



# Labels

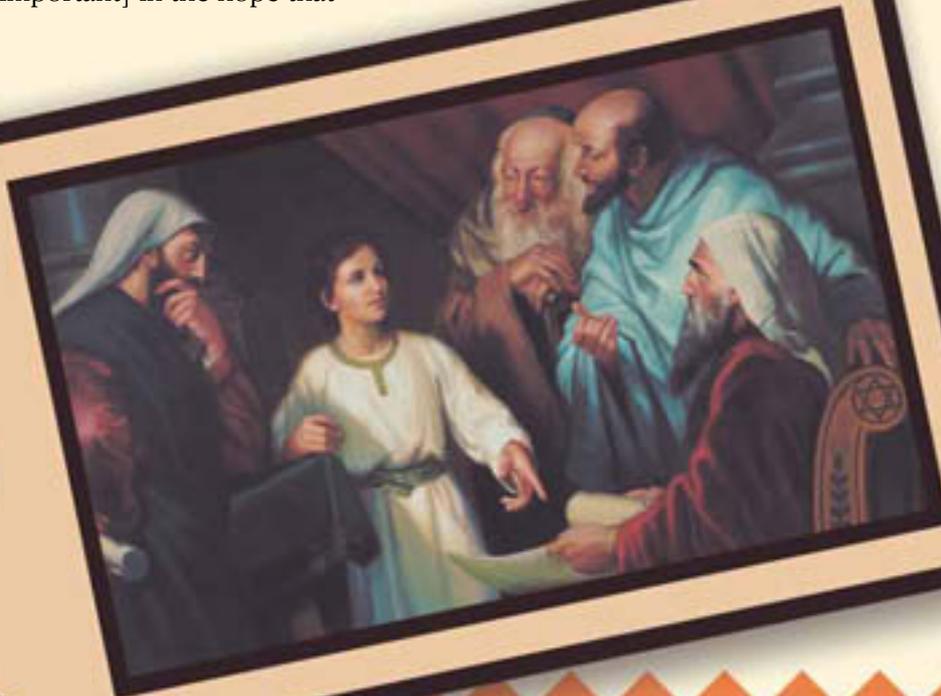


**BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

**T**he National Gallery in London, England, is one of the truly great museums of art in all the world. During a visit, I was surprised to see displayed magnificent portraits and landscapes which featured the name of no artist. Then I noticed this explanation: “The information on labels on paintings can often affect . . . our estimate [opinion] of them; and here labeling has been deliberately subordinate [made less important] in the hope that

visitors will read only after they have looked and made their own assessment [judgment] of each work.”

Like the labels on paintings are the outward appearances of some people—often misleading. There are those who may outwardly appear without talent. A classic label appeared beneath a picture of the boy Abraham Lincoln as he stood in front of his humble birthplace—a simple log cabin. The words read, “Ill-housed, ill-clothed,





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ill-fed.” Unprinted was the real label of the boy:  
“Destined for immortal glory.”

As the poet expressed:

*Nobody knows what a boy is worth,  
We'll have to wait and see.  
But every man in a noble place,  
A boy once used to be.*

The boy Samuel must have appeared like any lad his age as he ministered unto the Lord before Eli. As Samuel lay down to sleep and heard the voice of the Lord calling him, Samuel mistakenly thought it was aged Eli calling and responded, “Here am I” (1 Samuel 3:4). However, after Eli had listened to the boy’s account and told him it was of the Lord, Samuel followed Eli’s counsel and responded to the Lord’s call with the memorable reply, “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10). The record then reveals that “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him. . . .

“And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3:19–20).

As a boy, Jesus was found in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors,” and they were listening to Him and asking Him questions.

“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46–47; see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 2:46). To the learned doctors in the temple, the boy’s outward label may have conveyed brightness of intellect but certainly not “Son of God and future Redeemer of all mankind.”

The message on the label of a humble heart is “Lord, here am I.” It was true of the boy Samuel; it was the experience of Jesus. May it ever be the label which identifies each of us. ●

*Adapted from “Labels,” Ensign, Sept. 2000, 2–6.*