in getting our evening meal, it was long after dark when we left to go to our isolated cabin. We



CROCODILES

found the turnoff and had gone up the narrow road just a short distance when the engine stalled. We found a flashlight and I stepped out to check under the hood. As the light flashed on the dusty road, the first thing I saw was lion tracks!

Back in the car, we determined to content ourselves with spending the night there! Fortunately, we were rescued by the driver of a gas truck who had left the compound late because of a problem.


In the morning they brought us back to the compound. We had no automobile, and no way to get a replacement until late in the afternoon. Our one day in the park was ruined and, for me, the dream of a lifetime was gone.

I talked with a young ranger, and he was surprised that I knew many of the

African birds. Then he volunteered to rescue us. "We are building a new lookout over a water hole about 20 miles from the compound," he said. "It is not quite finished, but it is safe. I will take you out there with a lunch. You may see as many animals, or even more, than if you were driving around."

On the way to the lookout he volunteered to show us some lions. He turned off through the brush and before long located a group of 17 lions all sprawled out asleep and drove

Suddenly I became a believer!
"There are crocodiles all over the park," he said, "not just in the rivers."



Fortunately, there is spiritual first aid for those who have been bitten. The bishop of the ward is the guide in charge of this first aid. He can also treat those who have been badly morally mauled by these spiritual crocodiles—and see them completely healed.

right up among them.

We stopped at a water hole to watch the animals come to drink. It was very dry that season and there was not much water, really just muddy spots. When the elephants stepped into the soft mud, the water would seep into the depression and the animals would drink from the elephant tracks.

The antelope, particularly, were very nervous. They would approach the mud hole, only to turn and run away in great fright. I could see there were no lions about and asked the guide why they didn't drink.

His answer, and this is the lesson, was "Crocodiles."

I knew he must be joking and asked him seriously, "What is the problem?" The answer again: "Crocodiles."

"Nonsense," I said. "There are no crocodiles out there. Anyone can see that."

I thought he was having some fun at the expense of his foreign game expert, and finally I asked him to tell us the truth. Now I remind you that I was not uninformed. I had read many books. Besides, anyone would know that you can't hide a crocodile in an elephant track.

He could tell I did not believe him and determined, I suppose, to teach me a lesson. We drove to another location where the car was on an embankment above the muddy hole where we could look down. "There," he said. "See for yourself."

I couldn't see anything except the mud, a little water, and the nervous animals in the distance. Then all at once I saw it!—a large crocodile, settled in the mud, waiting for some unsuspecting animal to get thirsty enough to come for a drink.

Suddenly I became a believer! When he could see I was willing to listen, he continued with the lesson. "There are

crocodiles all over the park," he said, "not just in the rivers. We don't have any water without a crocodile somewhere near it, and you'd better count on it."

The guide was kinder to me than I deserved. My "know-it-all" challenge to his first statement, "crocodiles," might have brought an invitation, "Well, go out and see for yourself!"

I could see for myself that there were no crocodiles. I was so sure of myself I think I might have walked out just to see what was there. Such an arrogant approach could have been fatal! But he was patient enough to teach me.

I hope you'll be wiser in talking to your guides than I was on that occasion. That smart-aleck idea that I knew everything really wasn't worthy of me, nor is it worthy of you. I'm not very proud of it, and I think I'd be ashamed to tell you about it except that telling you may help you.

Those ahead of you in life have probed about the water holes a bit and raise a voice of warning about crocodiles. Not just the big, gray lizards that can bite you to pieces, but spiritual crocodiles, infinitely more dangerous, and more deceptive and less visible, even, than those well-camouflaged reptiles of Africa.

These spiritual crocodiles can kill or mutilate your souls. They can destroy your peace of mind and the peace of mind of those who love you. Those are the ones to be warned against, and there is hardly a watering place in all of mortality now that is not infested with them.

On another trip to Africa I discussed this experience with a game ranger in another park. He assured me that you can indeed hide a crocodile in an elephant track—one big enough to bite a man in two.

He then showed me a place where a tragedy had occurred. A young man from England was working in the hotel for the season. In spite of constant and repeated warnings, he went through the compound fence to check something across a shallow splash of water that didn't cover his tennis shoes.

"He wasn't two steps in," the ranger said, "before a crocodile had him, and

we could do nothing to save him.”

It seems almost to be against our natures, particularly when we are young, to accept much guidance from others. But there are times when, regardless of how much we think we know or how much we think we want to do something, our very existence depends on paying attention to the guides.

Now, it is a gruesome thing to think about that young man who was eaten by the crocodile. But that is not, by any means, the worst thing that could happen. There are moral and spiritual things far worse even than the thought of being chewed to pieces by a monstrous lizard.

Fortunately there are guides enough in life to prevent these things from happening if we are willing to take counsel now and again. If you will listen to the counsel of your parents and your teachers and your leaders when you are young, you can learn how to follow the best guide of all—the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. That is individual revelation. There is a process through which we can be alerted to spiritual dangers. Just as surely as that guide warned me, you can receive signals alerting you to the spiritual crocodiles that lurk ahead.

Fortunately, there is spiritual first aid for those who have been bitten. The bishop of the ward is the guide in charge of this first aid. He can also treat those who have been badly morally mauled by these spiritual crocodiles—and see them completely healed.

That experience in Africa was another reminder for me to follow the Guide. I follow Him because I want to. I bear witness that He lives, that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He has a body of flesh and bones, that He directs this Church, and His purpose is to see all of us guided safely back into His presence. **NE**

Adapted from an April 1976 general conference address.



Friend POWER

After a friend introduced Amy Valentine (right) to the Church, Michelle Broczek (left) stepped in to provide support and friendship.

In New Zealand they know that being a good friend sometimes means being a good missionary.

Jaslyn Simpson took a leap of faith in a Beehive class of only two girls in Wellington, New Zealand. The Beehive teacher of the Crofton Downs Ward challenged the girls, as part of their lesson on missionary work, to invite a friend to church. And Jaslyn decided she'd do it.

"I knew there was something missing in Amy's life," Jaslyn says, "so I knew I should introduce her to the gospel." Jaslyn's small action of love caused a major reaction in the life of her best friend, Amy Valentine. Amy came to church with Jaslyn at the first invitation and then kept coming to Sunday meetings and youth activities for the next two months, until Jaslyn and her family moved to Sydney, Australia.

"I've never really had a Christian background. I had no idea how to pray or anything," Amy says. "But before they left, I decided I was going to keep going to church without them. By then, I sort of knew some other people at church."

One of those people was Michelle

Broczek, the other Beehive in the Crofton Downs Ward. Michelle invited Amy to take the discussions in her home and, with her parents' approval, Amy was baptized when she was 13.

But Amy's transition into the Church wasn't easy. "Even when I was leading up to it and for a while after my baptism, it was hard to adjust," she says. Michelle's friendship and love helped Amy stay close to the gospel, even though none of her family or other friends were members. "Michelle's an amazing example. That was one of the biggest differences for me."

"I've always done those things," Michelle says. "I didn't just change because Amy was joining the Church." She says it's important to be an example, especially to strengthen investigators and new members in the Church. "Keep on working on your testimony and yourself and just be aware of the little things you do."

Amy and Michelle gain a lot of strength from each other, and they have strong individual testimonies, too. They frequently give away copies of the Book of Mormon with their testimonies written inside.

Love at home

Even with a strong testimony of the gospel, being the only member in the

by Shanna Ghaznavi





Now, whether attending early-morning seminary or other activities, Amy tries to return the favor by working alongside Michelle to help befriend and fellowship others.

family is not easy. Although she's been able to share the gospel with her friends at school, it's more difficult with her family. "They're the hardest, especially because I look to my parents as an example. It's kind of a switch when I try to teach them more about the gospel."

Not having other members of the Church in her family makes the goal of a temple marriage very important to Amy. She wants to have a family that is strong in the gospel and be able to do all the things she doesn't get a chance to do now, like family scripture study and family home evening.

Christlike love

Amy keeps trying to share the gospel with her family and hopes her example and activity in the Church will finally have an effect on them. She stays active by praying a lot and drawing strength from Young Women.

A value project Amy has chosen also helps her to come closer to Christ. "This year, I'm really concentrating on getting to know Jesus Christ better," she says. And the way to know Him better is to be more like Him. So Amy made a list of all the attributes of Christ she could think of, with help from the scriptures. She

came up with things like faith, charity, love, and generosity, and she works on trying to be each of the things on her list for a few days at a time.

To others who are in her situation, Amy has some words of advice: "Really, really study," she emphasizes. "Gain a testimony and an understanding of the gospel for yourself. Don't rely on others because it is up to *you*. Always rely on Heavenly Father. He will give you the understanding and the blessings you need."

Labor of love

The young women in her ward all agree: Amy's life is a labor of love. "Everyone should want to have a friend who's as into the gospel as she is. She loves the gospel," says Kelly Butters, who just left the Laurels for the Relief Society. Since the gift of the gospel was shared with her, Amy feels she needs to share it with others too. She and Michelle have fellowshipped many of the other young women in their stake, and they continue to share the gospel and their testimonies. Jaslyn's small leap of faith, nearly five years ago, has rippled through Amy's life and continues to bless the lives of others through her example and testimony. **NE**



You're **INVITED!**

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, general president of the Young Women, made this special request of all the young women in the Church at the last general Young Women meeting:

“Will you reach out and bring one other young woman into full activity in the Church this coming year? Surely each one of you knows of a girl who is less active or a recent convert or who is not a member. We are asking you to reach out and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with one other young woman, so that she can also enjoy the sweet blessings of heaven. . . .

“Just think, if each one of you will accept this invitation to reach out and bring in just one, next year there will be twice as many active young women! Let the Holy Spirit guide you in your effort. Your parents and leaders will also help you know what to do and how to do it” (*Ensign*, May 2001, 92).

Q & A

“In school I am always surrounded by words that are offensive to me. Every day I hear these words, and now they are repeated in my head subconsciously and I don’t like it. How do I avoid these words and get them out of my head?”

NEW ERA

Trying not to be exposed to offensive language at school can be a lot like swimming in a pool of water and trying not to get wet.

You will hear things at school that you would rather not hear. However, that doesn’t mean you should be content to swim in a pool of profanity. There are ways to avoid some offensive language. And if some of it does stick in your head—like things you don’t want to remember tend to do—there are ways to get rid of those thoughts.

In school you don’t always have control over who is around you. When you can choose, make sure you choose friends who respect your standards. When you can’t choose, and if you feel it is appropriate, let those around you know, in a polite way, that you don’t appreciate offensive language.

“The mind is like a stage,” says President Boyd K. Packer. “Except when we are asleep, the curtain is always up. . . .

“Have you noticed that, without any real intent on your part and almost in the

Associate with friends who have high ideals and respect your standards.

In a polite way, let your friends know you don’t appreciate offensive language.

Your mind can think about only one thing at a time, so keep your mind engaged with positive thoughts.

Choose a hymn and think through it to get rid of unclean thoughts.

Remember, when you are desensitized to offensive language, you are less likely to recognize promptings of the Holy Ghost.

R E A D E R S

There is tremendous power in music. When I am faced with inappropriate thoughts, I begin to go over hymns in my head. I find that rather than becoming frustrated and angry when those thoughts pop up, I can use that time to slow down and really meditate on the words and messages of the songs. Both the music and lyrics invite the Spirit into my heart.

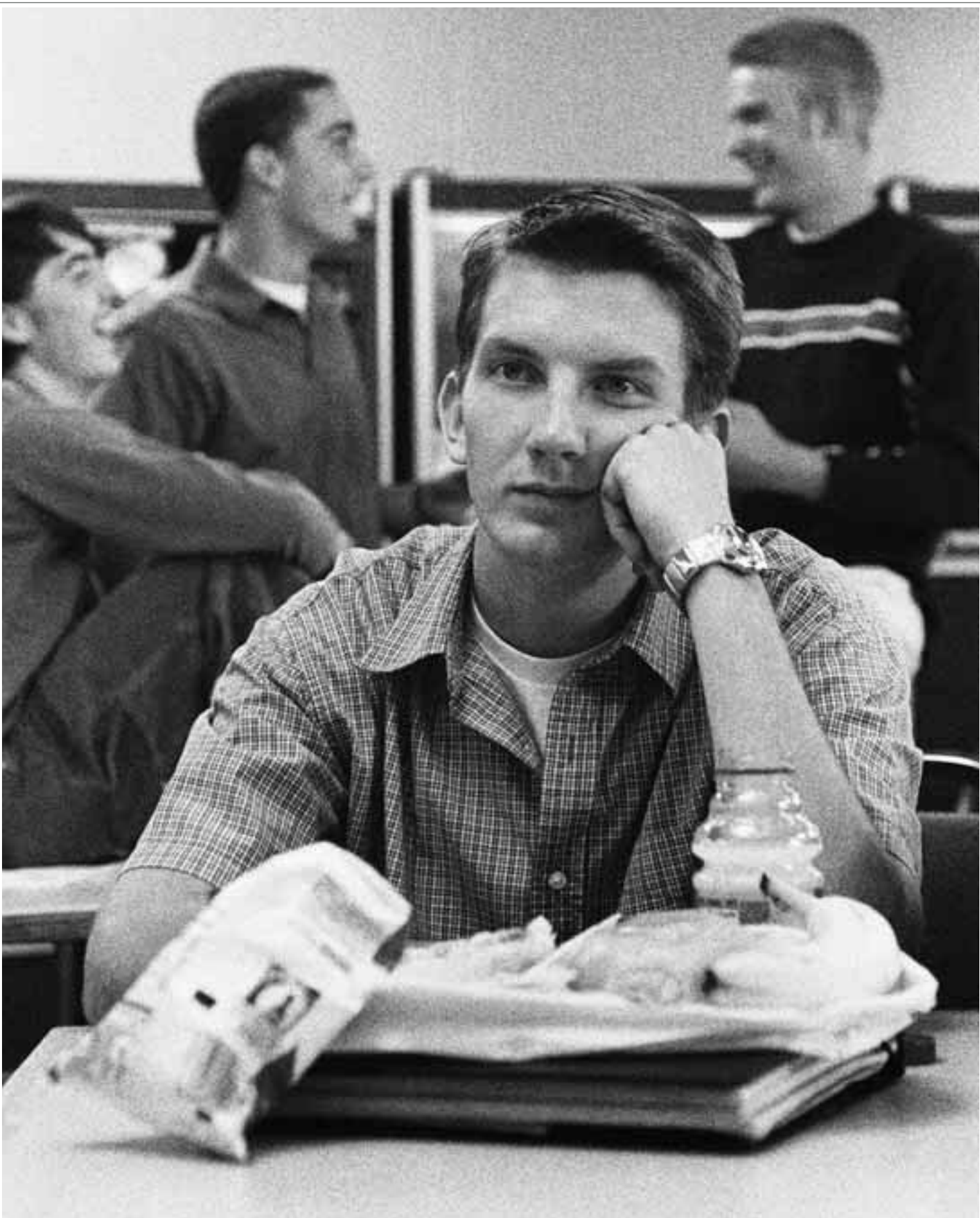
Elder Tyler Probasco, 19
California Riverside Mission



I am often faced with this situation. I find it best to politely ask people if they could not use vulgar language around me. Most people are nicer than you think. If they don’t quit, just leave. Don’t forget you can always ask the Lord for help.

Rachel Quito, 16
Mesa, Arizona





midst of any performance, a shady little thought may creep in from the wings and endeavor to attract your attention? . . . If you permit them to go on, all other thoughts, of any virtue, will leave the stage. You will be left, because you consented to it, to the influence of unworthy thoughts" (*That All May Be Edified*, 38).

Unlike other stages, the stage of your mind allows only one performer at a time because you can think of only one thought at a time. President Packer says that when your mind's stage is occupied by unwanted thoughts, like offensive language, you should remove them with your favorite hymn. "Anytime you find that these shady actors have slipped in from the sideline of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, think through this hymn. . . . It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is clean and uplifting and reverent, the baser thoughts will leave" (39).

Since your mind can think about only one thing at a time, keeping your mind anxiously engaged with positive thoughts can be a way to keep offensive words out of your mind. If you keep busy with school, work, church, service, and family activities, you can keep offensive actors off your stage.

If you don't do anything to avoid offensive words or get them out of your mind, you can become desensitized. When you are desensitized to offensive language, you are less likely to recognize promptings of the Holy Ghost. You may also forget how disgusted you once were with that language and find yourself slipping and using words that used to make you cringe. **NE**

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



"Choose from among the sacred music of the Church one favorite hymn. . . . Anytime you find that . . . shady actors have slipped in from the sideline of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, think through this hymn" (*That All May Be Edified*, 38–39).

**—President
Boyd K. Packer
Acting President
of the Quorum
of the Twelve**

When I say my prayers at night, I ask my Heavenly Father to help me not be influenced by the bad language. When I'm faced with such language the next day, I think of my prayer, and that helps to block the negative influences.

**Janica Roane, 13
Clinton, Utah**



I have found that the best way to rid your mind of offensive words is to think of your favorite scripture or hymn. Then repeat it over and over to yourself until the bad words are forgotten and you can feel the Spirit once again.

**Barry Fulk, 16
Paris, Illinois**



What I do to help me block out my surroundings is to bring a good, wholesome book with me.

**Melissa Zachreson, 17
Phenix City, Alabama**



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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

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

QUESTION

It seems every time I ask my friend a tough question, he answers by saying I need to pray about it. He says he receives an immediate answer to his prayers, but it just doesn't work for me. What am I doing wrong?

Please respond before December 1, 2001.

STANDING TALL



YOU REACH THE GREATEST HEIGHTS WHILE ON YOUR KNEES.
(See D&C 19:38.)

My Family



What if your best friends lived with you? What if you could be together forever? This Texas family knows how to make that happen.

Rick Weirich couldn't see through the viewfinder of his video camera because of the tears in his eyes.

But he kept the camera pointed at his two sons on the field. His sons were standing by the pole vault venue with their arms around each other, the younger one comforting his older brother. Moments before, they had been competing against each other in the pole vault at a regional track and field meet in Texas to decide who would go on to the state championships. The brothers had had big plans. They wanted to place first and second in regionals and go to state together. Chris had broken his pole on his first try, and, on his final try with his backup pole, he was eliminated when he didn't clear the height.

Before younger brother Matt set up for his next attempt, he stopped. He had something more important to do. He needed to see if his brother was all right. He needed to say some reassuring words to Chris. For a moment these two brothers, who had been competitors, stood together, sharing the burden of disappointment.



by Janet Thomas

My Friends





Everyone pitches in. Erica (above) likes gathering the eggs in a basket that belonged to her grandmother. Brian and Victor (right) take care of their puppies, including bathing and feeding them, plus paying the vet bills.

The parents, Rick and Brenda, didn't need videotape to record the scene. It was being recorded in their hearts. What they saw wasn't failure but a huge success. Their sons cared more about each other than they did about winning.

The Weirich family is from Fredricksburg, Texas, a small town about 60 miles northeast of San Antonio. Rick and Brenda Weirich have two daughters and seven sons. With five teenagers, the Weirichs make a mark in the community and especially in their branch. But most of all, they have learned to pull together and support each other in everything they do. This feeling of togetherness permeates their home, their branch, and every part of their lives.

For example, preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament every Sunday involves four Weirich brothers. Because the branch is small, these young men handle most of the Aaronic Priesthood duties. And they like it. "It's kind of a family unity thing," says 18-year-old Chris.

"You know that each one of your brothers is worthy, and you also feel their spirits. Just being up there is uplifting."

Matt, 17, adds, "It's fun because we have four brothers taking care of the branch and making sure everything's okay."

The boys also look up to their dad as their branch president and admire the way he cares for the members of the branch. And with three more Weirich brothers growing up, there will be four brothers handling priesthood duties for years to come.

Lots of built-in friends

Kimberly and Erica are vastly outnumbered in the girl-to-boy ratio in their family, but it doesn't seem to be a disadvantage. Erica, 20, the oldest, has some mental challenges. Her brothers watch out for her. Matt says, "She's got a special heart. I have a picture on my wall she colored for me that says, 'To Matt—Love Erica.' There's nothing around it."



People who go into my room look at it and ask, 'Why do you have that picture hanging up?' I tell them that this was my sister who did this, and it really means something to me. It's just like her special little spirit right there."

Kimberly, 15, keeps up with her brothers. She plays touch football on the lawn and can tease them as much as they tease her. As Kimberly approaches her 16th birthday, she is getting lots of advice from her older siblings. They warn her which boys to stay away from and have threatened to chaperon her first dates. If any boy starts to bother her, her friends tell him that he better stop because she has too many brothers.

Kimberly has been following the example set for her. "My brothers have a reputation for leadership and always being kind to everyone. I try to be the same."

Whenever Kimberly's friends phone her to see what she's doing, she tells them what she's doing with her little

brothers or her older brothers. As Kimberly tells it, "They say, 'You're always doing something with them, and it sounds really fun.' My friends think it's cool I have so many brothers."

Learning responsibility

Because they make up the majority of youth in the branch, the Weirichs have learned responsibility. But their family encourages reliability in other ways as well. They raise pedigreed basset hounds, and the family members each have a female dog they are responsible for. That includes keeping it bathed, fed, and groomed. And if their dog gets sick, they have to pay the vet bills. They are also responsible for their dog's puppies.

"My dog is named Myrtle. She has four puppies, and she's such a good mom. I try not to get too attached to them because I really hate it whenever they go," Kimberly says as she cuddles a handful of cute, squirming puppies. "But I think I get too attached."

The goats come running when Matt (above) shows up with dinner. The family has learned responsibility by understanding how to care for and love all God's creatures.



Family football games (above) become free-for-alls as five younger brothers try to tackle their oldest brother, Chris, without much success. With Dad, Rick, serving as president, the Weirich family play a big part in the branch.

When the puppies are sold, the money goes into a bank account to be used for missions and education. In the meantime, everyone gets plenty of chances to play with and take care of some great dogs.

Other animals also demand their daily attention. The chickens have to be fed, and the eggs gathered. The goats and cows have to be fed and watered. But there are a lot of helping hands to take turns and to keep everything around home running smoothly.

Setting the example

Brenda Weirich has a philosophy that she teaches her children. She tells them, "When you're in school, you'll have a set of friends. You'll go to college where you'll likely have other friends. You'll get married and have a whole new set of friends. But one thing that will not change is your family. You will always have the same brothers and sisters and parents."



Rick says, "They have their squabbles like all children do, but as time goes on, it's decreasing. I think they see other families where the kids are not united and close, and they don't want that. They want family to give them a safe haven."

To work on having family unity, they all try to attend every game or concert or event any one of them is participating in. Sometimes that gets difficult, but since they live in a small town they can go to half a game for one person, then race over and see the other half of someone else's game. It also helps that two boys are old enough to drive and help out with taking the younger children to the places they need to go.

Chris is keenly aware that, as the oldest, he is setting an example for his six young brothers. He has been offered scholarships to play football at several big-name universities. But they want him to commit to at least one year of college before leaving on his mission. Since Chris turns 19 soon after he would start



college, he refuses to postpone his mission and has turned down the scholarships. He has faith that he'll be able to regain a scholarship when he gets back. His parents were introduced to the gospel by missionaries when he was a baby, and his entire life he has anxiously looked forward to serving.

That interest and excitement about missionary work has spread. Victor, 12, is, all the brothers admit, the best baseball player, and he loves the game. His parents started getting calls from the local baseball coaches asking why Victor had not signed up to play baseball during the summer. "When I asked Victor," says Rick, "he said he wanted to spend as much time as possible with Chris during the summer before he went on his mission. I just said, 'Wow, Victor, you'd do that for your brother?'"

With so many boys in the family, the competition was sometimes less than brotherly. Chris and Matt, being close in age, suffered from it for a while.

Anything Chris did, Matt tried to do better. It caused contention. Chris says, "Mom knew best. She had a talk with me. She said that God gave us all talents, and we can't be better than someone else at everything. Then I realized that Matt has something in him that makes him better at some things. He has his talents, and I have mine. We need to share them and gain from each other and really enjoy watching each other do whatever. It might be soccer, band, sports, being outdoors, or giving service."

When Chris watched Matt compete at state in the pole vault, the sport he had taught his younger brother, the disappointment at not being there himself lessened. He felt calm. "I was glad one of us made it and that it could be my brother." **NE**

Editor's Note: Since this article was written, Chris received his mission call and is serving in the Lithuania Vilnius Mission.

A plaque on the water-wheel behind the boys commemorates the part Mormon settlers played in 1846 helping to establish Fredericksburg. With their service in the branch, the Weirichs help ensure that the Church will be a good influence in the city for years to come.

Every Soul Is Precious

What is the sealing power? And what blessings and obligations do we have because of it?

Salvation for the dead is a doctrine which shows forth the love and mercy and justice of God in His dealings with all His children—not only to those whose receive the gospel in this life, but to all those to whom this privilege does not come, since they are still precious in the Lord’s sight.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are a most blessed and favored people. The Lord has restored to us the sealing power, the power to bind on earth and have our acts sealed eternally in the heavens.

This sealing power is the same divine authorization received by Peter in fulfillment of the Lord’s promises:

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19).

The sealing power was given by the Prophet Elijah to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the third day of April 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. The sealing power now resides in the Church and will continue to do so to the end of time.

Two great truths

To understand what is involved in this



by President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972)

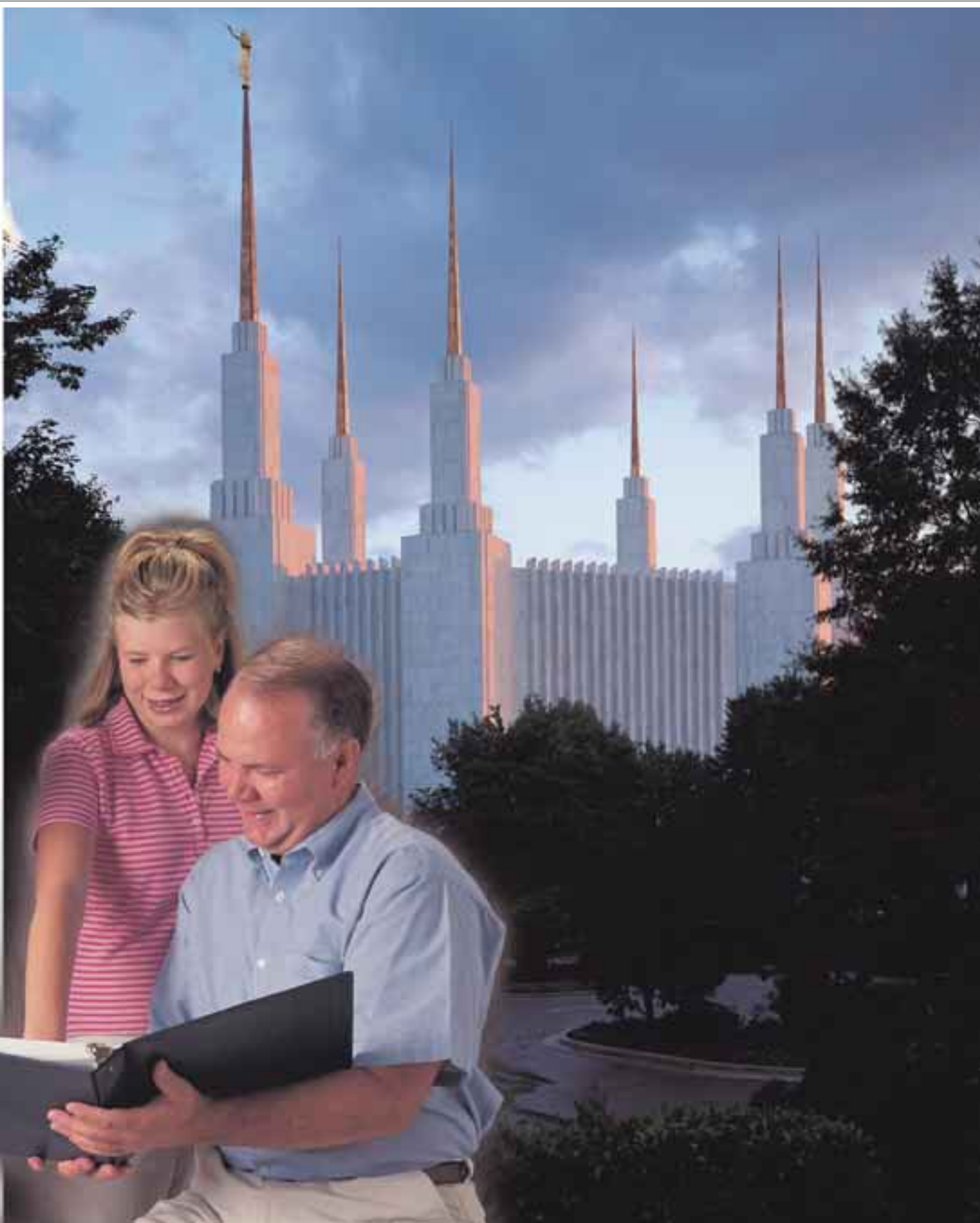
This plan of salvation is family centered. It leads to eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life that God our Father lives.

modern ministry of Elijah—a prophet who was translated and taken up into heaven without tasting death, but who now is a resurrected and exalted being—we must remind ourselves of two great truths.

The first great truth is that we are the spirit children of God our Heavenly Father; that we are members of His family; that we dwelt with Him for long ages in our premortal life. God ordained a plan of progression and salvation which would enable us—if we are faithful



Photography by John Luke



and true in all things—to advance and progress until we became like Him.

This plan of salvation is family centered. It leads to eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life that God our Father lives. This plan of salvation is designed to enable us to create eternal family units of our own.

The second great truth we need to remind ourselves of is that God has restored the fulness of His everlasting gospel. That is, He has revealed anew the law and principles by which we may press forward in righteousness until we gain eternal life. And He has conferred again upon men that priesthood and those powers whereby they can be sealed up unto eternal life.

What is eternal life?

Eternal life consists of the continuation of the family in eternity. And the sealing power restored by Elijah includes the power to bind families together forever. By virtue of this power we perform marriages in the temples which cause family units to endure for time and *all* eternity. And it is this same power that reaches out to include our ancestors who did not have the opportunity to receive the gospel when they lived on earth.

Thus we find Malachi promising that when the Lord should send the Prophet Elijah “before the coming of the great and dreadful day,” this great prophet would “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5–6). This is exactly what happened. Since that third day of April 1836, when Elijah conferred the sealing power again upon men on earth, there has been a great increase in genealogical research, the result of which is to identify our dead ancestors so that we can perform the ordinances of salvation for them vicariously.

What we should be concerned with

Our first concern should be our own salvation. We should seek every gospel blessing for ourselves. We should be baptized and enter into the order of celestial marriage so that we can become inheritors in the fulness of our Father’s kingdom.

Then we should be concerned about

Our first concern should be our own salvation. We should seek every gospel blessing for ourselves. Next we should seek out our dead ancestors and perform the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for them in the temples of the Lord.

our families and our ancestors. We should teach the gospel to others, so they will have opportunity to gain all of the blessings of the gospel and eternal family units of their own.

Next we should seek out our dead ancestors and perform the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for them in the temples of the Lord. Our descendants and our ancestors are all members of our families, and we do and should have more concern about their spiritual well-being than that of any other people in the world.

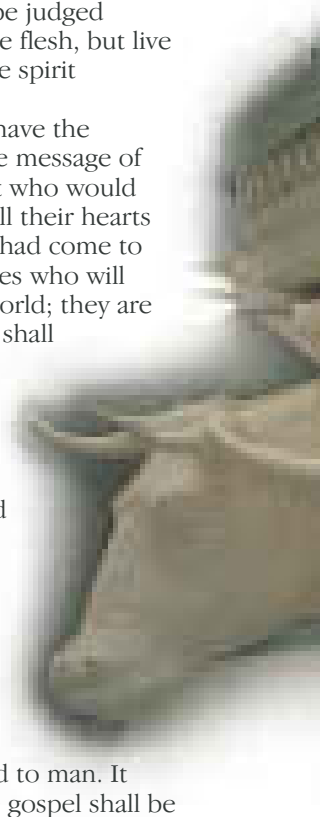
The Lord has decreed that all of His spirit children, every soul who has lived or shall live on earth, shall have a fair and just opportunity to believe and obey the laws of His everlasting gospel. Those who accept the gospel and live in harmony with its laws, including baptism and celestial marriage, shall have eternal life.

It is obvious that only a small portion of mankind has so far heard the word of revealed truth from the voice of one of the Lord’s true servants. In the wisdom and justice of the Lord, all must do so. As Peter said: “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit (1 Pet. 4:6).

Those who did not have the opportunity to hear the message of salvation in this life but who would have accepted it with all their hearts if such an opportunity had come to them—they are the ones who will accept it in the spirit world; they are the ones for whom we shall perform the ordinances in the temples; and they are the ones who shall become heirs with us of salvation and eternal life.

Every soul is precious

I think this doctrine of salvation for the dead is one of the most glorious principles ever revealed to man. It is the way in which the gospel shall be



offered to all men. It establishes the fact that God is no respecter of persons; that every soul is precious in His sight; and that all men will be judged according to their works.

Now, I thank the Lord that He has restored His everlasting gospel to us in this day. I thank Him for the sealing power returned to earth by the Prophet Elijah. I thank Him for the eternal family unit, for the privilege we have of being sealed ourselves in His holy temples. I thank him for making available these sealing blessings for our ancestors who died without a knowledge of the gospel.

What a wonderful privilege is granted to us that we may go into the temples of the Lord and perform the work of salvation for our ancestors who lived and died before the Church was established among them.

I bear testimony that the work in which we are engaged is true. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God; that he received the revelations, the priesthood, and the keys; and that he set up this Church and kingdom at the

The doctrine of salvation for the dead is one of the most glorious principles ever revealed to man.

command and direction of the Lord.

I love the Lord and desire to see His earthly kingdom prosper—and it is prospering. The gospel is rolling forth in the nations of the earth in a marvelous manner; we are identifying our progenitors and performing the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for them by virtue of the sealing power which we now possess. **NE**

Adapted from a BYU devotional address given January 12, 1971.





That's exactly why, crawling through mud, with gunfire and bombs going off, I began to sing a *Primary* song.

by Aaron J. Letteer

I was playing follow-the-leader, but this definitely wasn't child's play.

The bombs were going off all around me, and gunfire zinged overhead. But I had to keep crawling, dragging the 40-pound ammunition can with me through the dirt and mud. My basic training in South Carolina was nearly finished. We were in the final ordeal to test our skills, endurance, and obedience. Each day had been challenging, and it seemed that I'd been

able to meet each task and accomplish it. But I was really being pushed this time.

When I first arrived, I realized that in order to succeed, I needed to learn from those around me. Watching the people who were excelling, I followed their lead. With each new skill, I looked to see how the best men of our group worked at it, and then followed their example to develop my full potential. It was the same lesson my mother and father had taught me since childhood. They read the scriptures, and they taught me to, so I read them daily. I was shown by them to kneel and pray, morning and night. They taught me to follow the example of my

Carry On, RECRUIT



Savior and live my life as He lived His.

When the going would get tough, my mother always said, “Sing a Primary song; it will carry you through.”

So there I was, with my face in the dirt, struggling through the gunfire and explosions, in the final big test of my training, and my mother’s words came to mind. I began singing, softly at first, “I am a child of God, and He has sent me here, has given me . . .” (*Hymns*, no. 301).

Suddenly, a drill instructor on the course shouted, “Recruit Letteer! What are you singing?”

I thought I had been singing to myself,

but in the pressure of the moment I must have started singing out loud. Now, over the din on the field, one of my drill instructors had heard me. I lifted my face from the mud and called out, “Sir! I’m singing ‘I Am a Child of God,’ sir!”

He looked at me, paused for a moment, then shouted, “Carry on, recruit!”

And I will, I’ll carry on as a United States Marine in the Reserve Corps, and in a few months, as Elder Letteer somewhere in the world as a missionary. And when the going gets tough, I’ll just look to my example, Jesus Christ, and know how to “carry on” again. **NE**

The drill instructor barked at me, “What are you singing?” I lifted my face from the mud and answered.



Everyone SAID IT

People always told me that if I wanted to know the Church is true, I should pray and ask. But I wasn't getting an answer.

They all said it. My mom said it. My dad said it. My teachers at church said it. My friends said it. And they said it over and over again. Joseph Smith is a prophet, they said. This Church is true, they said. The only true church on the face of the earth. But I wasn't so sure that I could say it with my whole heart.

I wanted to know if they were right. I had always been told that if I wanted a testimony I had to pray and ask God for the truth. I prayed, but I felt nothing. As part of my daily prayers, I asked for a confirmation, a sure knowledge and testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the Church was true. I still felt the same. I continued praying daily, asking for a witness of the truth. God chose not to answer my prayers right away. But I continued seeking.

One day I was playing hymns on the piano and singing to myself. I turned to "Joseph Smith's First Prayer" (*Hymns*, no. 26). I had sung it many times before. This time, I paid closer attention to the words, and they meant more to me than

they ever had. "Oh, how lovely was the morning!" I sang. "Radiant beamed the sun above. Bees were humming, sweet birds singing, Music ringing thru the grove, When within the shady woodland Joseph sought the God of love."

I imagined in my mind, Joseph Smith walking into a grove of trees on a beautiful spring day. "Humbly kneeling, sweet appealing—'Twas the boy's first uttered prayer." I pictured Joseph in my mind, praying to his Father with all his heart.

When I reached the third verse, the words affected me powerfully. "Suddenly a light descended, Brighter far than noon-day sun." Just as that sudden light, brighter than the sun, enlightened the understanding of the boy Joseph, it enlightened mine. Peace filled me as I continued to sing. "And a shining glorious pillar O'er him fell, around him shone, While appeared two heav'nly beings, God the Father and the Son."

With joy in my heart I sang, "Joseph, this is my Beloved; Hear him!" Oh, how sweet the word! Joseph's humble prayer was answered, And he listened to the Lord."

Joseph's humble prayer was answered, and so was mine that day. I didn't have a vision as Joseph did, but I could feel that the Church was true. It was something I had never felt before: a peace, a joy, a surety that Joseph Smith was a prophet and had restored the Church of Jesus Christ. I have felt that peaceful assurance many times since then. I know God lives. He hears and answers our prayers. This is His true Church. And Joseph Smith was a true prophet. **NE**

I continued to seek an answer. And it came in an unexpected way—as I was singing a hymn I had sung many times before.

by Jeniann Jensen

YOUR SPECIAL PURPOSE



by Elder
H. Burke Peterson
Emeritus Member
of the Seventy

One missionary had injured his knee and couldn't ride his bike. Rather than split up a successful team, they convinced the mission president to let them find a way to continue working together. The solution was simple but achieved a great purpose.

One of our greatest challenges is to overcome the feeling that we are unimportant, that we are not special and unique.

Have you ever thought: “I’m not very important so what I say or do will never really be noticed? What can I offer that will make any difference? What can I do that will truly help others, cause their lives to be different, to be better? Do I actually have any worthwhile talents? Is there anything I can do to reach another in need? I’m not that special. If I don’t help, someone else will come along and do a better job than I can do.”

One of the greatest challenges is to overcome the feeling that we are unimportant, that we are not special and unique. Do you think for a moment that Heavenly Father would have sent one of His children to this earth by accident, without the possibility of a significant work to perform?

It is true we all have different traits, talents, personalities, and abilities. True, some seem to have more or at least different gifts than others. Some make higher grades or play basketball better. Some are taller, shorter, heavier, or lighter than others. Yes, we know some are even better looking—more beautiful or handsome. And so we find ourselves thinking or saying: “If I were only like John, or if I were only like Ann, then I could really do something fantastic, something others would notice. Then everyone would want to be like me. Wouldn’t that be great?”

Would you like to hear about some

uncommon common members of the Church who have just done ordinary things that have made them great in small ways?

Missionary companions

The missionary bearing his testimony was on crutches; he had injured his knee in a bicycle accident. He wanted to tell the other missionaries how much he loved his companion, to tell them how he had learned of a new dimension in love from this companion. Two or three weeks earlier he had been in an accident. The doctor had said he couldn’t ride his bike anymore and must stay off his leg. The mission president had decided to transfer him so his companion could keep on working. What good could he do when he couldn’t even ride a bicycle? His companion pleaded with the mission president not to break up the partnership yet. They were having success. He loved his incapacitated companion. They would find a way. “Please let us try!” he said. The mission president agreed to let them make the attempt.

Then the elder on crutches told us how they had solved their problem. He said his companion had connected their two bikes with a rope and had pulled him all over the city for two weeks as they did their work. He said he had really learned what it was like for one man to love another.

Perhaps you have something to give that is as simple as love, or dedication, or hard work, or anything else that may be missing in someone’s life. Try it. Share it. You’ll never know what it may do for another.

A broken neck

In a western city a young man had been preparing for 18 years to go on a



He couldn't move a finger or a toe, an arm or a leg. Yet he found a way to accomplish the assignment the bishop had given him.



mission. He was excited, his parents were excited, his girlfriend was also, and he was ready.

One evening at the city swimming pool, he and some friends were diving from the highboard. The second he hit the water, he knew his approach angle had not been good. He was in trouble. His head pierced the water and struck the bottom of the pool with a sickening thud. He was immediately knocked unconscious. He was brought carefully to the poolside and then rushed to the hospital. After weeks of medical attention, he was finally told that he would be paralyzed from his neck down for the rest of his life. He couldn't move a finger or a toe, an arm or a leg. He would now lie in bed forever. His body would become a useless thing, and unless something unusual happened, so would his spirit.

A wise bishop recognized the problem. After talking with the boy's parents and the doctor, the bishop gave him an assignment. It was unbelievable, unreal, impossible! The assignment: would he please write a letter each month to every missionary and serviceman from their ward? Was the bishop just not thinking or was he inspired? How could the boy write with no hands or fingers to assist? Some had learned to use their toes in such an emergency, but he couldn't move his. Having faith in their bishop,

the boy and his parents started to work on the assignment. It took days, weeks, and months of effort and discouragement. In time, it began to happen.

By putting a pencil between his teeth and moving his head, he learned to make a mark, then a word, next a sentence, and finally a page. He wrote and wrote.

For more than 20 years he has been writing beautiful letters. He has inspired thousands. The side benefit is that his own spirit, simply stated, is magnificent. Is it worth the effort to follow our leaders' counsel no matter how hard or how difficult? He thinks so. So do I.

A royal generation

My dear friends, you are a royal generation. You were preserved to come to the earth in this time for a special purpose. Not just a few of you, but all of you. There are things for each of you to do that no one else can do as well as you. If you do not prepare to do them, they will not be done. Your mission is unique and distinctive for you. Please don't make another have to take your place. He or she can't do it as well as you can. If you will let Him, I testify that our Father in Heaven will walk with you through the journey of life and inspire you to know your special purpose here. **NE**

Originally published in the May 1979 New Era.

ROUGH DAY?

We all have those hard days or times in our lives that discourage us and make us want to give up. A positive attitude is a must during those times, so here are some suggestions from *New Era* readers to help you be hopeful, even when things might be going badly:

- ✦ Use challenging times to learn to rely on the Lord and grow closer to Him. When we are patient and endure our trials well, we become more like the Savior.
- ✦ Serve. Focus on others and their needs instead of your own to get your mind off your problems.
- ✦ Be grateful. Dwell on the positive instead of the negative.
- ✦ Stop worrying about it. Do all you can do to resolve your challenges and then lay your problems at the Lord's feet. Have faith that He will bless you with the righteous desires of your heart.
- ✦ Seek forgiveness. Repentance can bring great peace when we have made wrong choices and need to return to Heavenly Father.
- ✦ Talk to a friend or, better yet, counsel with your Heavenly Father. Pray.

- ✦ Do something active. Shake those doldrums loose with some exercise or sport.
- ✦ Read the scriptures; they are full of the gospel message of hope.
- ✦ Do something you enjoy. Draw, run, write poetry, or whatever it is you like to do.
- ✦ Ask for help. Your parents, family, and Church leaders want you to be happy.
- ✦ Write a letter of encouragement to a missionary or to someone who might need cheering up more than you do.
- ✦ Develop an attitude of happiness. Remember our attitudes are the results of our choices. You can choose to be happy even if your circumstances aren't the best.
- ✦ Don't be so serious. Laughter really is the best medicine, and it cheers those around you as well.
- ✦ Don't give up. Know that Heavenly Father has a plan for you and, if you seek His will, things will turn out all right eventually.
- ✦ Remember you are *never* alone. Christ has felt every heartache and pain that we might ever feel, so He knows how to help us. Rely on the Lord. **NE**

GOT ANY BRIGHT IDEAS?



What are some ways you can increase the reverence of your behavior and thoughts? Send your ideas to Idea List, *New Era*, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. Or e-mail us at cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org. Please send your ideas by December 1, 2001.

I Broke My **PROMISE**

I had made the commitment to date only members of the Church when I was 12. But when I turned 16, the members I knew didn't start calling. In fact, no boys started calling. I went through high school wishing for dates and not getting any. I didn't even get asked to the prom. So when Mark told me he liked me and wanted to go out, I jumped at the chance. But Mark wasn't a member of the Church. I rationalized breaking my promise, though, because he was the only boy who would ask me out.

Mark seemed perfect in almost every way. He was three years older than me and shared a house with two roommates. He was very cute, fun, and full of ambition. Mark was my dream come true, a singer and dancer working on a music career.

Mark lavished me with compliments, and he introduced me to his friends and family, who were all welcoming and fun. We started to see each other every day. I had explained my standards to Mark, and he said he understood and respected them—at least at first.

But after a while he started to push me to do more with him physically. I resisted but gradually started to give in. I liked him, and the feelings he stirred in me were very strong. We weren't doing anything too bad, I rationalized.

I started staying out late at his house, and we would always have fun. But then

when I would get home, I wouldn't feel as good. There was something nagging me in the back of my mind, and it kept tugging at my spirit. I was uncomfortable with how physical I was getting with Mark. And though I tried to rationalize, I couldn't hide from that feeling.

I decided I had to break up with Mark. I talked to him, and he listened to me, telling me I should do whatever I was comfortable with. He did, however, beg me to stay his friend. I agreed.

I thought things were resolved. But they weren't. After a week hanging out as friends, we started kissing and my problems all started again. I tried to keep myself occupied with other friends, but Mark made me feel wanted and special.

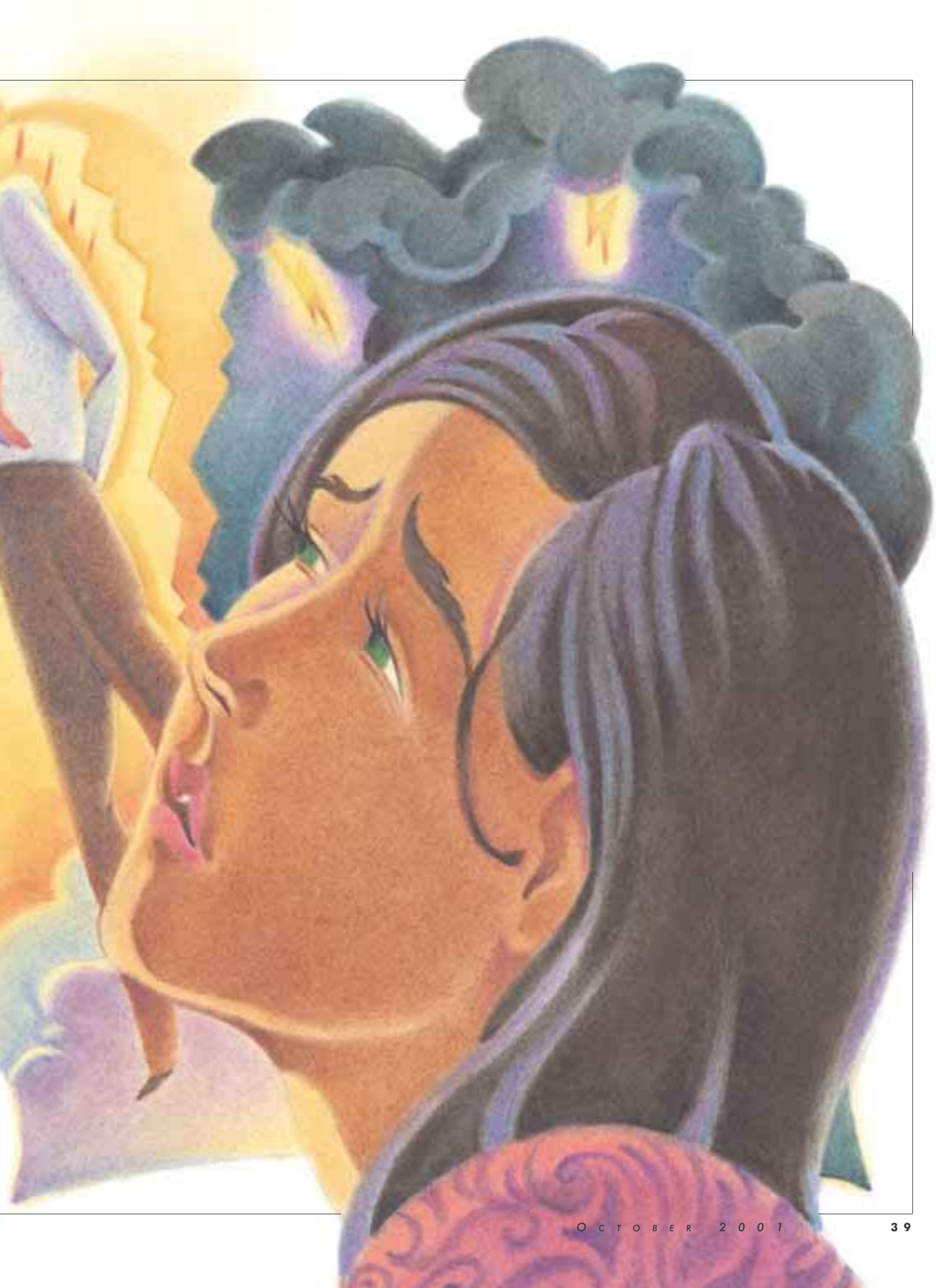
Then Todd asked me to go on a date with him. He was a returned missionary I had met at a student ward. He took me to dinner and then to the local fun center. I have never had so much fun at an amusement park in my life. By the time the place closed, neither of us wanted the date to end, so he took me to get ice cream.

Todd was great. We talked and laughed the entire date. He had me back home by 11:30 and asked if we could go on another date sometime. I felt wonderful. I couldn't believe how I felt compared to how I felt after a date with Mark. After the date with Todd I felt happy and good about myself. After a date with Mark I felt depressed.

Mark was cute, fun, and full of ambition. He made me feel wanted and special. But he also made me feel guilty.

Name Withheld





Going out with Todd was so different. I felt wonderful because the Holy Spirit was with us. We weren't doing anything to drive it away. I was no longer fighting my conscience.



My date with Todd made me realize I hadn't been feeling the Spirit when I was with Mark. I didn't expect to have great spiritual experiences while dating, but I had wanted to have the Spirit there to prompt me. I noticed that, because of what we were doing, the Holy Ghost left whenever I would go see Mark. Having a good time with Todd made me realize how much I yearned to feel the Spirit always.

So I again broke up with Mark. It wasn't easy, but I did immediately feel as if a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I was used to spending lots of time with Mark, and I still liked him. But I knew I had made the right decision. I wanted to have the Holy Ghost's presence when I dated, and I was willing to do whatever it took to keep that influence in my life.

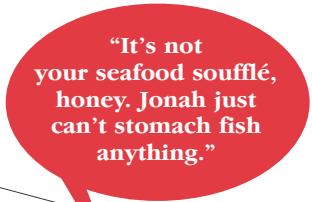
Even though I was able to feel the Spirit more often, my life wasn't suddenly

perfect, and the dates didn't start pouring in. I left for college out of state, and Todd and I were not able to go out any more. And the dates haven't picked up much at college. But I have been able to feel the Holy Ghost more often, and I am no longer fighting my conscience. That is a wonderful feeling worth the sacrifice.

I have found there is an entirely different spirit when you follow the commandments and date "only those who have high standards, who respect your standards, and in whose company you can maintain the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 7). I still have many good friends who are not members of the Church, but I have realized I only want to date people who have the same beliefs and standards that I do. After all, dating is already so complicated. Why add to the confusion? **NE**



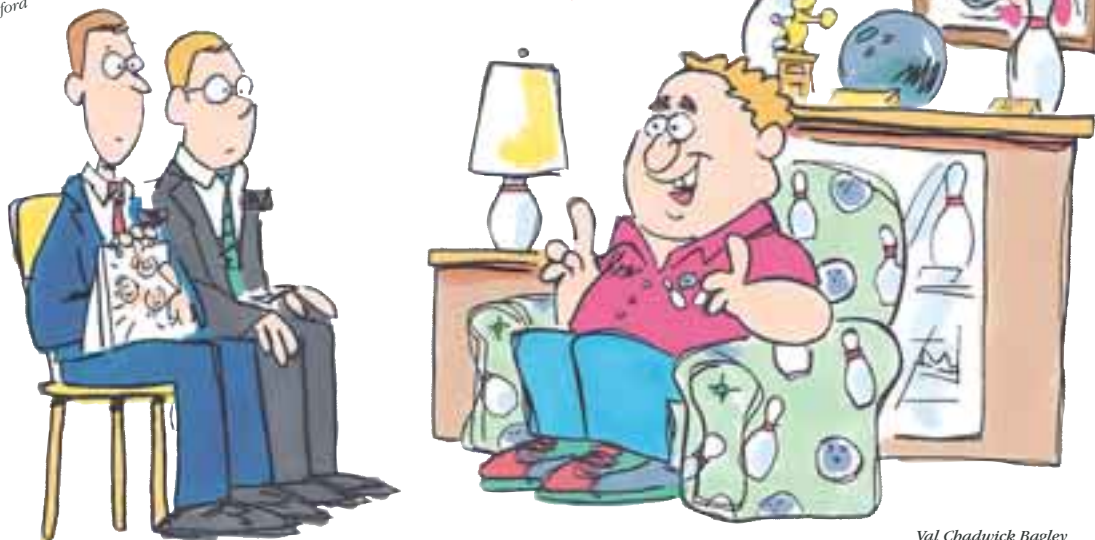
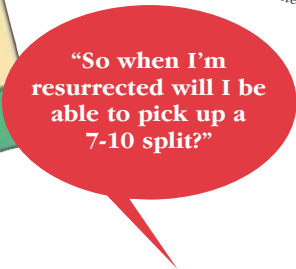
Val Chadwick Bagley



Caleen A. Jensen



Adam Koford



Val Chadwick Bagley

STORM WARNING



by Elder Neil L.
Andersen
of the Seventy

When the
tornado
struck
she felt her
trailer shake,
she was jostled
around, and
then everything
was quiet.

Those terrible storms you sometimes hear about on the news? They have a spiritual equivalent. Here's how to avoid being uprooted or even carried away.

A few years ago we were in Tampa, Florida, to spend some time with our family. During our time there, a powerful and potent tornado touched down. While hurricanes are common to Florida, tornadoes are not. This tornado came ripping through Haines City, about 50 miles away from where we were, leaving destruction in its path.

I read one experience of a woman in her mobile home. As she heard the winds approaching, she went into her bathroom and crouched down on the floor hoping to avoid injury. She felt her trailer shake, she was jostled around, and then everything was quiet. As she crouched motionless in her bathroom, she heard the voice of her neighbor who lived approximately 50 yards away from her. The voice said, "I am here in the front room."

She thought somehow her neighbor had come into her trailer and was looking for her. She soon, however, was very surprised to find that was not the case at all, but that the winds had lifted, carried, and landed her trailer upright on the top of her neighbor's trailer. She had



Illustrated by Sam Lawlor



There are four powerful pillars to anchor you to your spiritual foundation so the tornadoes of the world will not dislodge you and carry you away.

1. *Prayer.*
2. *Scripture study.*
3. *Worship.*
4. *Willingness to serve one another.*

not realized it, but her trailer had been flying through the air. Her neighbor was actually below her, in the neighbor's own mobile home.

Spiritual tornadoes

When we built our house, it was interesting to see all the efforts made to securely hold the house in place. First a giant hole is dug, and the footers for the foundation are placed deep beneath the frost line. Steel rods run through the yards and yards of cement that form the foundation. With each adjoining part of the house, metal and steel is used to ensure that each part of the house is attached firmly to the other, and that all is tied securely into the foundation and footers. Every effort is made so that the house may remain stationary should winds or tornadoes come upon us.

With all the wonderful blessings that are ours in living in this beautiful world, ours is also a time of spiritual tornadoes.

These tornadoes come out of the modern-day sky with increasing frequency and test our spiritual foundations. With more opportunities, more time, more freedom, and more privilege come more temptation and more chance of spiritual destruction from the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life (see Matt. 13:21; Luke 8:13–14).

To weather these storms in this environment, we have been instructed by the prophets to become grounded, rooted, established, and settled in spiritual things (see Eph. 3:17; 1 Pet. 5:10; Col. 1:23; 2:7).

What does it mean?

What does it mean to be grounded, rooted, established, and settled spiritually? It means having an eternal perspective. It means realizing those things that will shape our lives over much more than the next 5, 10, 15, or 50 years, but that will shape and mold our spirits eternally, for our spirits live forever. It is having a faith that is not a generalized feeling but reflects specific experience with interlocking principles. Being grounded and rooted means being able to look forward and backward from this life. A hundred years from now, how will my decisions affect me? A thousand years? A million years? The difficulties that are now mine, how meaningful will

they be in a future state?

This perspective of seeing the spiritual all around us, seeing the purposes of life, does not come merely because we want to believe these things. If we have not grounded and settled these things deep within the foundation of our soul, when the tornadoes come we will find ourselves carried away, and rarely will we land right side up on our neighbor's trailer.

Being grounded, rooted, established, and settled means that we see things as they really are, that we see the spiritual hosts that surround us, that we understand that those who are with us are more than those who are against us. It means that we sense that while this earth life is a true proving ground, and there will be many difficulties and obstacles to overcome, all lasting happiness will come as we keep the commandments of God and as we put our trust in Christ, who is our Savior.

I would like to share with you four powerful pillars to anchor you in your spiritual foundation so the tornadoes of the world will not dislodge you and carry you away.

1. We must pray. There is no other way to have these spiritual assurances. We must pray and ask for them. We must seek them from our Father. Don't try to survive spiritually without deep and continuous prayer. Don't roll into bed at night without first kneeling before your Father, expressing your thankfulness for what you have, and appealing to Him to strengthen your spiritual pillars.

2. We must study the scriptures. The Lord has given us these magnificent books to cement our foundation and to give us another way to unlock spiritual confirmations. As I read the scriptures, as I come to understand the tremendous miracle of the writings being preserved for us, I better understand how crucial this gift is for our spiritual foundation. For many, reading the scriptures is not a natural experience. It requires work; it requires self-discipline; but study is essential in constructing these pillars in our hearts.

3. We must worship. There is power in the ordinances of the gospel, in taking the sacrament every week, in approaching the sacrament prayerfully, righteously asking for forgiveness. There

is power in meeting together in our Church meetings and our homes and discussing the doctrines of the kingdom.

4. We must be willing to serve one another. We must be unselfish and incorporate into our lives the qualities that Christ has taught us. As we live these principles, we will learn that there is no lasting happiness in selfishness and that as we give ourselves to others, our spiritual moorings will be strengthened. Pray, study, worship, serve. This is how we build the spiritual foundation to be grounded, rooted, established, settled. Be willing to recognize and acknowledge the spiritual manifestations you have already received.

Helaman 5:12 says, “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”

I pray that this may be our spiritual foundation, that when the worldly tornadoes come dangerously among us, we may stand firm. **NE**

Adapted from a January 14, 1998, devotional address at LDS Business College.



HOW THE SPIRIT WORKS



by Elder
Douglas L. Callister
of the Seventy

The war for your soul began in heaven and continues here. When you learn to be guided by the Spirit, you are on the road to final victory.

In Italy there is a majestic sculpture of Moses with a crack on one of the knees. A tour guide may say that Michelangelo, viewing the masterpiece, hurled a chisel at the sculpture and exclaimed in disdain, “Why doesn’t it speak?”

Unlike the inanimate stone, the true Church of Jesus Christ is filled with life. The voice, Spirit, and power of God are found in our worship services, or whenever the ordinances of the holy priesthood are administered.

Elijah inquired of Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for thee.” Elisha said, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kgs. 2:9). He could not have asked for anything greater.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith has written: “The Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth. . . . Through the Holy Ghost the truth is woven into the very fibre and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten” (*Instructor*, Oct. 1935, 431). With our confirmation as Church members, the door is opened for us to pursue this heavenly endowment. This should be an urgent and lifelong quest.

As we become more familiar with the Holy Spirit, our lives become refined. The sordid and base have no attraction. It is developed spirituality which separates us from the secular world.

Noticing the beauty of nature

A spiritual-minded man is observant of the beauty in the world around him. As the earth was organized, the Lord saw that “it was good.” Then, “It was very good” (Gen. 1:4, 31). It pleases our Father in Heaven when we, also, pause to note the beauty of our environment, which we will naturally do as we become more spiritually sensitive. Our awareness of grand music, literature, and sublime art is often a natural product of spiritual maturity.

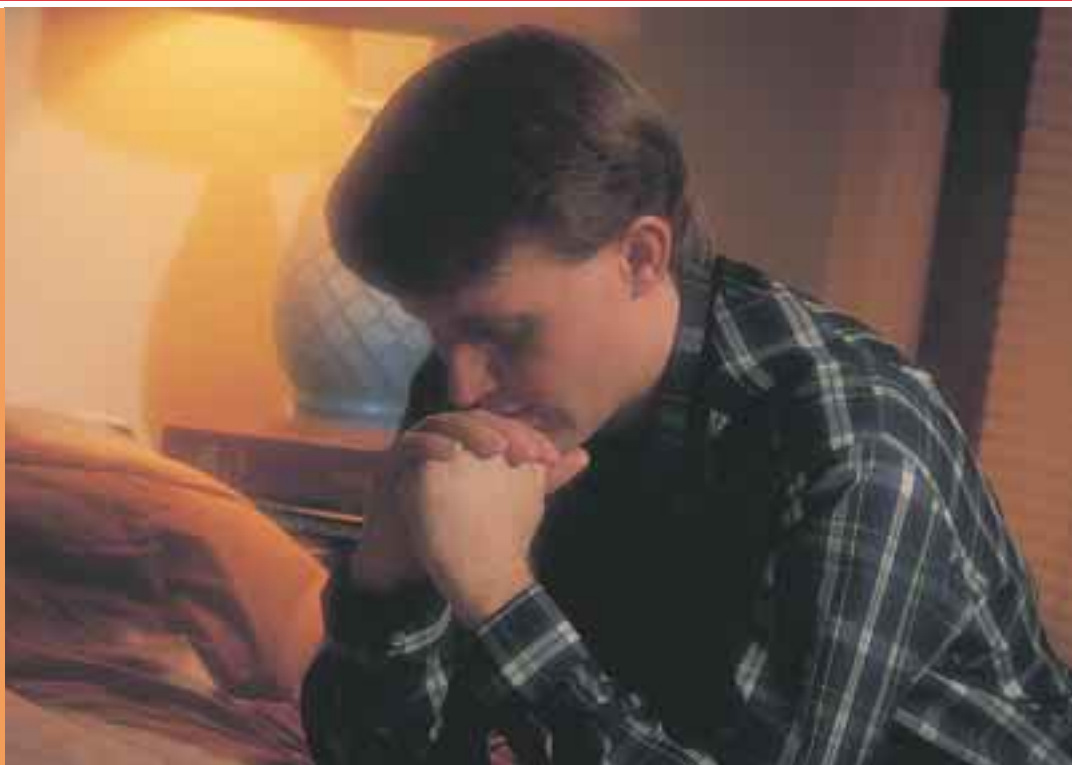
Improving scripture study

As we seek the Spirit, our scripture reading becomes more reflective. We rediscover the virtue of slow reading. There is more reading aloud as, perhaps, the scriptures were meant to be read. Brigham Young said: “All I have to do is . . . keep my spirit, feelings and conscience like a sheet of blank paper, and let the spirit and power of God write upon it what he pleases. When he writes, I will read; but if I read before he writes, I am very likely to be wrong” (*Deseret News Weekly*, 19 Apr. 1871, 125).

As an evidence of increased spirituality we become more selective in what we read. J. Reuben Clark said, “My rule now is, never read anything that is not worth remembering” (quoted by Joseph L. Wirthlin in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1947, 85).



K *Keep your covenants and strive to live worthily as you seek the Spirit of God. And listen. It comes quietly and without drama. And we must listen or it will leave.*



Learning to pray

Another fruit of spiritual maturity is improved prayer. More than 30 years ago, President Spencer W. Kimball called me to serve as a stake president. At the conclusion of a long conference weekend, I inquired if he had counsel for me. He replied: “Go teach the Latter-day Saints how to pray. As a people we must not forget how to commune with our Heavenly Father. That is all.” Most of the profound and important teachings in the Church are simple.

Becoming a spiritual giant

Those who have made it their quest to realize the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit will awaken in the next life as spiritual giants, in contrast to the infancy of others who have lived without God in this world. One of the spiritually advanced was President Joseph F. Smith. Bishop Charles W. Nibley said at the passing of Joseph F. Smith: “Never was man more moral and chaste and virtuous to the last fiber of his being than he. Against all forms or thoughts of licentiousness, he was set, and immovable as a mountain. . . . As a preacher of righteousness who could compare with him? . . . [When] the heart of President Smith was attuned to the Celestial melodies—he could hear, and [he] did hear” (quoted in Joseph F.

Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 522–25).

The great battle of our premortal estate was a struggle for individual souls. It is the same battle we wage here, which is to become supremely spiritual beings. Spirituality is the sure knowledge that we are winning the struggle for the soul. Sensuality is the realm of self-indulgence. Spirituality is the realm of self-victory.

I attended a church class in which the instructor asked what counsel we would give our children in the closing moments of life. I answered: “First, keep your covenants. God keeps His. It will mean much to stand before your Father in Heaven and report: ‘I am home. I am clean. I have done all I covenanted to do.’”

“Second, seek the Spirit of God. The scriptures plead: ‘Quench not the Spirit’ (1 Thes. 5:19). ‘Grieve not the . . . Spirit’ (Eph. 4:30). It will not come to impure hearts or minds. It comes quietly and without drama. A listening ear can hear the faint rustle of a wing. If we do not listen, it will leave.”

I testify that the workings of the Spirit are real and are found in this Church. I also testify of Christ, the Redeemer, and the work He has instituted in this dispensation. **NE**

Adapted from an October 2000 general conference address.

Creative ideas for using this issue of the New Era.

Personal Improvement

□ President Gordon B. Hinckley's message on page 4 tells of the healing power of repentance. Decide on a few areas of your life that could use improvement. If you have serious concerns, make an appointment to speak with your bishop.

□ Read the Idea List on page 37. If you feel you're not as grateful for your blessings as you could be, choose a few of the activities and put them into practice over the next week.

Leadership Tip

□ One of the best things you can do in your class or quorum is to share your testimony. Read "Everyone Said It" on page 32 for inspiration, and renew your efforts to gain or build your own testimony. Share your thoughts and insights at your next presidency meeting or class meeting.

Family Home Evening

□ Read "My Family, My Friends" (page 20) as a family. Discuss the obstacles you need to overcome in building strong relationships with one another—things like limited time, age differences, and different interests. Plan a few activities the whole family can participate in and enjoy together. Some of the most memorable family activities don't need to cost money or take a lot of time.

Seminary Devotional

□ Write the words, "Just A Member," on separate pieces of paper and hang them in the front of the room. Explain that if we live mediocre lives, we will be merely members of the Church.

Rearrange the order of the words so that the phrase now reads, "A Just Member." Explain that it was a slight adjustment that made a big difference and changed the meaning of the phrase. Point out that we may need to make changes in our lives in order to become more faithful and just members of the Church. Conclude with D&C 51:19.

Young Men and Young Women Activity Idea

□ Amy Valentine is a Church member because she accepted the invitation of a friend to attend church (see "Friend Power" on page 12). Plan a fun evening of games that people would be comfortable inviting their friends to, and ask everyone to invite a friend or neighbor they feel might be receptive to the gospel message. Begin the evening with regular opening exercises and perhaps a brief devotional that introduces some basic gospel principles. Thank your visitors for attending and give them a copy of *For the Strength of Youth* at the conclusion of the evening.

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Fond memories

I love being a missionary. It has brought so much joy to my life. But I have to tell the truth. Being in the mission field is tough, and since I've been here, I've been feeling a little inadequate. One day when I was feeling down, I picked up the June 2000 *New Era* special issue about missionary work, and I immediately felt the spirit of the MTC come back to me. The Spirit comforted me and gave me a great desire to serve. Having the Spirit, along with hard work, makes a missionary happy. Thanks for helping me when I felt a little down.

Elder Joshua Lindsay
Arizona Tempe Mission

Source of strength

I love getting the *New Era*. It is really a great magazine. I especially like it because I don't have to worry about what might be written in it. It is also a great source of strength, with articles that help me with troubles I've had or when I need a spiritual boost.

Maren Poulson (via e-mail)
Lafayette, Colorado

Thanks for the Idea

I want to thank the youth who send their ideas to the Idea List. Each month it helps me because I sometimes get tempted to do wrong. By reading the Idea List and following the teachings, it really helps me progress with my life. I am sure I will never forget these ideas.

Nancy Nair
Ba, Fiji

We love hearing from you. Write us at

New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Or e-mail us at

cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

"I love getting the New Era. It is really a great magazine. I especially like it because I don't have to worry about what might be written in it."



The New Era Contest Comes to an End

After 30 years, the annual *New Era* contest has been discontinued.

However—this is just the end of a contest, not of your opportunity to develop and share your talents. We still rely on you, our readers, to share your faith-promoting, true personal experiences, your poetry, your music, etc. We still want and need to hear from you.

Creative talents and abilities don't depend on a contest. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said: "While true creativity is something that can be shared by those who appreciate the works of creation, true creativity does not depend entirely for its satisfactions upon 'consumers.' It is a highly personal experience in which we are grateful to the Lord for helping us to see beauty and truth and the order of things, for restructuring our understanding of things, if necessary, to accord with things 'as they really are' (Jacob 4:13). Creative experience is intrinsically satisfying" (*New Era*, Aug. 1982, 7).

We encourage you to continue to develop and share your talents. Take classes, study, practice, maybe even teach someone else. Enter school and community contests if you wish. Use your talents to create thoughtful, personal gifts for family and friends. And in all you do, give thanks to the Creator who has given you, His child, wonderful gifts. Above all, be sure that what you create lifts and elevates and expresses truth and testimony. As you use the creative skills you have learned and developed, be more concerned with pleasing God than with pleasing the world.

Now, to all who have participated in the contest over the years—thank you. You did well. And those of you who were planning to contribute to the *New Era* in the future—what are you waiting for? We still need and want you. If you would like writer's guidelines, please write or e-mail us at the editorial office addresses listed to the left.

Eternal Questions

by Adele Maurine
Marcum

You ask me
What I am doing
For eternity
And I pause—

You think
I have doubts or
concerns
But I don't.
I've waited eternally
To hear those words
From you.

And here you are
Now
Asking me
To spend
Eternity
With you.

Of course I will!
Without you
Eternity
Would just be
A long time.



by Crystal Christison



*“My
brothers
have a
reputation
for
leadership
and
always
being
kind to
everyone. I
try to be
the same.”*

*See “My
Family, My
Friends,”
p. 20.*