

For the Strength of Youth



7 Brushstrokes to a **HAPPIER LIFE**

p. 8

**God's Divine Plan of
Happiness**

pp. 2, 24

Hope after Abuse

p. 22

ORIN S.

17, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



MY FAMILY WENT on a sailing trip and didn't see land for over three weeks. After the first two weeks, we were hit by a crazy storm. Our sails broke in the wind, and waves crashed onto the deck, completely submerging the front of the boat. On top of all that, we were almost out of drinking water—so if we survived the storm, we still had that to worry about.

My family crammed down into the only dry part of the boat and prayed for

almost an hour. I didn't know if we'd survive the night, but I knew that, no matter what, I would be with my family because we were sealed together.

When we finished the prayer, we saw that the wind had settled down and the waves had stopped. Soon after, it started pouring rain, which is extremely rare in that part of the ocean. We used a tarp to fill our tanks and miraculously got enough water to finish the trip.

That experience showed me how powerful prayer can be and how much Heavenly Father cares about us. When I think back on that storm, I know the gospel is true and real.



Share your story and read stories from other youth at the **@StrivetoBe** Instagram, or post using **#StrivetoBe**.

Contents

2 THE DIVINE PLAN OF BECOMING MORE

By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

In this life, it is not a question of “to be or not to be” but “to become more or not to become more.”

6 WHY YOU SHOULD BE OF GOOD CHEER

The Lord encourages us to be of good cheer—and gives us reasons.

8 7 BRUSHSTROKES TO A HAPPIER LIFE

Here are some simple things you can do to be happier.

12 KOSEI'S JOY

This young man from Japan loves to share the gospel.

16 THE VISION

See how Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received the vision that became Doctrine and Covenants 76.

18 DO THE WRITE THING

By the Young Men General Presidency

Having trouble with scripture study? Try writing.

22 WAS I WORTHY?

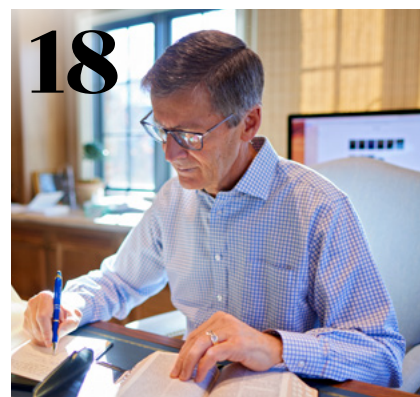
A young woman talks about what helped her deal with the effects of sexual abuse.

24 YOU CAN MAKE IT!

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have done—and are doing—so much to help us inherit the celestial kingdom.

Also Inside . . .

- 7 Poster
- 20 How We Worship
- 27 Firm Foundations
- 28 Fun Stop
- 30 Questions and Answers
- 32 Last Word
- 33 People from Church History



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When we see mortal life in context, we see that it is not a question of “to be or not to be?” but rather “to become more or not to become more?”

The Divine Plan of **BECOMING MORE**

I HAVE BEEN BLESSED to be with my wife at the birth of each of our children and to be present also at the death of each of my parents. I was surprised to feel what I felt at the moment of birth and at the moment of death. I felt that something sacred was occurring. Our time on earth is an eternally significant part of our existence. Heaven marks the beginning and the end of each mortal life.

What we need to do while we are here on earth can be understood only through knowing what happened before birth and what will happen after death. If our life on earth were all there is, we might all “eat, drink, and be merry” (2 Nephi 28:7) without much concern for others. But when we see mortal life in context, we see that it is not a question of “to be or not to be?” but rather “to become more or not to become more?”¹

Understanding the plan of salvation—our life before birth, the purpose of our life on earth, our life after death—and the key role that our Savior, Jesus Christ, plays in that plan shows us that He will help us through this life. As we make covenants with Him, we put ourselves on the covenant path—and we become more like Him and our Heavenly Father, step by step.

Our Life Before Earth

Revelation teaches that we are the spirit children of God and that we lived with Him for a long time before we came to earth. Our Heavenly Father



*Elder Christofferson with
his wife and children.*



**By Elder D. Todd
Christofferson**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



“

OUR TIME ON
EARTH IS AN
ETERNALLY
SIGNIFICANT
PART OF OUR
EXISTENCE.

prepared a way for us to become like Him. Those who chose our Father's plan of salvation or plan of happiness in the premortal life—which is all of us—chose to “become more.”

Our Time on Earth

We came to an earth created by God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We received a physical body. Having a body is essential to receiving the glory that God enjoys. If we demonstrate that we will keep God's commandments, we will “have glory added upon [our] heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26). This means we will become like our heavenly parents and live with them forever. We shouted for joy at these glorious possibilities.

You and I waited a long time, but now we are here on earth. We look forward to the time when we are resurrected with a perfect, immortal body and enter the celestial kingdom to enjoy eternal life—something so wonderful that we cannot even imagine it. In the meantime, we are learning and striving to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command [us]” (Abraham 3:25). Because we know God's plan, we know that these commandments are not given to restrict our freedom or happiness—just the opposite. The commandments are our guide to ultimate freedom and joy.

He Provided a Savior

Still, life is hard. We all stumble as we learn to live by faith. But God promised us before the earth's creation that He

would provide a Savior to rescue us from sin and death. By His own suffering and death—His Atonement—Jesus Christ paid for our sins and offers us the gift of repentance. So, when we repent, He forgives our sins and cleanses us from their effects. And by His Resurrection, the Savior gives us the gift of our own resurrection and immortality.

Walking the Covenant Path

Just as we are born physically into this mortal world, we must be born again spiritually into the kingdom of heaven. We do this by exercising faith in Christ, repenting, being baptized, and receiving the Holy Ghost. This is the beginning of a spiritual transformation that lasts throughout our lifetime on earth. We sometimes call it “enduring to the end,” which means that we strive to keep our baptismal covenant of obedience our whole lives, repenting as needed and moving forward again. “Yea, and as often as my people repent,” Jesus says, “will I forgive them their trespasses against me” (Mosiah 26:30).

You Can Count on God's Help

In your life before birth, you chose God, you chose Christ, you chose to “become more” with Their help. And you can count on Their help. The members of the Godhead are not disinterested observers in our lives. They love us infinitely and use their powers to help us, as much as we will permit. They always respect our agency, but They are eager to bless us.

“
YOU DON'T
HAVE TO
ACHIEVE
PERFECTION
HERE ON
EARTH.”





Jesus assures us, “I will not forget thee, O house of Israel. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (1 Nephi 21:15–16).

Becoming Better Step by Step

Some feel that the celestial kingdom is a realistic hope for others but somehow not for them. The truth is, no one qualifies without the grace of Jesus Christ. Thankfully, you can access His grace. Jesus told us that He has overcome the world. With your baptism and other covenants, you bind yourself to Him so that with Him, you also overcome the world.

You don’t have to achieve perfection here on earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith compared it to climbing a ladder: you start at the bottom and climb step by step in learning and living gospel principles. And that learning, he taught, continues beyond this life—“It is not all to be comprehended in this world.”²

Whatever weaknesses, hardships, or suffering we face on earth, God promises His faithful children that no blessing will be withheld if we stay on the covenant path (or quickly get back to it). Then it all works out. That is the divine plan of becoming more! 🏰

NOTES

1. Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* (1966), 31–32.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 268.



*Cheer up!
The Lord has
given you
reasons to.*

By David A. Edwards
Church Magazines

THE LORD HAS given us many invitations. And He often repeats important ones. (For instance, how many times has He said something like “Come unto me”?)

One invitation you’ll find repeated in the scriptures is: “Be of good cheer.”

The Lord sometimes says this when His people are trying to follow Him but are facing opposition and trials. And when He invites us to be of good cheer,

He usually gives *reasons* for His encouraging us to be happy. For example, He once said:

“Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (Doctrine and Covenants 78:18).

Let’s break that down:

“Be of good cheer, for **[Reason 1]** I will lead you along. **[Reason 2]** The kingdom is yours and **[Reason 2a]** the blessings thereof are yours, and **[Reason 3]** the riches of eternity are yours” (Doctrine and Covenants 78:18).

Here the Lord reminds us of His guidance and blessings. Those are some pretty good reasons to cheer up.

Here’s another example:

“Be of good cheer, little children; for **[Reason 1]** I am in your midst, and **[Reason 2]** I have not forsaken you” (Doctrine and Covenants 61:36).

And another:

“Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for **[Reason 1]** I the Lord am with you, and **[Reason 2]** [I] will stand by you” (Doctrine and Covenants 68:6).

The Lord reminds us that He is near us and will help us as we strive to follow Him and do His work. We can then go on our way with confidence and, yes, cheerfulness. After all, Heavenly Father’s plan is the “plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8, 16), and following the Lord’s commandments is to live “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

Even if our trials start to get us down, if we desire to follow the Lord, He encourages us to be of good cheer. And He gives us some good reasons for it. 🏰

Find more examples of reasons to be of good cheer in 2 Nephi 10:23 and John 16:33.

Why You Should Be of **GOOD CHEER**



— “Be of good cheer; I have

OVERCOME THE WORLD”

(John 16:33).

That is the Savior’s message to all of our Heavenly Father’s children. That is the ultimate good news for each of us in our mortal lives.

President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Be of Good Cheer,” Oct. 2020 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 70).

7 Brushstrokes to a **HAPPIER** LIFE



*The simple steps you
do each day add up
to a happy life.*

By For the Strength of Youth Staff

WHEN YOU AREN'T feeling as happy as you would like, it can seem that everyone else's life is going well but yours.

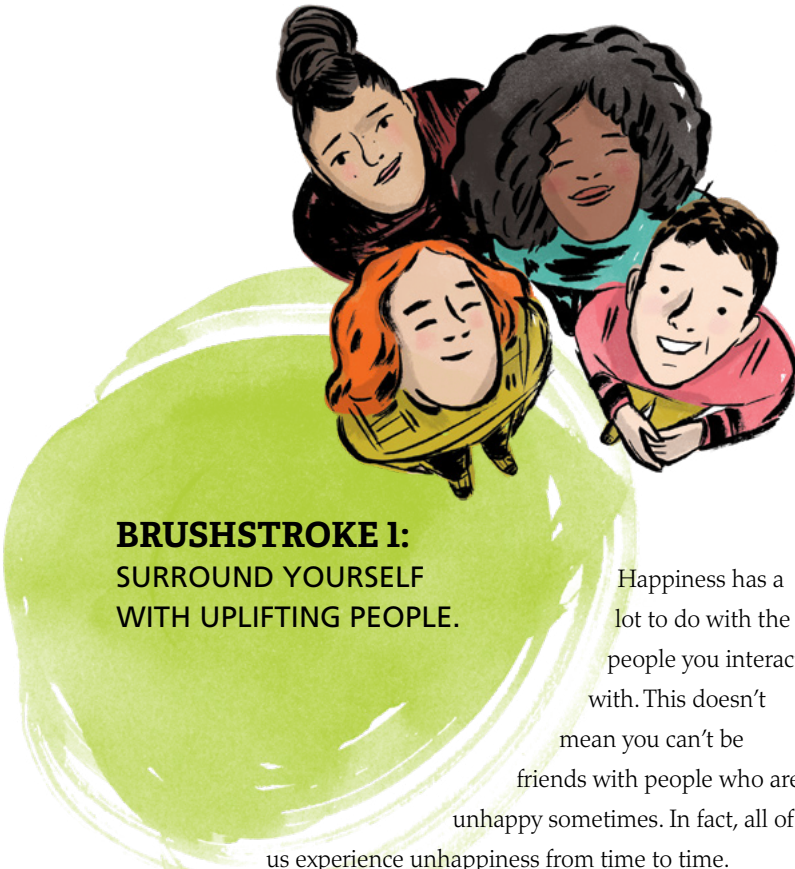
Sometimes people sit around waiting for happiness to happen to them. But your happiness is largely within your control. There may be rough patches, but even in hard times there are things you can still do that lead to happiness.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once taught, "Just as . . . strokes of paint complement each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so our consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results."¹

Think of a painting you've seen. Usually there isn't a single brushstroke that makes it beautiful. In fact, when you look at a single brushstroke by itself, it isn't all that impressive. However, when you combine them all, you have a breathtaking work of art.

Finding happiness in life is similar to painting. There are small, intentional brushstrokes, or daily activities, we can do to create a life full of happiness. Applied by themselves or done only once, these things won't seem incredibly extraordinary. But when we combine them over and over in daily and weekly efforts, they can create an abundantly happy life.

Here are seven brushstrokes or activities you can develop to create more happiness in your life.



BRUSHSTROKE 1: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH UPLIFTING PEOPLE.

Happiness has a lot to do with the people you interact with. This doesn't mean you can't be friends with people who are unhappy sometimes. In fact, all of us experience unhappiness from time to time.

But make sure you spend time with people who are uplifting and inspire you. Good friends who help you live the Lord's standards can make a big difference to your happiness. And try to be an uplifting friend to others. You can make a big difference in others' lives too.



BRUSHSTROKE 2: USE MUSIC TO INCREASE YOUR HAPPINESS.

Music has a powerful effect on your mind. It can literally change the chemistry in your brain. Good music will help you feel positive, happy, and inspired. Create a playlist of happy, encouraging, and faith-promoting songs you listen to regularly.



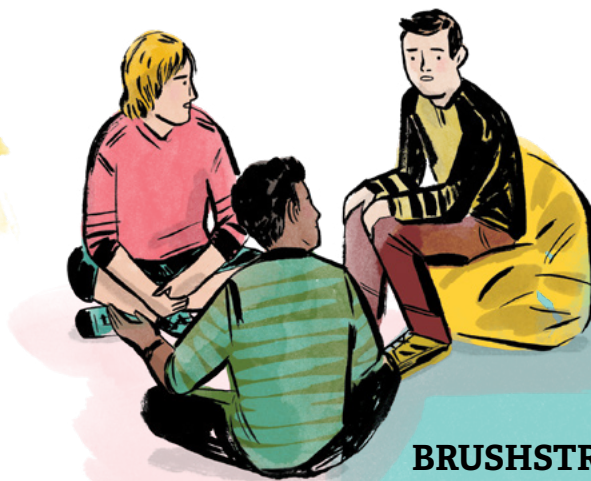
BRUSHSTROKE 3: GET OUTSIDE.

Enjoying God's creations is very healing to our spirits and bodies. It's critical to your happiness to regularly take time away from television, computer, and phone screens to go outside and enjoy the sunshine, plants, and animals around you. Go on walks with your family and friends, play games outside, read and study outside. You'll be amazed at how good you feel when you do.



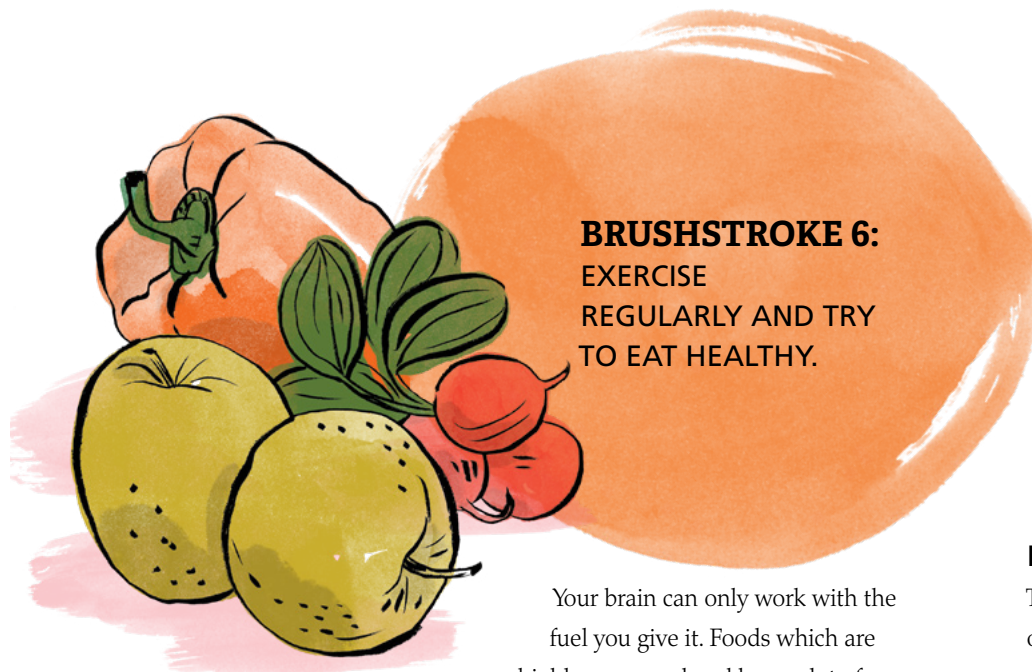
BRUSHSTROKE 4: GET ENOUGH SLEEP.

The Lord has said that sleep is essential to the health of your mind and body (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:124). Like a phone battery needs to be recharged, your brain needs sleep to work properly. Just as you set a time to wake up in the morning, be sure to also set a time for you to get into bed (and don't take your phone with you!).



BRUSHSTROKE 5: HAVE DEEP IN-PERSON CONVERSATIONS.

Using texting and social media to talk with your friends and family can be awesome. But having in-person conversations does something for your mind and spirit that electronic communication can't. Be sure you interact with your family and friends. Take time to listen and talk with those around you.



BRUSHSTROKE 6:

EXERCISE REGULARLY AND TRY TO EAT HEALTHY.

Your brain can only work with the fuel you give it. Foods which are highly processed and have a lot of sugar (sometimes known as junk food) may taste good but often make your mind and body feel sluggish. The good news is that as you eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, your cravings for junk food will decrease. The Lord gave us only one body, so we'd better take care of it!

BRUSHSTROKE 7: PRAY AND PONDER.

The Lord and His prophets and apostles have frequently counseled us to take time to pray and be still. Prayer and meditation positively impact the areas of the brain in which you experience happiness. If you take time regularly to ponder and pray, your happiness will increase a little each time. Over a long period of time, you'll notice a big difference in how peaceful and confident you feel.



Looking for More Ideas?

These seven brushstrokes are only a few of the daily steps we can all take to fill our bodies and spirits with happiness. For more ideas, look through the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet to identify principles that have made you or others happy in the past. What do you feel impressed to do to incorporate those things more consistently into your daily life?

Always remember that the supreme source of happiness is our Savior, Jesus Christ. No matter your circumstances, He stands ready to bless you and help you through your difficulties. He will help you find the happiness you're hoping for. 🙏

NOTE

1. David A. Bednar, Oct. 2009 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 19–20).

If You Need Help

If you feel you are suffering from depression and/or anxiety, besides incorporating these brushstrokes into your daily life, be sure to talk to your parents, your doctor, and other trusted adults about how you're feeling. There is help available for you.

*This young man from
Japan loves to share
the gospel.*

KOSEI'S JOY



By David Dickson
Church Magazines

HE PLAYS THE PIANO. He sprints. He even long jumps! But those aren't the only impressive things about Kosei H., a 17-year-old young man from Nagasaki, Japan.

"He's one of the greatest youth missionaries I have ever known," says Sister McKenna Frasure, a recently returned missionary who served in Japan where Kosei lives. "Kosei never passed up an opportunity to be with the missionaries or testify of Christ through Church activities and social media," she says.

Kosei considers the missionaries to be some of his closest friends. And it's no surprise he feels that way once you

realize how much he enjoys sharing the gospel.

"Missionary work is my joy," Kosei says. "Nephi taught us that the fruit of the tree of life 'is the most desirable above all things' (1 Nephi 11:22). Some people may deny this fruit. However, as someone who knows the sweetness of the fruit, I want to share the gospel with those around me."

Sharing the blessings of the gospel might just be Kosei's biggest talent of all.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

After taking a missionary preparation class, Kosei felt an even greater desire to

bring the joys of the gospel to his friends. He started by going online. One of the main tools he uses to share gospel-related messages and content is social media.

Several of his friends have responded to these social media posts. One friend in particular came up to Kosei and said, "I have an interest in your church."

This friend was just an acquaintance at first, but their friendship quickly deepened. "He started by asking me the differences between his faith and mine," Kosei explains. "Although I had not spoken with him very often, we became good friends after my sharing the gospel on social media."



SPORTS, HOBBIES, AND FOREVER FRIENDSHIPS

Social media isn't the only way Kosei shares his faith. Remember, he has a busy life that's full of activities. He has plenty of chances to meet people and make friends. And he uses those opportunities to spread the joy of the gospel.

"One time I invited a sports club friend to the English class that the missionaries were teaching at the church," Kosei explains. "He and the missionaries became good friends with each other while he was learning English."

However, the conversations didn't stop at English lessons.

"My friend started to think about why these missionaries, who were almost his same age, were doing volunteer work and serving as missionaries in Japan. His next question was to ask what drives missionaries to serve. He's now heard the missionary lessons and still has a correspondence with missionaries through video chat."

Whenever he brings up the gospel with his friends, Kosei tries to match what he shares with their level of interest. "For example, I first talk about what happens after death, what the purpose of life is, or whether God exists," he says. "Then I can adjust, based on their interest."

Of course, he knows that not everyone will be interested. He's had setbacks, the same as anyone. One day, after several of his friends were asking him questions about the Church, Kosei tried to share a Church handout with one of them. "However, that friend ran out of the classroom and gave a loud laugh at me from the hallway.

"That caused me deep sorrow," Kosei says.

But he doesn't let discouragement stop him. He knows that what he's sharing will bless their lives forever if they listen.



THE JOY THAT DRIVES HIM

“I feel joy in the teachings of Christ,” Kosei says. “If I didn’t know those teachings, I would have had a life without real joy.”

As he juggles his many activities and interests, Kosei knows how to prioritize. “The gospel of Jesus Christ brings hope to our lives and reveals all things we should do,” he says. “Even when we feel depressed or are having a hard time, sincere prayer will bring peace and help us have a positive attitude.”

That’s why he’s so determined to share the gospel every chance he finds. He wants others to experience what he enjoys on a daily basis! “I hope from the bottom of my heart that many people

may have the opportunity to experience this real joy,” he says.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Naturally, sharing the gospel doesn’t occupy *all* his time. Kosei works incredibly hard at his other goals in life. Each day he trains hard with running and strength training. When he needs to unwind a bit, he plays the piano. He also enjoys visiting nature and spending time with his family. “Out in nature with my siblings—I’ll never forget the day we caught fish and ate them!” he says.

All along, though, Kosei continues to make time for what matters most.

And he has a little advice for anybody else who wants to do the same: “We

receive guidance when we keep the commandments. As we do so, we can be strengthened by the Lord. Fears and anxieties are replaced with hope and confidence. If we open our mouths without being ashamed of the gospel, people will come to know Christlike love and will be filled with joy.”¹

How Does Living the Gospel Bring You Joy?

Share your experiences with us at ftsoy@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The VISION

BY PAUL B. MURPHY, ILLUSTRATED BY LANCE FRY

AFTER TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON, THE LORD
COMMANDED JOSEPH TO REVISE THE BIBLE.



AS HE READ THE BIBLE, JOSEPH WAS INSPIRED
BY THE LORD TO MAKE SOME CHANGES.



JOSEPH ASKED SCRIBES
TO HELP HIM.



THE WORK WAS DELAYED WHEN THE LORD COMMANDED
THE SAINTS TO MOVE TO OHIO.



AFTER MOVING TO OHIO, JOSEPH STARTED HIS REVISIONS
AGAIN WITH SIDNEY RIGDON HELPING AS SCRIBE.

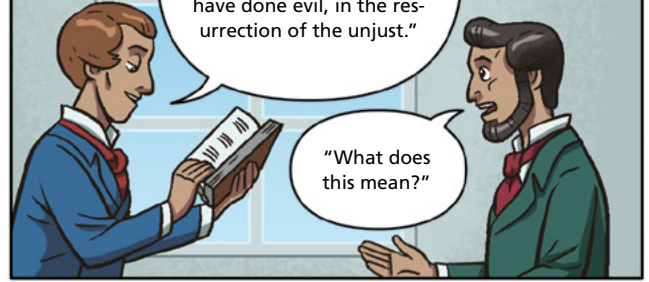


ON FEBRUARY 16, 1832, JOSEPH AND SIDNEY WERE REVISING THE BOOK OF JOHN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.



"... they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust."

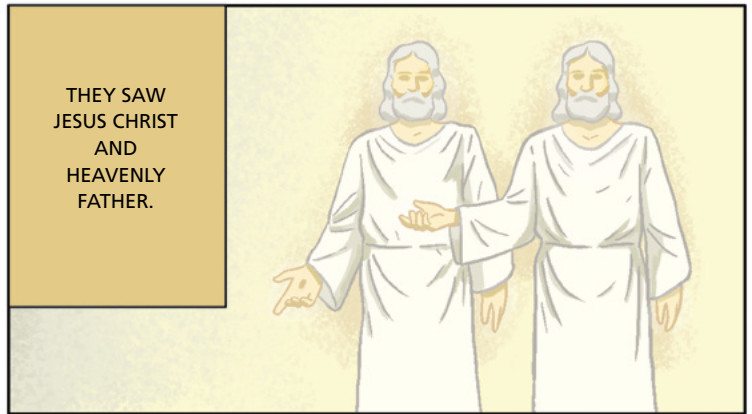
"What does this mean?"



AN INCREDIBLE VISION OPENED UP TO JOSEPH AND SIDNEY.



THEY SAW JESUS CHRIST AND HEAVENLY FATHER.



THEY ALSO LEARNED THAT THERE ARE THREE KINGDOMS IN HEAVEN.



"These are they who are ... made perfect through Jesus."

THEY WERE SHOWN THAT THOSE WHO WILL INHERIT THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM WILL BE RESURRECTED FIRST.



WHEN THE VISION WAS OVER, THEY WERE AMAZED. SIDNEY WAS TIRED.



"Sidney is not as used to this as I am."

President Wilford Woodruff said that this vision "gives more light, more truth, and more principle than any revelation contained in any other book we ever read."

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff (2004), 120–21.

Do the **WRITE** Thing

Writing your thoughts as you study the scriptures can really help you learn.

**By the Young Men
General Presidency**

“EVERY TIME I start reading the scriptures, I fall asleep!” one missionary told his mission president. “It’s like the scriptures are a sleeping pill!”

His president responded, “Do you ever take notes when you read?”

“No,” said the missionary.

“It’s easy to fall asleep or let your mind drift when you are only reading,” the president said, “but it is impossible when you add writing!”

The advice this mission president gave his struggling missionary made a big difference. So if you’re looking for a new way to strengthen your scripture study, give it a try. As you write about what you’re reading, you’ll likely find yourself more engaged and learning better, too.

Here are some approaches we’ve found really useful.

Brother Steven Lund:

I keep paper handy when I read. As the Spirit prompts me during my study, I write those promptings down.

I got the idea from Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who said: “Write down in a secure place the important things you learn from the Spirit. You will find that as you write down precious impressions, often more will come. Also, the knowledge you gain will be available throughout your life” (“To Acquire Knowledge and the Strength to Use It Wisely,” *Ensign*, June 2002, 32).

I know those words are true. As I prepare talks and lessons, I go not only to the scriptures but also to what I wrote down while reading them.



Brother Ahmad Corbitt:

I love to study topically. I read the scriptures from beginning to end, but I also like to bounce around and study topics. For example, I’ll use the Topical Guide to find scriptures on faith or the gathering of Israel. Then I don’t just take notes, but I write down what I’m learning to make sure I really understand it. I’m always amazed at how much I understand things better when I do this. I also choose some scriptures to memorize.



Brother Bradley Wilcox:

I keep a study journal where I write the scriptures in my own words. For example, “For the natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19) becomes “For the prideful and unrepentant man chooses to be an enemy to God, but God is not his enemy. God is his best friend.”

I also write questions. They can be questions I am thinking about before I read, or they can be questions that are sparked by what I read. Either way, it keeps me focused.



How Have These Tips Helped You?

What are your experiences with these or other scripture study tips? Share them on social media, and email us at ftsoy@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

The Power of Writing Your Thoughts

Each of us in our presidency studies the scriptures differently, but we all write as we do!

Reading helps us internalize thoughts and feelings. That is important. And when we speak or write, we discover and express thoughts and feelings from the inside-out. We feel that helps us personalize gospel truths better.

One young man discovered this truth for himself when he was asked to give a talk in sacrament meeting. He had heard many other people give talks but could not remember the details. This time was different. When he wrote an outline for his own talk, not only did it help him deliver an organized talk, but he remembered it for a long time.

The same thing can happen in your scripture study. If you are falling asleep when you open your scriptures, it's time to wake up. Try pulling out a pencil, pen, phone, or computer and get writing. You'll be amazed at what a difference it can make! 🏠

The Power of a Study Journal

I was wondering how I could improve my studies and retain knowledge rather than having it merely pass through my mind.

One day I read in *Preach My Gospel*, “Use a study journal to help you understand, clarify, and remember what you are learning” ([2018], xi). I had never tried this, but I thought it was a good idea. I found a notebook and started writing about what I was reading.

It required focus, and that helped me stay attentive and retain knowledge when I studied. Writing in my study journal has helped me really ponder the scriptures. This practice has been life-changing for me.

Elder Calvin,
Micronesia Guam Mission



IN SAN DIEGO, USA



HELLO! My name is Chace B., and I live in San Diego. San Diego is at the southern end of the state of California, USA. The landscape is quite diverse. San Diego is home to ports, mesas, valleys, canyons, and hills. It's usually pretty warm and sunny year-round.



Meet My Family

My family and I live up in the mountains of San Diego. I live with my mom; my 10-year-old sister, Payslie; and my *abuelito* and *abuelita* (grandpa and grandma). We live on a farm with lots of animals. We try to live a very simple and old-fashioned lifestyle.



Making the Sacrament Special

During COVID-19 quarantine, Sunday became too casual in our home. I wanted to do something to make sure Sunday was special. I decided to make my family our own sacrament tray as one of my spiritual goals for the new Children and Youth program.

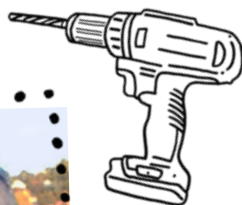
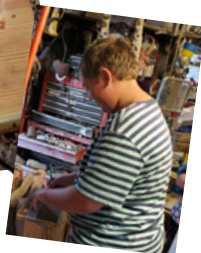
First, I took a piece of wood and drilled holes in one half for cups. Then I carved out a tray on the other half for the bread. My *abuelita* helped me sand it until it was perfectly smooth. Then we attached a handle and sealed the wood.

The first Sunday we went to prepare the sacrament and couldn't find the cups that fit the holes

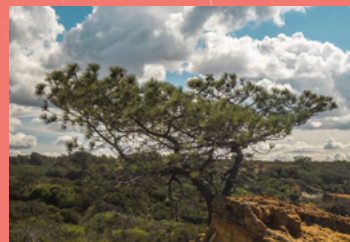
in the tray. We all looked for them for hours. After a while I decided that with or without the

perfect cups we were still going to partake of the sacrament.

When we partook of the sacrament that day, it was with more stillness, intention, and reverence. I felt pleased with the goal I'd set and achieved. I know that my Heavenly Father was proud of me.



San Diego is home to the rare Torrey pine tree.



San Diego produces more avocados than anywhere else in the USA.

The San Diego California Temple was the 45th temple to be dedicated.



California is nicknamed "The Golden State."

The Church has one mission in San Diego, and it reaches down to the border of Mexico.

San Diego is home to the Church's Mormon Battalion Historic Site.



Tell Us How You Worship

We would love to hear how you worship where you live. Send us a brief description of your location, what you do on the Sabbath, your favorite activities, or anything else you can think of. Send it to ftsoy@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



Was I Worthy?

I had been a victim of abuse for as long as I could remember. Did that affect how the Lord saw me?

Name withheld

ON THE SURFACE, my childhood was very normal.

We went to church and attended all of our Church meetings and activities. I went to school and played with my friends. As a teenager, I did all the things that normal teenagers do. I hung out with my friends and was in the choir and drama club. I went to prom. But there was a very dark secret underneath that happy, normal exterior.

From the time I was about two years old, I had been a victim of sexual abuse by my two older brothers. They also abused my sisters. We were too young to understand what was happening, but as I grew older, I began to understand a little. I felt dark and dirty whenever I was in the presence of my brothers.

My Confusion Grew

After attending a Young Women class where they taught about morality, I understood the meaning of virtue and chastity. I listened to my leaders plead with me and the others in my class to stay morally clean.

I wondered, "How could I be morally clean?" As far back as my memories could go, I had been a victim of sexual abuse. I couldn't help but wonder what the Lord thought of me. Was I a virtuous young woman? Was I worthy to date the righteous young men in my ward and school? Did the abuse I had suffered make me unworthy of a temple marriage?

I thought a lot about it. It didn't make sense to me that I would be considered unvirtuous when what happened to me was not my choice. Why shouldn't I be able to feel virtuous? Was I unworthy of the Lord's love? Did I require repentance?

I Just Tried to Forget

I honestly did not know. I felt that I was not to blame, but at the same time, I felt dirty and degraded and totally humiliated. I couldn't get the courage to tell my parents or anyone else. I did try several times, but I felt too embarrassed and I didn't know how to say the words. I just tried to forget that it was happening.

When I was 15 years old, my little sisters found the courage that I lacked. They talked to a counselor at school. A short time later, one of my brothers was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison. But still, for years afterward, I suffered with the same fears that I wasn't virtuous or worthy.

I Found the Courage to Get Help

Eventually, one day I got the courage to go see my bishop. He explained that the Lord does not hold me accountable at all for the sexual acts that were forced on me as a child and young woman. He assured me that it was not at all my fault. I stood blameless before the Lord. I was still virtuous!

With some counseling from professionals and help from my bishop, I have been able to leave the abuse—and the pain and suffering it caused—behind me. Now I really do have a happy and normal life. I was married in the temple to a righteous man, and we are raising our family happily.

Sometimes the past will intrude on my thoughts, however, and I can remember the anguish that I felt as I pondered my worthiness.

I wonder how many other young people are out there in a situation like the one I was in, feeling ashamed and humiliated, wondering about their virtue and where they fit in God's plan.

**“HE LOVES YOU.
HIS HEART
ACHES FOR YOU.
HE KNOWS THAT
YOU ARE NOT
TO BLAME.”**

To these young people I want to say, the Lord loves you.

His heart aches for you.

He knows that you are not to blame.

He knows that you are truly virtuous.

He will help you find the courage and strength to live your life with happiness. 🙏

RESOURCES FOR FINDING HELP AND HOPE

If you have been the victim of abuse, find help and hope by:

- Going to Church resources online at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/get-help/abuse](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/get-help/abuse) and “Abuse” at [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/topics).
- Talking to your bishop or a leader you trust.
- Speaking up to someone who will help you. Abusers often threaten their victims not to tell others about the abuse. Don't listen to their lies.
- Knowing that it's not your fault and that the Lord loves you.

YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTS

“I solemnly testify that when another's acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty.”

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Apr. 1992 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1992, 32).

YOU CAN MAKE IT!

We need to remember all that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have done—and what They continue to do—to help us inherit the celestial kingdom.

By Eric B. Murdock
Church Magazines

“ME? IN THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM?” I don’t think I can make it.”

Have you ever had a thought like that? Well, it’s normal to wonder if we’re good enough especially when it seems like we are so far way from being perfect. Sometimes it feels like the celestial kingdom is unattainable!

But don’t get discouraged. The whole point of Heavenly Father’s plan is to help you become like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and live with Them in the celestial kingdom. And you are in a much better position than you think you are. President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has reminded us that living with Them again “is more than just *our* goal—it is also *Their* goal.”¹



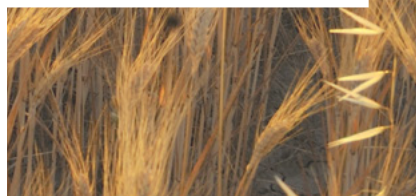
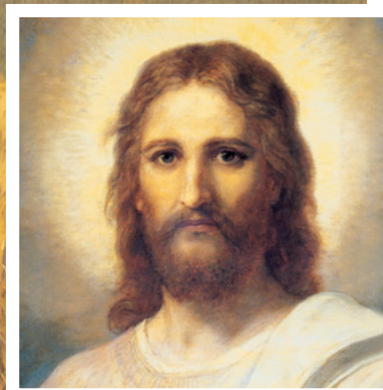
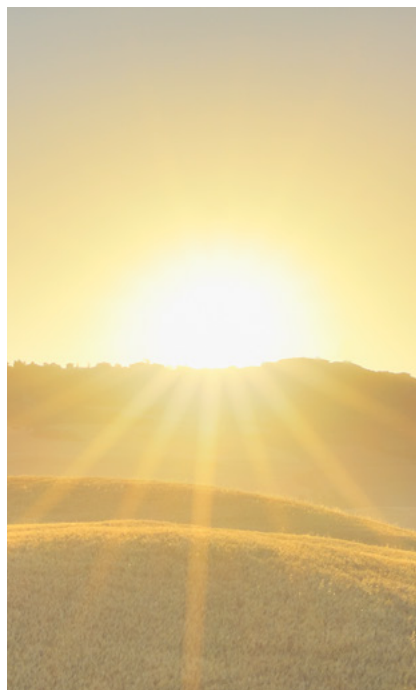
More than anything, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want all of us to live in the celestial kingdom with Them and our families. The good news is that we don't have to get there all on our own. When we come unto Christ and follow Him, we receive the strength and help we need. Because of His Atonement, inheriting the celestial kingdom is not only possible, it's likely.

So, with His help, you *can* do this! You can make it!

GOD'S PLAN IS FOR EVERYONE

To enter the celestial kingdom, we need to have faith in Jesus Christ and seek to increase that faith. We need to strive to change and repent daily. We need to be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost—and regularly remember Jesus Christ and renew our covenants. We need to endure to the end. If these are things you desire and are striving for, you are on your way to becoming one who inherits the celestial kingdom.

In addition, President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught that those who are worthy of the *highest degree* of the celestial kingdom are “those who have met the highest requirements for this kingdom, including faithfulness to covenants



made in a temple of God and marriage for eternity.”² (You can learn more about this by reading Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–70, 92–96).

If this makes you wonder—or worry—about your preparations to inherit the celestial kingdom, remember that it's a journey. Each day that we choose to become more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is a day that we move closer to becoming a more celestial person—and closer to the celestial kingdom. Of course, there will be slip-ups, mistakes, and sins for all of us. Relying on Jesus Christ as we repent daily is the key. This journey is a hopeful one because of all that He and our Heavenly Father have done—and what They continue to do—to help us get there.

WE HAVE THE SAVIOR

The Savior provides the way for us to return to our Heavenly Father. Joseph Smith described those who live in the celestial kingdom as having “received the testimony of Jesus” and having been “made perfect through Jesus . . . who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:51, 69).

Becoming perfect in Jesus Christ doesn't mean that we don't ever make mistakes. It means that we repent and try to get a little better every day, relying

on the Savior and the power of His Atonement to help us change. As we do this, His grace allows us to progress toward the highest degree of the celestial kingdom where we will live with Him, Heavenly Father, and our families forever. We will also receive all that our Father in Heaven has. None of this would be possible without the Savior.


WE HAVE THE CHURCH

President Oaks taught that the Church is also here “to help all of the children of God understand their potential and achieve their highest destiny. This church exists to provide the sons and daughters of God with the means of entrance into and exaltation in the celestial kingdom.”³ This is done through obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the gospel.

These ordinances and covenants require the priesthood, which is available only in God’s true Church. In these and other ways, the Lord and His Church help us on our journey to become the best we can be so that our hearts are prepared to one day inherit all that Heavenly Father has and gain eternal life.

KEEP GOING, AND DON’T GIVE UP!

This journey toward the celestial kingdom is hopeful, but it isn’t always easy. Heavenly Father knows that. He and



**“Keep loving.
Keep trying.
Keep trusting.
Keep believing.
Keep growing.
Heaven is
cheering you
on today,
tomorrow, and
forever.”**

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles,
Apr. 2016 general
conference
(*Ensign* or *Liahona*,
May 2016, 127).

Jesus Christ have promised to help and strengthen us every step of the way.

So keep going, and don’t give up. We will have help as we strive to follow the Savior, live so we are worthy to receive and act upon promptings from the Holy Ghost, and recognize where we can improve. As we go through life with faith in Jesus Christ and repent when we need to, our Heavenly Father will help us change for the better.

Being worthy of the celestial kingdom isn’t accomplished in one great act. It’s the result of consistently choosing to follow the Savior and relying on the hope and assurance that come from His gospel.

So, if you strive to follow the Savior and still worry whether you’ll make it to the celestial kingdom, all signs point to a resounding “Yes! You can make it!” This is what Heavenly Father intends for all of us! And as President Oaks taught, it’s all possible “because of God’s love for his children and because of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, ‘who glorifies the Father, and saves *all* the works of his hands’ [Doctrine and Covenants 76:43].”⁴ 🙏

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 65).
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” Apr. 1995 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1995, 86).
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration” (87).
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration” (87), emphasis added.

PRAYERS ABOUT SWIM GOGGLES

ONCE I WENT WITH MY DAD to Sigatoka, Fiji—a great place to swim in the ocean. My parents were divorced, so my mum wasn't going with us. Before we left, she bought me purple goggles. Sure, they're just goggles, but she expected me to take care of them and bring them back.

At the end of the second day in Sigatoka, I realized I didn't have my goggles. I worried that I'd lost them in the ocean. The first thing I did was pray that I would be able to find my goggles. I felt peace and knew everything would be OK.

The only person I told was my brother. He doesn't believe in God and often criticized my beliefs because I am the only member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in my family. He said, "Yeah, you're not going to get them back." I told him, "I prayed about it, and I know my prayers will be answered."

The next day I scanned the water while we swam. When it was time to go, I still hadn't found my goggles. I accepted I probably wouldn't find them and thanked Heavenly Father for His comfort and peace.

Then my brother suddenly shouted. He was holding up the purple goggles!

My brother still doesn't believe in the gospel, but I am grateful for the comfort, strength, and assurance that come when I put my faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Shreya S., Suva, Fiji

"When [we] pray with faith, [we] have the Savior as [our] advocate with the Father. . . . Answers come. Blessings are received. There is peace and joy even in hard times."

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, "Prayers of Faith," Apr. 2020 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 29).

FUN STOP

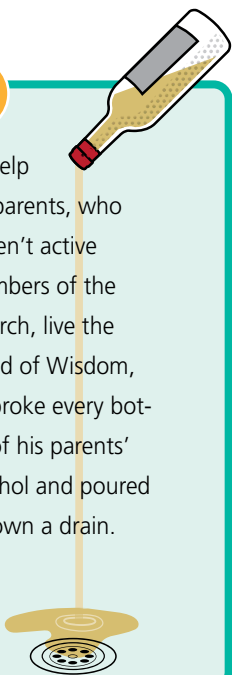
PRESIDENT NELSON QUIZ

See how well you do in this true or false quiz about President Russell M. Nelson.

True
or **False?**

1.

To help his parents, who weren't active members of the Church, live the Word of Wisdom, he broke every bottle of his parents' alcohol and poured it down a drain.



4.

President Nelson performed the first-ever open-heart operation in Utah.



5.

He has nine sons and one daughter.



9.

He always wanted to learn how to snow ski, but never found the time.



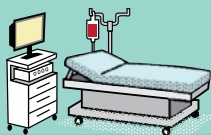
6.



He has perfect pitch.

2.

He was a brain surgeon.



7.

He performed heart surgery on Elder Spencer W. Kimball, who later became President of the Church.



10.

Due to an outbreak of war, President Nelson did not serve a full-time mission.



3.

He helped develop the heart-lung machine.



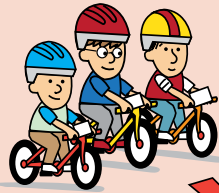
8.



He almost drowned once on a family rafting trip.

MAZE PARTY TIME

These three siblings each need to make it through the town to pass out invitations to their grandmother's 90th birthday party. Can you help them find three paths through the maze that reach every house with a red roof, but without any two siblings taking the same street?



I thought there was an earthquake or a bear had gotten into the house or something! Why didn't you turn on a light?

I didn't want to wake anyone!

I still say it's too early for family scripture study!

KEVIN BECKSTROM

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



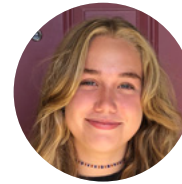
Through Heavenly Father's Eyes

"Every day, I pray to Heavenly Father and ask Him to help me see myself the way He sees me. Then I listen closely as the Spirit gives me positive messages from God about my worth and identity, and I say these words to myself in the mirror. This simple activity is a way we can connect with heaven and learn that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love us and believe in us."
Madeleine M., 14, New York, USA



A Blessing in Disguise

"We often think that being weak or having flaws makes us worthless. In reality, we're blessed so we can rise above them and become better versions of ourselves through humility and self-improvement. If we work on the things that are hard for us, the Lord will see and reward our efforts. It's all about trying and never giving up."
Ricardo R., 17, Chihuahua, Mexico



Love Our Differences

"I always do my best to remember that I am a loved child of God. I try not to compare myself to others, because that makes it harder to believe in my self-worth. God made us all unique and beautiful in our own way, and those differences are a good thing."
Brooke D., 14, Alberta, Canada

"How can I stop questioning my self-worth?"



Our Divine Nature

"Nothing compares to knowing that as children of the living God, we can become like Him. It changes everything! When we get bad thoughts that make us question our worth, remember that those thoughts come from Satan, not God. We have infinite potential and a divine nature, just like our Heavenly Father. He trusts and loves each of us individually."
Alexandre S., 16, Minas Gerais, Brazil



Great Responsibility

"As I strive to study and ponder the scriptures and the words of the living prophets, I can feel the Holy Spirit with me, which reminds me that I am a beloved daughter of heavenly parents and that God has great plans for me. President Nelson is always showing us the great responsibilities we have in these latter days and that God trusts us and knows what we are capable of."
Mirian P., 16, Paraná, Brazil

"If we look at ourselves only through our mortal eyes, we may not see ourselves as good enough. But our Heavenly Father sees us as . . . His sons and daughters, as beings of eternal light with everlasting potential and with a divine destiny."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then-Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "It Works Wonderfully!" Oct. 2015 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 105).

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



What is the celestial kingdom like?

THOUGH WE MAY not have all the details about the celestial kingdom, the Lord has revealed some powerful truths about it. Here are some of the things we know:

- To live there means to dwell in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ with a perfect, resurrected body and to live the kind of life They live. This life is “a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41) and a “fulness of joy” (3 Nephi 28:10).
- Those who live there have been “made perfect through Jesus,” and “all things are theirs” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:59, 69).
- It has the greatest glory of any kingdom. Its glory has been likened to the brightness of the sun.
- The same kinds of relationships we have here will exist there, including family relationships, but they will be “coupled with eternal glory” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:2).
- It has three degrees. The highest degree is where people live who have been sealed together in eternal marriage and have been true to their covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4).
- The earth will receive a celestial glory (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:17–20).

What Do You Think?

I’m not sure I’ll be ready to serve a mission at 18 or 19. How do I decide when it’s the best time to go?

Send your answer and photo by August 15, 2021.

Go to ftsoy.ChurchofJesusChrist.org and click “Submit Your Work.” Sign in with your Church Account and then select “For the Strength of Youth” under “Choose Magazine.” Click “Add File” to select your file and photos, and then click “Submit” to upload and send us your file. Or email us at ftsoy@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

FUN STOP ANSWERS (PAGES 28–29): President Nelson Quiz: 1. True; 2. False—he was a heart surgeon; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False—it’s nine daughters and one son; 6. True; 7. True; 8. True; 9. False—he’s been an active snow skier his whole life; 10. True

Keeping Our Promises

By Elder Ronald A. Rasband

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From an October 2019 general conference address.

ONE EVENING IN MY YOUTH, my mother sat with me at the foot of her bed and spoke fervently of the importance of living the Word of Wisdom. She looked right into my eyes, and I felt her words penetrate my heart: “Promise me, Ronnie, today, that you will always live the Word of Wisdom.” I solemnly made that promise to her, and I have held to it all these years.

I also made a decision in advance to follow God’s laws, and I never had to revisit it. The Lord has said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:10).

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I invite you to consider the promises and covenants you make with the Lord, and with others, with great integrity, knowing that your word is your bond. I promise you, as you do this, the Lord will establish your words and sanction your deeds as you strive with unwearied diligence to build up your lives, your families, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He will be with you, and you can, with confidence, look forward to being “received into heaven, that thereby [you] may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness” (Mosiah 2:41).

Integrity means being honest. It also means doing the right thing even if no one is watching. We have integrity when we keep our promises.

Unwearied diligence means to keep trying, even when it’s hard.



Sanction means to give approval for an action.

► **WHAT PROMISES HAVE YOU MADE TO THE LORD AND TO THOSE AROUND YOU? WHAT PROMISES SHOULD YOU MAKE?**



Edward Partridge

1793–1840

First bishop in the Church

Tarred and feathered by Church opponents

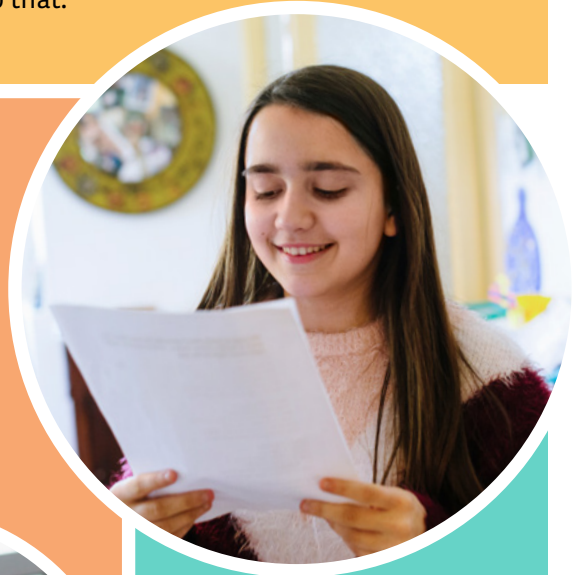
After being called as bishop, Edward asked his wife, Lydia, to pray for him so he could fulfill his calling in a way that pleased the Lord. After Edward's death, the Lord told Joseph Smith that He had received Edward "unto myself" because of his diligence (Doctrine and Covenants 124:19).

JUST CHECKING IN

Have you thought about your goals recently?

Now's a great time to reflect on how you're doing. Here's a few ways you can do that.

- Make sure you've got your goals in a place where you can review them often.
- Don't be afraid to set goals that stretch you!



- Spend time reflecting on your ideas in your journal or Children and Youth booklet.
- You can track your goals and record your thoughts in the Gospel Living app.

