

Liahona



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The Nativity, by Phyllis Luch

We learn in Matthew 2:9–11 that the Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus Christ when He was a young child, and they were led by the new star that appeared at His birth.

“The star, which [the Wise Men] saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

*“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*

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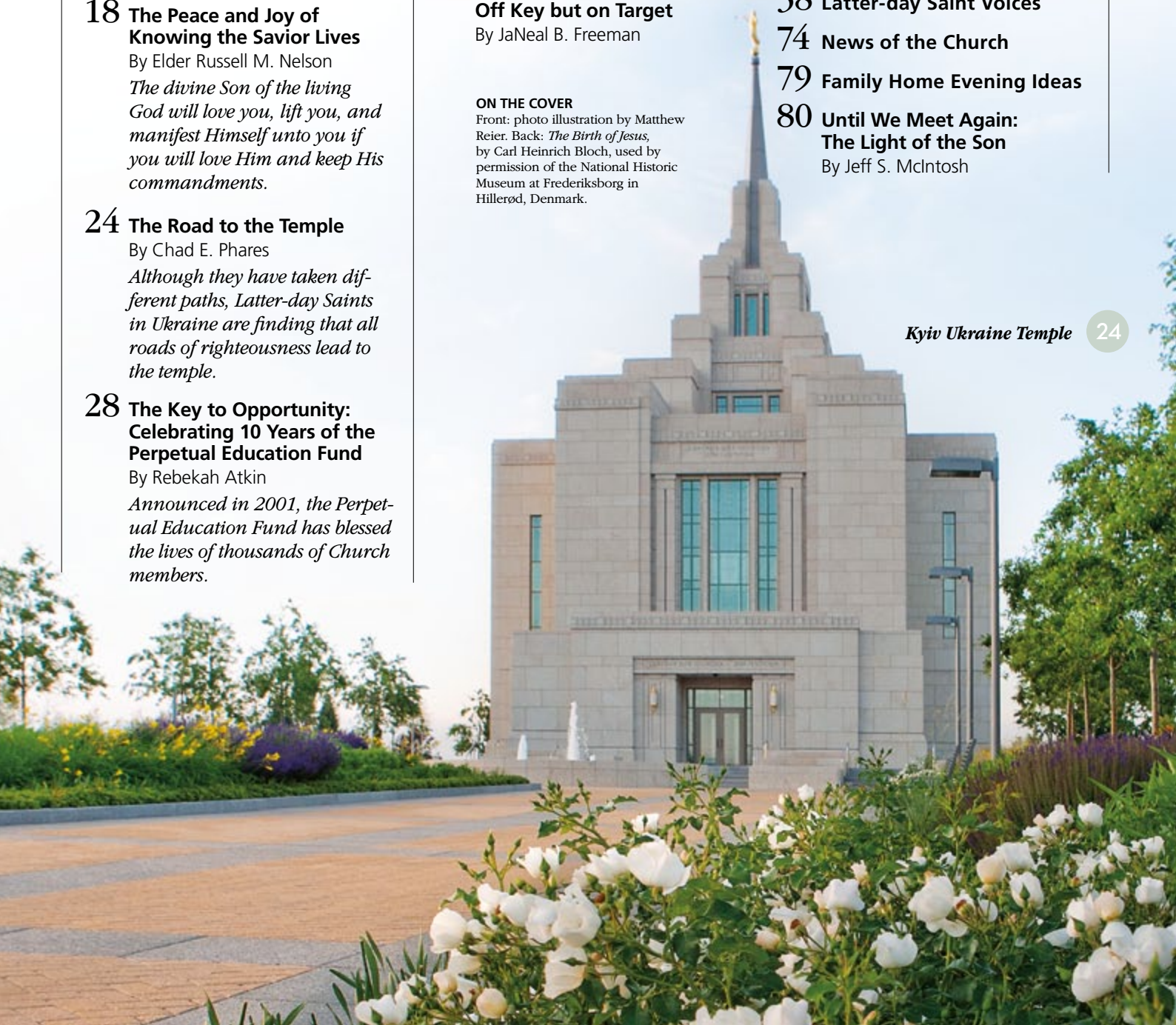
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For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and Canada, go to store.lds.org or contact your local Church distribution center or ward or branch leader.

Submit manuscripts and queries online at liahona.lds.org; by mail to *Liahona*, Rm. 2420, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA; or e-mail: liahona@ldschurch.org.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning "compass" or "director") is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

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For Readers in the United States and Canada:

December 2011 Vol. 35 No. 12. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover) may be taken by phone or at store.lds.org. (Canada Poste Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Salt Lake Distribution Center, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368.

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FOR ADULTS

The **Perpetual Education Fund** has thrived since President Gordon B. Hinckley announced it 10 years ago (see page 28). To read more success stories, learn how to obtain a PEF loan, or contribute to the fund, visit pef.lds.org.

FOR YOUTH

Read how the Kyiv Ukraine Temple has strengthened families (see page 24) and watch how the **youth cultural celebration** that took place before the temple was dedicated strengthened the testimonies of the teens involved. Watch the inspiring video at youth.lds.org (search for "Kyiv Ukraine Temple").

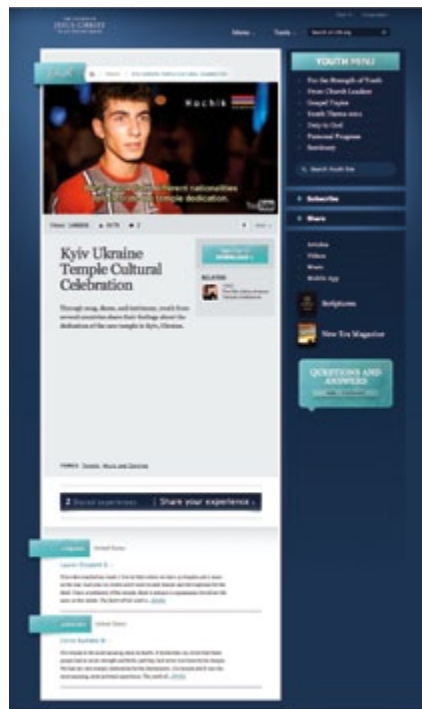
FOR CHILDREN

Enjoy the Christmas stories on pages 64, 66, and 70. Then **watch a video of the first Christmas** based on Luke 2. Visit lds.org/new-testament-videos.

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IN YOUR LANGUAGE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in many languages at www.languages.lds.org.

**By President
Henry B. Eyring**
First Counselor in
the First Presidency



THE CHOICE TO BE Grateful

Our Father in Heaven commands us to be thankful in all things (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18), and He requires that we give thanks for the blessings we receive (see D&C 46:32). We know that all of His commandments are intended to make us happy, and we also know that to break commandments leads to misery.

So to be happy and to avoid misery, we must have a grateful heart. We have seen in our lives the connection between gratitude and happiness. All of us would like to feel gratitude, yet it is not easy to be consistently grateful in all things in the trials of life. Sickness, disappointment, and the loss of people we love come at times in our lives. Our sorrows can make it hard to see our blessings and to appreciate the blessings God has in store for us in the future.

It is a challenge to count our blessings because we have a tendency to take good things for granted. When we lose a roof over our heads, food to eat, or the warmth of friends and family, we realize how grateful we should have been when we had them.

Most of all, sometimes it is hard for us to be sufficiently grateful for the greatest gifts we receive: the birth of Jesus Christ, His Atonement, the promise of resurrection, the opportunity to enjoy eternal life with our families, the Restoration of the gospel with the priesthood and its keys. Only with the help of the Holy Ghost can we begin to feel what those blessings mean for us and for those we love. And only then can we hope to be thankful in

all things and avoid the offense to God of ingratitude.

We must ask in prayer that God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, will help us see our blessings clearly even in the midst of our trials. He can help us by the power of the Spirit to recognize and be grateful for blessings we take for granted. What has helped me the most is to ask God in prayer, “Wouldst Thou please direct me to someone I can help for Thee?” It is in helping God bless others that I have seen my own blessings more closely.

My prayer was once answered when a couple I had not known before invited me to go to a hospital. There I found a little baby so small that she could fit in my hand. In only a few weeks of life, she had undergone multiple surgeries. The doctors had told the parents that more difficult surgery would be needed for the heart and lungs to sustain life in that little child of God.

At the request of the parents, I gave the baby a priesthood blessing. The blessing included a promise of life being extended. More than giving a blessing, I received the blessing myself of a more grateful heart.

With our Father’s help, all of us can choose to feel more gratitude. We can ask Him to help us see our blessings more clearly, whatever our circumstances. For me that day, I appreciated as never before the miracle of my own heart and lungs working. I gave thanks on the way home for blessings to my children that I could see more clearly were miracles of kindness from God and from good people around them.



God the Father gave His Son, and Jesus Christ gave us the Atonement, the greatest of all gifts and all giving.

Most of all, I felt gratitude for the evidence of the Atonement working in the lives of those anxious parents and in mine. I had seen hope and the pure love of Christ shining in their faces, even in their terrible trial. And I felt the evidence you can feel if you ask God to reveal to you that the Atonement can allow you to feel hope and love.

We all can make the choice to give thanks in prayer and to ask God for direction to serve others for Him—especially during this time of year when we celebrate the Savior's birth. God the Father gave His Son, and Jesus Christ gave us the Atonement, the greatest of all gifts and all giving (see D&C 14:7).

Giving thanks in prayer can allow us to see the magnitude of these blessings and all of our other blessings and so receive the gift of a more grateful heart. ■

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Writing down our experiences and blessings can help us remember them and give us something to refer back to. Consider asking those you teach to write down what they are grateful for—to help them remember the blessings they have received, recognize the blessings of the present, and look forward to the blessings of the future.

You could also encourage those you teach to follow President Eyring's example in asking Heavenly Father to direct them to someone they can help or serve.

Take a Gratitude Challenge

By John Hilton III and Anthony Sweat

Let's not just talk about counting our blessings—let's do it! Write a list of 100 things you are thankful for. If that sounds like it is too many, try this:

1. Write 10 physical abilities you are grateful for.
2. Write 10 material possessions you are grateful for.
3. Write 10 living people you are grateful for.
4. Write 10 deceased people you are grateful for.
5. Write 10 things about nature you are grateful for.
6. Write 10 things about today you are grateful for.
7. Write 10 places on earth you are grateful for.
8. Write 10 modern inventions you are grateful for.
9. Write 10 foods you are grateful for.
10. Write 10 things about the gospel you are grateful for.

When we make a list like this, we discover that a list of 100 doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of all the things God has given us.

CHILDREN

Help Me See My Blessings

Felipe is asking Heavenly Father to help him see the blessings in his life. Help him find things he can be thankful for by circling them. Be sure you don't miss these things hidden in the picture: house,

banana, dog, church, school, clothes, bike, guitar, ball, and flower.

Consider making a list of things you are thankful for and sharing it with your family.





Faith • Family • Relief

An Extensive Sphere of Action

The Lord, His Church, families, and communities need the influence of righteous women. In fact, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God.”¹

Some sisters may wonder if they can accomplish such lofty aims. But as Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), second Relief Society general president, explained, “There is no sister so isolated, and her sphere so narrow but what she can do a great deal towards establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth.”² Sister Snow also taught that Relief Society was organized “for the accomplishment of every good and noble work.”³

Participation in Relief Society enlarges our spheres of influence by giving each sister opportunities to build faith, to strengthen families and homes, and to provide service both at home and throughout the world. And fortunately, our efforts as individuals and as Relief Societies need not be large and overwhelming, but they should be deliberate and consistent. Righteous practices such as daily personal and family prayer, daily scripture study, and consistently magnifying Church callings will help increase faith and build the Lord’s kingdom.

To sisters who wonder if these seemingly quiet contributions make a difference, Elder Ballard affirms: “Every sister who stands for truth and righteousness diminishes the influence of evil. Every sister who strengthens and protects her family is doing the work of God. Every sister who lives as a woman of God becomes a beacon for others to follow and plants seeds of righteous influence that will be harvested for decades to come.”⁴

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help the sisters I visit recognize and act on their ability to be a righteous influence?
2. How can I use my unique gifts and talents to bless others?

From the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 12:4–18; 1 Timothy 6:18–19; Mosiah 4:27; Articles of Faith 1:13

For more information, go to reliefsociety.lds.org.

From Our History

Eliza R. Snow, who had served as secretary when Relief Society was organized in Nauvoo, was called by President Brigham Young (1801–77) to travel throughout the Church, helping bishops organize Relief Society in their wards.

Sister Snow taught: “If any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least circumscribed [limited] in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed. . . . President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness.”⁵

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Women of Righteousness,” *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 39; *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 70.
2. Eliza R. Snow, “An Address,” *Woman’s Exponent*, Sept. 15, 1873, 62.
3. Eliza R. Snow, “Female Relief Society,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.
4. M. Russell Ballard, *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 39; *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 70.
5. Eliza R. Snow, *Deseret News*, Apr. 22, 1868, 81.



Small & Simple Things

“By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

CHURCH HISTORY AROUND THE WORLD



Mexico

The first Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in Mexico in 1875. They divided into two groups. One sent selections of the Book of Mormon in Spanish to influential leaders throughout the country and taught many people, but they had no converts. The other group baptized Mexico’s first five

members of the Church, in Hermosillo, Sonora. Four years later, one of the leaders who had received the Church literature in 1875, Plotino C. Rhodakanaty of Mexico City, requested baptism for himself and others. By 1885 a Spanish translation of the Book of Mormon was completed.

For many years the country faced political tension, but the early members remained faithful. The first Spanish-speaking stake in the Church, the Mexico

Stake, was organized on December 3, 1961. The Church opened several schools, including Benemérito de las Américas, founded in Mexico City in 1963, which is still in operation.

The first temple built in Mexico, located in Mexico City, was dedicated in 1983. In 2000, eight temples were dedicated in Mexico.

In 2004, Mexico became the first country outside the United States to have one million members.



Church leaders participate in the groundbreaking for Benemérito de las Américas on November 4, 1963.



THE CHURCH IN MEXICO	
Membership	1,234,545
Missions	23
Stakes	221
Wards and Branches	2,009
Temples	12 in operation; 1 announced

Christmas for the Early Pioneers

Harsh winter months made for difficult times for most pioneers, and resources for Christmas presents and celebrations were often scarce. Yet that didn't deter the early pioneers from creating special memories during the holiday season. Here are a few records of how Christmas was celebrated in pioneer times:

My Happiest Christmas

"My first Christmas in the [Salt Lake] Valley came on Saturday. We celebrated the day on the Sabbath. All of us gathered around the flag pole in the center of the fort. There we held a meeting. What a meeting it was. We sang praises to God. We joined in the opening prayer, and the speaker that day has always been remembered by me. There were words of thanksgiving and cheer, not a pessimistic word was uttered. People were hopeful and buoyant, because of their faith in the future. After the meeting there was handshaking all around. Some wept with joy. Children played in the enclosure and around the sagebrush fire that night. We gathered and sang, 'Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear; but with joy wend your way.' We had boiled rabbit and a little bread for dinner. We all had enough to eat and there was a sense of perfect peace and good will. I never had a happier Christmas in my life."

Unknown author, quoted by Bryant S. Hinckley, in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (1958–77), 14:198.

My, How Time Flies

"One night when I was sixteen years old, Father gave a Christmas party for his own children and their families and the nearest neighbors. We danced. My brothers were the musicians. We knew it was Father's aim to end the party at ten o'clock, which he did right in the middle

of a square-dance by ordering the musicians to stop. But Father didn't know that my brothers had lifted me up to the clock many times that night. Each time I turned it back thirty minutes. It must have been past midnight when the party broke up."

From Christian Olsen family records, in Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 15:199.

A Jolly Time

"When the children awoke on Christmas morning in 1849, not a doll was to be found in all the land, no, not even a stick of candy, or an apple was found in the cabins. But the children and their parents were happy for all that. They were glad that they still had a little to eat, and prospects before them in their new homes

were beginning to grow brighter every day. But, if there were no dolls or toys for the children, the fathers and mothers could not forget Christmas, and before the day was over they all had a jolly time.

"In the evening they met at the cabin of John Rowberry. This was the house where the first meetings were held. There they had an old fashioned dance to wind up the day, and it was the merriest crowd that ever met in a Christmas gathering. . . . But the great drawback was music. Not an instrument of any kind was to be found. Cyrus Call was a very good whistler and he whistled tunes while the merry pioneers danced."

Sarah Tolman, in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Treasures of Pioneer Heritage*, 6 vols. (1952–57), 4:197–98.



GREAT LIVES REMEMBERED

President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901)



Though he later became the fifth President of the Church, Lorenzo Snow had little interest in being baptized until his sister, Eliza, invited him to attend Hebrew classes at the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. Also attending the school were Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. Lorenzo soon became interested in the gospel and joined the Church on June 19, 1836. Elder Snow then served missions to Italy, the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), and Great Britain, where he presented a copy of the Book of Mormon to Queen Victoria.



Elder Snow possessed remarkable gifts that he used to serve the Lord. In his patriarchal blessing he was promised that although he would live to an old age, he would not feel the effects of aging. His vitality allowed him to remain active in his later years as an apostle and a prophet. He also used the priesthood to raise several people from the dead.

During President Snow's time as prophet, Latter-day Saints in southern Utah were suffering from a drought. While speaking at a conference in the southern Utah town of St. George, President Snow was inspired to promise the Saints that it would rain and they would enjoy a bountiful harvest if they would pay tithing. Though the members paid their tithing, several months passed without rain. President Snow implored Heavenly Father to send rain. Later he received a telegram announcing, "Rain in St. George."

For more information, see Francis M. Gibbons, Lorenzo Snow: Spiritual Giant, Prophet of God (1982).



Top: Portrait of Lorenzo Snow in about 1865. Middle: President Snow (middle) with his counselors in the First Presidency, George Q. Cannon (left) and Joseph F. Smith (right) in 1900. Bottom: Latter-day Saints were blessed with rain for their crops after heeding President Snow's counsel to pay tithing.

OFF KEY BUT ON TARGET

By JaNeal B. Freeman

My father sang a line of music all his own—not tenor, not bass, but somewhere around and all over both of them. Even though he couldn't tell a middle C from an A flat, Dad sang out loud and strong.

I never remember being embarrassed by my father's singing, but I do remember being both amused and puzzled by his joyful noise. Didn't he realize other people were listening?

My dad loved the hymns of the gospel, and he wasn't about to let a lack of talent get in the way of worshipping through music. He sang with joy, enthusiasm, and emotion. I loved how he could sing a hymn like "The Spirit of God" with energy and conviction and then a few minutes later sing the sacrament hymn with tenderness and reverence.

One afternoon my father taught me a powerful lesson through a hymn. I was playing the piano as I often did to unwind after a day of high school. My father, always watching for a little one-on-one time, came in and joined me. It was a routine I was familiar with: he would page ahead in a songbook, find a song, and then have me play it while he sang.

On this particular day, Dad pulled out the hymnbook and turned to a hymn.

"This is a great song. One of my

favorites," he said, placing the book on the piano. It was "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." Dad told me it was a favorite hymn of the Prophet Joseph Smith and that Joseph had asked John Taylor to sing the song at Carthage a short time before Joseph and Hyrum were martyred.

Then Dad sang all seven verses while I accompanied him. In that moment, two amazing things happened. The first was that my father sang the whole song without missing a note. His A flats were actually A flats! Dad's voice was unpretentious and simple, and to me it sounded beautiful. The second amazing thing was less surprising but much more important. As my father sang, I knew that he loved Joseph Smith and had a testimony of his prophetic call. The Spirit bore witness to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

My father passed away a few years later, and I often think of that day and the impact it had on me. An important part of my testimony of the gospel is held firmly in place because a father who "couldn't sing" chose to sing with all of his heart. ■



TAKE TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

"Besides showing youth the way by example, we lead them by understanding their hearts and walking alongside them on the gospel path. To truly understand their hearts, we must do more than just be in the same room or attend the same family and Church activities. We must plan and take advantage of teaching moments that make a deep and lasting impression upon their minds and hearts. . . .

"I would hope that we would have the opportunity of bearing our testimonies that we know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I would hope that we would bear our testimonies so that our children will know where our hearts are and that we love them. The greatest love and the greatest teachings should be in our homes."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 95, 98.

MY SERVICE AS A SINGLE MEMBER

By Julie Burdett

Church Magazines

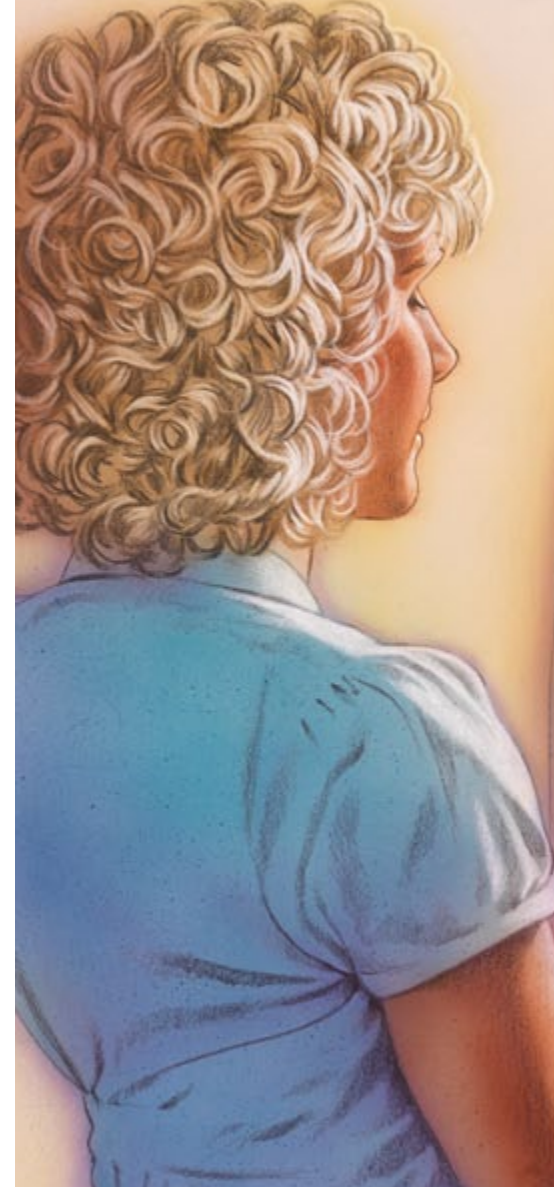
*When I received a new calling, I was stunned.
“Can I do that?” I asked myself.*

About seven years ago, when I was 29, I moved to Utah from Oregon, USA. After weighing my options, I decided to attend my local family ward, thinking I needed a change from the singles wards I had attended.

My parents raised me to always accept Church callings, so I made an appointment with the bishop to present myself as someone who wanted to be put to work. It wasn't long before I found myself teaching the five-year-olds in Primary, which I enjoyed. Five months later the bishop called me to be Primary president. I was stunned. “Can I do that?” I asked myself.

Being single and childless made me wonder if I was qualified to serve in that capacity. In my past experience with family wards, Primary presidents were happily married, accomplished, and devoted mothers. Remembering what my parents had taught me, however, I accepted the new assignment. The bishop truly took to heart the mandate that bishops are to “find meaningful callings for all young single adults.”¹ The calling may have been a little more meaningful than I was expecting, but I was grateful for it.

As I served in my new calling, I experienced many sweet, funny, and



inspiring moments with the children. One year, during Christmastime, we reenacted the Nativity for a special sharing time. We sang songs. We furnished robes and towel headdresses for the shepherds and for Joseph. We had tinsel garlands for the angels' heads. We made cardboard and foil-covered crowns for the Wise Men.

As we reenacted the Christmas story and sang the sacred songs of the season, I noticed the beautiful young girl who was portraying Mary. Her example of reverence and gentleness as she knelt, quietly holding the doll that represented the baby Jesus, touched my heart. The spirit of



that moment made me thankful to a loving Heavenly Father for our Savior and helped strengthen my testimony of His profound and loving mission. It also made me thankful for the tremendous blessing I had received in being called to serve and for an inspired bishop who helped to make that service possible.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, we read, “Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work” (D&C 4:3). Though this verse is usually associated with missionary work, I like to think that it can refer to any form of gospel-based service.

Regardless of marital or social

status, each of us is first and foremost a child of a loving Heavenly Father, who wants us to grow, belong, develop our talents, serve one another, and help one another return to Him.

The acceptance and love I felt in that ward was instantaneous and remains in my heart to this day. My desire to serve was recognized and utilized, many people reached out and welcomed me, and Heavenly Father truly blessed me. Because of kind and attentive leaders, I was blessed to teach and learn from some of His most wonderful children. ■

NOTE

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 16.3.3.



LOVING ATTENTION

“Although many single adult members are well-adjusted to life and its problems, they still need loving attention from the Church and its members to reaffirm their usefulness and the love that God has for each of them.”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Welcoming Every Single One,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2007, 4; *Ensign*, Aug. 2007, 6.

An Answer for Every “WHAT IF?”

“And [Jesus Christ] shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11).



THE HEALING POWER OF THE ATONEMENT

“[Jesus Christ] knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. Like the good Samaritan in His parable, when He finds us wounded at the wayside, He binds up our wounds and cares for us (see Luke 10:34). Brothers and sisters, the healing power of His Atonement is for you, for us, for all.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “He Heals the Heavy Laden,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 7.

By Michael D. Woodbury

Several years ago my scooter slipped out from under me, and I fell in the middle of the road. Almost immediately I was hit by another vehicle—a large one—and dragged down the road. Those who reported the accident called it in as a fatality.

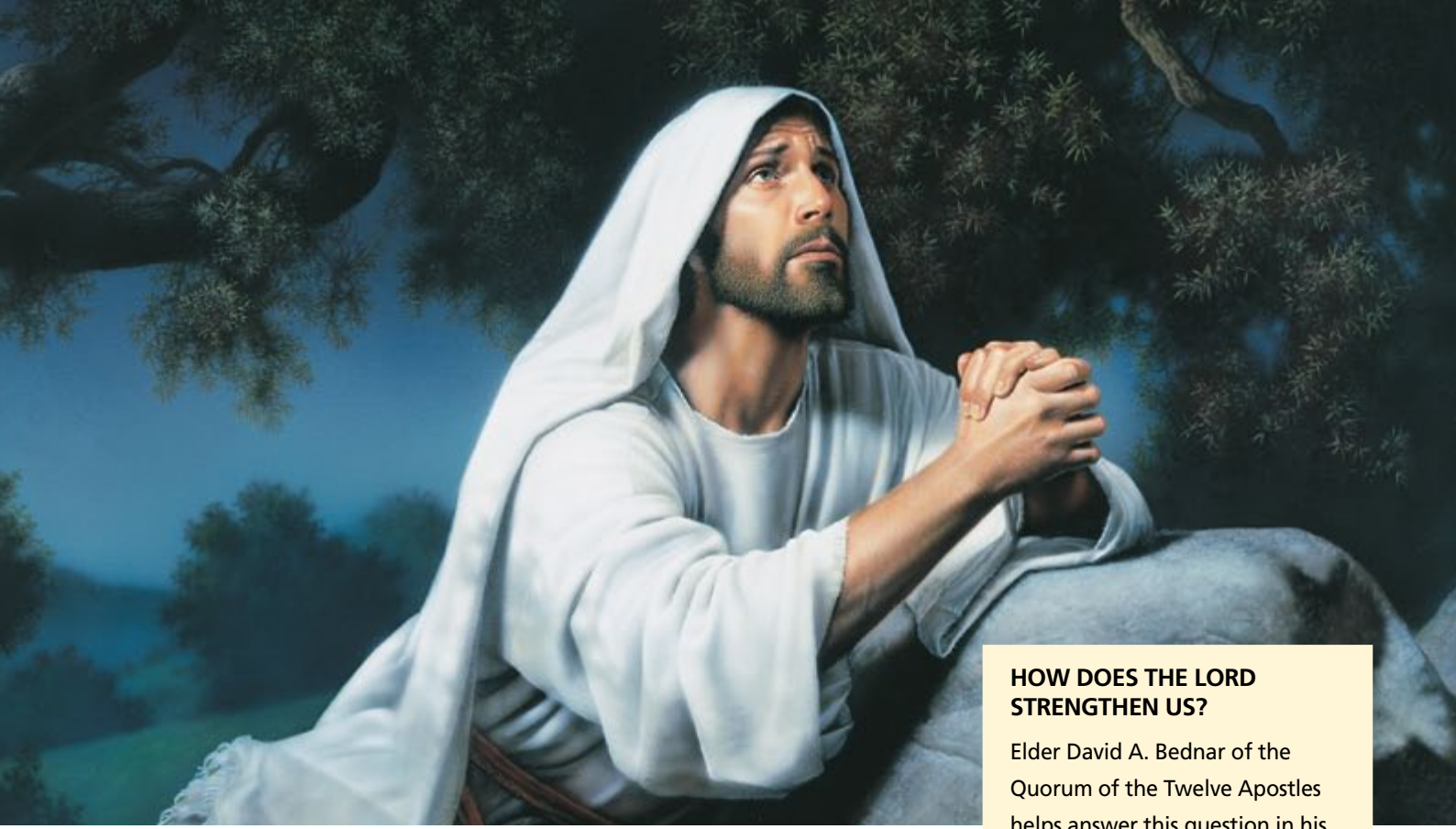
When paramedics discovered I was still alive, they rushed me to the hospital, where during the next several days I underwent a number of emergency surgeries. While I was on life support and unconscious, my father and others laid their hands upon me and, through the power of the priesthood, blessed me. From that moment on, the healing process was miraculous. But even more significant than what happened to me physically was what happened spiritually.

This experience opened my heart to the Savior’s influence. A week after the

accident, I regained consciousness and learned what had happened. I recognized that the Lord had protected me and allowed me to remain with my wife and children on earth. I found myself comforted, not abandoned, by God. Rather than feeling traumatized and overwhelmed by the recovery process that lay before me, I felt peace.

In the days that followed, my love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ reached new depths, and my desire to remain faithful all my life intensified. I saw the Lord’s love through the good people I encountered. And I saw that Heavenly Father heard and answered the prayers and fasting of people of many faiths on my behalf.

As I have shared this story with others, the “what if?” questions have been endless. “What if you had died?” “What if you



had been left unable to walk?” “What if you had to battle severe pain for the rest of your life?” The amazing part to me is that the Atonement provides an answer to every “what if?”

Because of the Atonement, I will be resurrected and any physical infirmity or pain will be wiped away. My wife, children, and I are sealed together as an eternal family. The Atonement made that possible too. If we move forward with faith in our Savior as we pass through the trials of life and endure to the end, the Atonement will provide the path we need to follow, with the glorious promise of eternal life waiting at the end. ■

“He will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

For more on this topic, see Matthew 11:28–30; 3 Nephi 17:7–9; and Bruce C. Hafen, “Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, Apr. 1997, 39; *Ensign*, Apr. 1990, 7.

HOW DOES THE LORD STRENGTHEN US?

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helps answer this question in his general conference talk “In the Strength of the Lord” (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 76–78):

- “In the strength of the Lord we can do and endure and overcome all things.”
- “The enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement helps us to see and to do and to become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity.”
- “In the strength of the Lord and through His grace, I know that you and I can be blessed to accomplish all things.”

Consider sharing with another your testimony of the blessings that come as a result of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

LESSONS FROM THE Master



By Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Marvin J. Ashton was ordained an Apostle on December 2, 1971. The following article is an excerpt of a Brigham Young University devotional address he gave on June 5, 1988.

For as long as I can remember I've had a special love for Jesus Christ. I was taught He was the Son of the living God. I was taught He was my friend, my teacher, and my strength. In years past, when the calling and responsibility and honor of bearing special witness of Him have come into my life, I have endeavored to be taught by His life and His ways. Truly, He is the Master Teacher. To assist me in my labors and commitment, I have found myself turning frequently to the eighth chapter of John in the New Testament for strength, for guidance, and for example. If you please, let us walk through some of the verses to strengthen our lives and our relationships with Jesus. These lines and words help me to better understand Him and give me the desire to do and be more like Him. . . .

[The scribes and Pharisees] brought unto Him the woman taken in adultery. These enemies . . . tried to trick Him. They sat her in the midst as an exhibit, as a sinner, as someone unclean. He didn't flee from her presence.

. . . She was taken in adultery—in the very act. There was no doubt about her guilt. They were setting Him up in what appeared to be an impossible situation. Moses's law says to stone her. "What sayest thou?" [John 8:5] they asked, tempting Him, trapping Him—putting Him in a no-win position.

Whatever He said, He would be accused of wrongdoing, wrong judgment. They were tempting Him to see if they could get Him to lose His patience and forget who He was. Stoning her would be cruel. Ignoring her would be wrong. . . . He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though He heard them not (getting their attention and preparing everyone within earshot to be taught). . . . And while it was silent, they continued asking. I can hear the questions of mischief: "C'mon, say something. We've got you. Are you afraid to answer?" But Jesus was in charge. . . .

Jesus lifted up Himself, in humble and meek majesty, and said these most powerful words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" [John 8:7]. A perfect answer from a perfect person.

Today in our responsibilities, situations, and callings, we need to be reminded of this over and over again. In our dealings with all

people, let him who is without sin be the first to criticize or find fault or belittle. . . . He stooped down and wrote on the ground. They heard what He said. They felt the impact of His silence of spirit while He said nothing. Convicted by their own conscience, they left on their own, not driven away. They went out one by one—not to find stones but to nurse their spiritual wounds.

He was left alone with the woman. I'm glad that's recorded. Some of us are inclined to avoid being with those who have fallen. . . . He said, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" [John 8:10]. . . . Jesus Christ took time to ask and to listen. Oh, if we could do more of that! Our answers would be so easy, so much improved. . . .

The woman taken in adultery answered the Lord's question regarding her accusers by saying, "No man, Lord." And then this powerful declaration came: "Go, and sin no more" [John 8:11]. The Master was teaching in that day and also teaching in this very hour. His great message: despise the sin, but love the sinner. I hope that can give us strength and confidence and a closer relationship to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus did not condone adultery. He gave the woman love instead of an authoritative lecture. She and the accusers needed a lesson in love. The situation called for mercy and compassion. How rewarding it is to know that Jesus believed that man is greater than all of his sins. Is it any wonder He was referred to as the "Good Shepherd"? He loved all of His sheep whether they were strays, hungry, helpless, cold, or lost.

At the conclusion of this great teaching experience, this lesson of love and compassion, is an important verse.



"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Let us follow His light. Let us refer often to these few words. I bear witness to you that they were preserved for the good of everyone. ■

Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been standardized. For the full text of the address in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.



THE PEACE AND JOY OF KNOWING THE SAVIOR LIVES



As a special witness of His holy name, I testify that Jesus the Christ is the divine Son of the living God.

As one of the Twelve Apostles, I can say that the members of the Twelve cherish the privilege of teaching and testifying of our beloved Savior. We gladly share our testimonies of His life, His ministry, and His mission in mortality.

We commemorate the humble birth of the Savior at this time of year even though we know it did not occur in December. More likely, the Lord was born in April. Both scriptural and historical evidence suggest a time in the spring of the year, near the Jewish Passover (see D&C 20:1).

Scriptures declare that His mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph (see Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27). Their espousal might be likened to a modern engagement, which is followed later by the actual marriage ceremony.

Luke's account records the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary when she learned of her mortal mission:

“And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. . . .

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:28, 30–32).

Note the capital *S* and *H*. Our Heavenly Father is the *Highest*. Jesus is the *Son* of the *Highest*.

“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:34–35).



By Elder Russell M. Nelson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Before Joseph and Mary came together, she was expecting that Holy Child. Joseph desired to protect Mary (see Matthew 1:18–19), hoping to spare her the punishment meted out to a woman pregnant without a completed marriage. While Joseph pondered these things, the angel Gabriel appeared to him, saying:

“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20–21).

Mary and Joseph did not need to be taught the deep significance of the name *Jesus*. The Hebrew root from which it was derived, *Yehoshua* or *Jehosua*, means “Jehovah is salvation.”¹ So the work of the Lord God Jehovah, soon to be named Jesus, was salvation. He was to become the Savior of the world.

In the Book of Mormon we read a dialogue Nephi had with an angel who asked, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?”

Nephi replied, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.

“And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

“. . . I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

“And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

“And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” (1 Nephi 11:16–21).

Insights from Luke

Precious insight is added by the fond and familiar story we recount at Christmastime as recorded in Luke, chapter 2: “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1).

This was really a capitation tax, a census, and an enrollment—a registration of the citizenry of the empire of Rome. King Herod had directed that people be counted in the land of their ancestors. Mary and Joseph, then living



in Nazareth, had to travel southward to the city of David, a distance of approximately 90 miles (145 km). Perhaps they traveled even farther if they had to go around the hostile intermediate province of Samaria.

Almost certainly they traveled with relatives also summoned to the land of their ancestry. This difficult travel was no doubt made with their animals, such as dogs and donkeys. They likely camped out several nights because their journey would have required three to four days.



A caravansary, where Mary and Joseph would have stayed, was typically rectangular in shape, composed of a central courtyard for the animals, surrounded by walled cubicles where people rested.

When they reached Bethlehem, the time came for the birth of the Holy Child.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

This verse is filled with meaning, enriched by knowing a word from the original text of the Greek New Testament and understanding the culture of that time and place. The term from which “inn” was translated is *kataluma*.² The Greek prefix *kata* (or *cata*) means “down” in time or place. When *kata* is joined with *luma*, the word signifies a place where people break up, or take a break from, their journey. In the Greek New Testament, the word *kataluma* appears in only two other passages, translated in each instance not as “inn” but as “guestchamber” (Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11).

At that time and place, an Asian inn was not like a modern Holiday Inn or Bethlehem Marriott. A lodging place back then provided accommodations for traveling caravans, including people and their animals. Caravans stayed at what was then known (and is still known) as a *caravansary*, or a *khan*. The dictionary defines these terms as an inn surrounding a court in eastern (or Asian) countries where caravans rest at night.³

Such a facility was typically rectangular in shape, composed of a central courtyard for the animals, surrounded by walled cubicles where people rested. These

cubicles allowed guests to be elevated slightly above their animals, with open doorways so that owners could watch over their animals. The Joseph Smith Translation of Luke 2:7 indicates that there was no room for them in the “inns,” suggesting that all of the cubicles of the caravansary were occupied.

The thought that the innkeepers were inhospitable or even hostile is probably incorrect. People there were no doubt then as they are now—hospitable. Particularly would this have been true at a season when the normal population of Jerusalem and neighboring Bethlehem would have been swollen with many relatives of the local citizenry.

At an Asian caravansary, animals were secured for the night in the corner courtyard. In that courtyard would have been donkeys, dogs, sheep, possibly camels and oxen, along with all the animals’ wastes and odors.

Because the guest chambers surrounding the courtyard were filled, Joseph may have made the decision to care for Mary’s delivery in the center courtyard of a caravansary, along with the animals. It is entirely possible that in such a lowly circumstance the Lamb of God was born.

Twice in Luke 2 reference is made to swaddling clothes. What is the meaning of the phrase “wrapped him in swaddling clothes” (Luke 2:7)? I sense significance beyond the

use of an ordinary diaper or receiving blanket. Instead of those five words in the English text, only one word is used in the Greek text of the New Testament. That word is *sparganoo*, a verb meaning to envelop a newborn child with special cloth, strips of which were passed from side to side.⁴ The cloth would probably bear a unique family identification. That procedure was especially applicable to the birth of a firstborn son.

The angel announced, “This shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12). The fabric of His wrappings surely would have been recognizable and distinctive.

What about the manger? French speakers will recognize that *manger* means “to eat.” A manger is a trough or an open box in a stable designed to hold feed for animals. Elevated from the floor of the contaminated courtyard, a manger was probably the cleanest site available. Such a feeding trough became a cradle for our Lord!

The Savior’s Unique Parentage

More important than the humble place of the Savior’s birth is His unique parentage. Several scriptures ask the question “Who shall declare His generation?” (Isaiah 53:8; Acts 8:33; Mosiah 14:8; 15:10). This means “Who shall declare His genealogy?” Now, two millennia later, we proclaim that Jesus the Christ was born of an immortal Father and a mortal mother. From His immortal Father, Jesus inherited the power to live forever. From His mortal mother, He inherited the fate of physical death.

Jesus acknowledged these realities as they affected His own life: “No man taketh it from me,” He said, “but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:18).

Those unique attributes of His parentage were essential for His mission to atone for the sins of all mankind. Thus, Jesus the Christ was born to die and then rise again to eternal life (see 3 Nephi 27:13–15). He died that

we might live again. He was born that all people could be soothed from the sting of death and live beyond the grave (see 1 Corinthians 15:55; Mosiah 16:7–8; Alma 22:14; Mormon 7:5).

His Atonement was wrought in Gethsemane, where He sweat great drops of blood (see Luke 22:44), and on Golgotha (or Calvary), where His body was lifted up upon a cross over the “place of a skull,” which signified death (Mark 15:22; Matthew 27:33; see also 3 Nephi 27:14). This infinite Atonement would release man from the infinitude of death (see 2 Nephi 9:7). The Savior’s Atonement made the resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility for all. His Atonement became the central act of all human history.

Its importance was stressed by the Prophet Joseph Smith, who said, “The fundamental principles of our religion are *the testimony* of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”⁵

This declaration was the undergirding inspiration that guided the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles some years ago when we were approaching the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of the Savior. We 15 men entrusted with the keys of the kingdom prepared our written testimony. We titled it “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.”⁶ Each of the 15 Apostles then living affixed his signature to that testimony.

Each individual with a testimony of the Lord has the privilege, in faith, to know of His divine parentage and to testify that Jesus is the Son of the living God. True testimony includes the fact that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, whose birth we commemorate on December 23. That testimony includes the fact that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true and is led by a living Lord via prophecy and revelation through authorized administrators who receive and respond to direction from Him.



The Savior's Atonement made the resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility for all. His Atonement became the central act of all human history.

Even in the most troubled times of modern life, this knowledge brings us peace and joy. “Be of good cheer,” the Master said, “and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come” (D&C 68:6). Lovingly, we hold fast to His blessed promise.

Our Gift to Him

Difficult days are ahead. Sin is on the increase. Paul foresaw that members of the Church would endure persecution (see 2 Timothy 3:1–13; D&C 112:24–26). Peter counseled, “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). As Jesus descended below all things in order to rise above all things, He expects us to follow His example. Yoked with Him, each of us can rise above all of our challenges, no matter how difficult they may be (see Matthew 11:29–30).

Considering all that the Savior has done—and still does—for us, what can we do for Him? The greatest gift we could give to the Lord at Christmas, or at any other time, is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, worthy to attend His holy temple. And His gift to us will be the peace of knowing that we are prepared to meet Him, whenever that time comes.

The fulness of the Master’s ministry lies in the future. The prophecies of His Second Coming have yet to be fulfilled. At Christmas, of course, we focus on His birth. And to this world He will come again. At His First Coming, Jesus came almost in secret. Only a few mortals knew of His birth. At His Second Coming, the whole of humankind will know of His return. And then He will come, not as “a man traveling on the earth” (D&C 49:22), but “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5; see also D&C 101:23).

As a special witness of His holy name, I testify that Jesus the Christ is the divine Son of the living God. He will love you, lift you, and manifest Himself unto you if you will love Him and keep His commandments (see John 14:21). Indeed, wise men and women still adore Him. ■

From a devotional address delivered at Brigham Young University on December 10, 2002. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See Eric D. Huntsman, “Glad Tidings of Great Joy,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2010, 54.
2. See word numbers 2,596 and 2,646 in James Strong, “Greek Dictionary of the New Testament,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (1890), 39, 40.
3. See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “caravansary” and “khan.”
4. See word number 4,683 in “Greek Dictionary of the New Testament,” 66.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49; emphasis added.
6. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.



THE ROAD TO the Temple

*Although members have taken different paths,
Latter-day Saints in Ukraine are finding that all roads
of righteousness lead to the temple.*

By Chad E. Phares

Church Magazines

The predawn drive along Kiltseva Road in Kyiv, Ukraine, presents travelers with a relatively quiet path to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple. Only a few sets of headlights shine through the morning fog as vehicles weave around a smattering of small potholes.

The glow of the temple ahead serves as a beacon, providing a guiding light that shows those traveling to the temple exactly where they need to go.

While some have been blessed to follow this serene path to the temple since it was dedicated in August 2010, others can attest that their paths to the temple were not quite as tranquil.

As morning breaks and the sun peaks over the horizon, cars and buses pour onto Kiltseva Road. Now flooded with vehicles, the once-serene path becomes a noisy parking lot.

Knowing that the traffic is an expected part of the drive, many temple goers stay on the

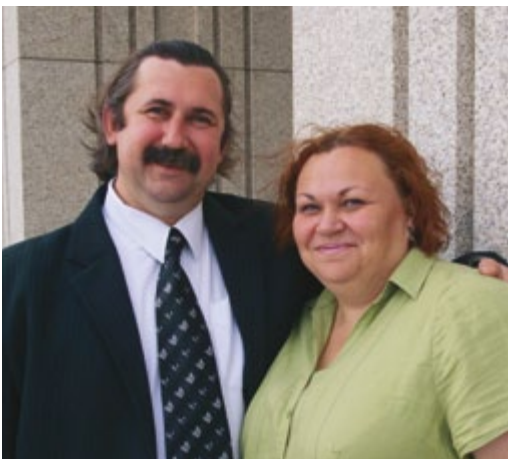
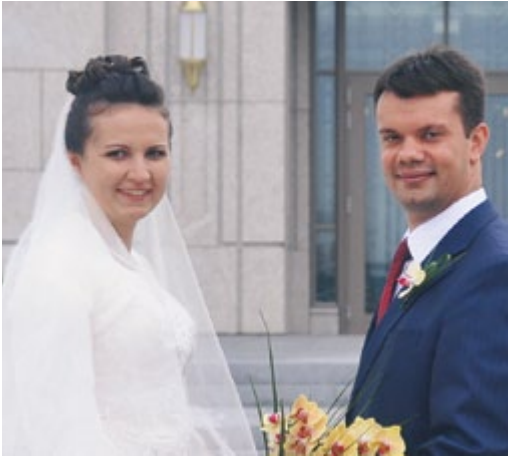
road, patiently moving a few feet at a time before rolling to another stop. The temple remains the destination, but the drive is slow.

Others choose different routes. Behind the temple is a collection of dirt roads and back streets. The way is not clearly marked, and drivers can easily get turned around. However, if the driver looks up, he or she can see the temple spire, once again serving as a guide, inviting all to come to the temple.

The spiritual paths members in Ukraine have taken to get to the Lord's house are not unlike the roads that surround the temple.

While some young members have been blessed to grow up in the Church and now are able to attend the Kyiv Ukraine Temple to do their own ordinance work, many others have driven their way through heavy spiritual traffic to get there.

The temple, announced in 1998 by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008),



From top: Asiya and Nikolai Chemezov were sealed in the Kyiv Ukraine Temple three days after it was dedicated. Petr and Adalina Mikhailenko are grateful their granddaughter, Masha, can look forward to attending the temple in her homeland. Andrei and Valentina Dudka visited the temple site often as the temple was being built.

was completed in 2010. During those 12 years, many Kyiv Ukraine Stake members stayed on the narrow—albeit seemingly slow—path, patiently waiting for the temple to be completed. Others took different paths, temporarily losing sight of their temple goals.

Although the spiritual paths members are taking to get to the temple differ, faithful members in Ukraine are finding that all roads of righteousness lead them back to the temple.

The Straight Path

Many young adult members in Eastern Europe were led to the gospel at a young age. This early gospel knowledge has allowed them not only to cultivate testimonies from their youth but also to build a strong resolve to be married in the temple.

Both Nikolai Chemezov and his wife, Asiya, of the Kharkivs'kyi Ward, were introduced to the gospel in their youth—Nikolai as an eight-year-old and Asiya as a teenager.

“Ever since I was baptized, I knew that Heavenly Father’s plan was the path of exaltation,” Brother Chemezov says. “The Church’s teachings on the divine mission of the family have always been important to me.”

Sister Chemezova also realized the importance of eternal families at a young age. “When I attended church as a young woman, I was taught how important it is to enter into sacred temple covenants,” she says. “I always dreamed of a temple marriage, and I always tried to be worthy of being able to be married in the temple.”

The couple began dating in 2009. As love blossomed and conversations began to turn toward marriage, the two already knew what would be their next step. “When they announced that the Kyiv Temple would be dedicated in August 2010, we decided we would be sealed there,” Sister Chemezova says.

“It’s good we didn’t have to wait too long,” Brother Chemezov adds.

The couple was sealed in marriage on September 1, 2010.

“It was the most wonderful day of my life,” Brother Chemezov says. “I felt blessed to take the hand of my dear Asiya and take her to the house of the Lord. It is safe to say that on that day my dream came true—the dream of creating an eternal family.”

The Long Way

Although the path to eternal marriage has been just as straight for Vynohradars'kyi Ward members Petr and Adalina Mikhailenko, the road has been much longer. The Mikhailenkos were among the first families

to join the Church in Ukraine, having been baptized in 1993—just two years after the first branch was established in Kyiv.

Despite this, distance from a temple and other factors kept the couple from being sealed for many years. Undeterred, they remained committed to each other and to their dream of an eternal marriage.

“I waited patiently for the temple,” Brother Mikhailenko says. “There was never a thought to leave the Church. The path has always been clear.”

After President Thomas S. Monson dedicated the temple in August 2010, the couple’s eagerness to be sealed couldn’t be contained. “We came so early on the day we were to be sealed that the temple was not open yet,” Sister Mikhailenko says.

The couple wasn’t alone. Many fellow ward members came to the temple that day as well, excited to share in the Mikhailenkos’ joy.

“The sealing was wonderful,” Sister Mikhailenko says. “There was a feeling like you never really loved your spouse like you love him at that moment.”

The feeling of love has persisted since that day. “There is an absolute difference in our relationship,” Brother Mikhailenko says. “We have been married for a long time, but there is now a different feeling. We want to do more for each other, and we do it with more love.”

Back on the Path

Andrei and Valentina Dudka of the Vynohradars’kyi Ward were introduced to the gospel by neighbors in 2003. After meeting for several weeks with missionaries, the couple decided to join the Church.

Although the Dudkas were excited to learn gospel truths such as the need for latter-day temples and the potential of having an eternal family, they gradually slipped into inactivity. “We just found reasons not to go to church,” Sister Dudka says. “We let things come up—like we were just too tired or there was

The Kyiv Ukraine Temple, the Church’s 134th operating temple, serves members in nine countries.

a show on TV we wanted to watch.”

The Dudkas’ lack of activity adversely affected their happiness. “We started to see a real difference between Church life and worldly life after we left the Church,” Brother Dudka says. “We weren’t happy.”

After about four months of not attending church, Sister Dudka reached her breaking point. “A certain Sunday came, and I said, ‘If I don’t go today, I might not survive,’” she says. “I was like a person who had gone days without water. I needed that water.”

After returning to activity, Sister Dudka patiently prayed for and encouraged her husband to come back to church with her. About half a year after she returned to church, so did her husband.

“My wife’s prayers affected me,” Brother Dudka says. “I realized that as a Melchizedek Priesthood holder, I had the responsibility to be an active member. I recognized that without God, I could not do anything.”

After the Dudkas returned to the Church, their thoughts returned to the saving ordinances of the temple. The couple joined with other Ukrainian Latter-day Saints in rejoicing in the temple groundbreaking in 2007.

“After they started building the temple, we would often come by and just look at the work being done,” Brother Dudka says.

“I jumped so high when I saw them lay the first stone,” Sister Dudka adds.

When the angel Moroni figure was placed on top of the temple, there was a lot of hugging and tears among the Saints and particularly among the Dudkas.

“When they finally finished building the temple, there was such relief that we knew we were worthy to enter,” Brother Dudka says.

The Dudkas say being sealed in the temple has built in them a stronger eternal perspective on life. “You understand that your family is no longer just you and your husband—now the Lord is part of it too,” Sister Dudka says. “We now look at each other with eternal eyes.” ■

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE PERPETUAL EDUCATION FUND

The Key to Opportunity



A decade after President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the Perpetual Education Fund, the initiative and its participants are thriving.

By Rebekah Atkin
Church Magazines

In 1850, just three years after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, President Brigham Young (1801–77) began establishing academies and universities to educate Latter-day Saints. Every prophet of this dispensation has encouraged the education of Church members.

Among them was President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), who introduced the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF), patterned after another of Brigham Young’s 19th-century initiatives, the Perpetual Emigration Fund. This new educational fund would become, in the words of President Thomas S. Monson, one of the hallmarks of President Hinckley’s administration.¹ President Hinckley had seen poverty and lack of education and training prevent many young adults in the Church from achieving their potential. He sought the Lord for answers.

In general conference on March 31, 2001, President Hinckley announced his vision for the program. He conceded that it was a “bold initiative” but held that “education is the key to opportunity.”² President Hinckley invited all who wished to contribute to do so, and the program was underway.

Now, 10 years later, contributions large and small from donors worldwide have allowed the initiative—and its participants—to thrive. Elder John K. Carmack, emeritus member of the Seventy and Executive Director of PEF, says it is “rescuing the Saints from the curse of poverty.” It has been successful in that rescue, says Rex Allen, volunteer director of training and communications for PEF, because it is established on eternal principles and comes with prophetic promises that have “an impact more far-reaching than any of us understand.”

In the decade since its inception, the Perpetual Education Fund has improved the lives of some 50,000 participants in 51 countries, like Kevin Moore of the West Indies and participants from Peru (left).



2001

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR

2011



PEF PARTICIPANTS BY THE NUMBERS

The Perpetual Education Fund has blessed the lives of over 50,000 participants in 51 countries in the last 10 years. Here are some statistics about these young adults:

- 47 percent are men, 53 percent are women.
- 34 percent are married.
- 80 percent of men are returned missionaries.
- 82 percent work while in school.
- Their average age is 24.5.
- They take 2.6 years on average to complete their education.
- They receive three to four times greater income after education.

A Bold Initiative

As President Hinckley explained in 2001, the fund has been created from monetary donations; the interest generated by the principal is loaned to prospective students.

Young adults interested in participating can approach local priesthood leaders and institute directors. With their endorsement, these “ambitious young men and women,” many of them returned missionaries, receive loans to attend school in their own communities.³ While still in school, they begin repaying the loan, enabling other students to use the fund too.

In the decade since its inception, the program has improved the lives of some 50,000 participants in over 50 countries, helping them to “rise out of the poverty they and generations before them have known,” as President Hinckley said it would.⁴

Brother Allen describes PEF this way: “The prophet did something remarkable that day. Long ago, Moses stretched his staff over the Red Sea and the waters divided. President Hinckley mirrored this same faith when he figuratively held his prophetic mantle over the dark sea of poverty and initiated PEF.”

Principles

The Perpetual Education Fund is built on a foundation of gospel principles—faith and hope in Jesus Christ, education, work, sacrifice, self-reliance, integrity, and service. PEF participants and graduates worldwide are implementing these principles in their lives.

Carolina Tello Vargas, a graduate from Colombia, says PEF was “a ray of hope” and evidence of the help of Heavenly Father, who “is guiding [her] and opening the way to progress.”

She understands the importance of education and the work and sacrifice it takes. Before she participated in PEF, Carolina worked several jobs and sold all of her jewelry so she could study law. Her family made sacrifices as well.

“I knew that in order to study I should make sacrifices,” Carolina explains. “I was willing to do it so that in the future I would have better job opportunities.”

But then family challenges arose during her last year of school, and she was unable to pay tuition. She received a PEF loan and used it to successfully complete her degree.

Shirley Mwelase of South Africa exemplifies these principles as well. She used a PEF loan to finish a computer programming course and, after getting a job at an insurance company, quickly paid off the remainder of her loan, helping her feel “reliable and trustworthy.”

Shirley explains, “A better-paying job meant a better quality of life. It meant I could help out my parents and family, and the skills and refinement I have since acquired from working have helped me greatly to be of better service in all my Church callings.”

Working as a programmer, she has accomplished much. She says, “I feel that if it were not for my studies and my constant participation at church, I would not have had a job, nor would I have been able to achieve any of these good things.”

Promises and Blessings

When President Hinckley announced the Perpetual Education Fund, he promised it would bring blessings to individuals, to their families and communities, and to the entire Church through opportunities



10 FRUITS OF THE FIRST 10 YEARS

Elder John K. Carmack, Executive Director of PEF, says the fund has produced these fruits:

1. Building self-reliance and integrity: fulfilling obligations and providing for families.
2. Furthering eternal progression: gaining intelligence in this life that will be an advantage in the next (see D&C 130:18–19).
3. Building capable leaders: finding better jobs that allow time for Church service.
4. Opening opportunities through education: qualifying for jobs that require certain training and skills.
5. Enriching lives: broadening understanding and opening minds.
6. Encouraging the spirit of the law of consecration: inviting all to contribute, coming closer to being one (see D&C 38:27).
7. Helping care for the poor: fulfilling a key obligation of the Church (see D&C 81:5; 83:6).
8. Building stronger families: breaking out of the cycle of poverty.
9. Building traditions of excellence: implementing gospel principles.
10. Following the Savior's example of sacrifice: giving what we have to help others.



for employment, service, and leadership.

President Hinckley promised that participants “will be enabled to get good educations that will lift them out of the slough of poverty. . . . They will marry and go forward with skills that will qualify them to earn well and take their places in society where they can make a substantial contribution.”⁵

This promise has been fulfilled for thousands of PEF participants, including Pablo Benitez of Uruguay. Pablo was working 12-hour days at a grocery store, barely scraping together a living, when he decided to change his life. He started attending school, but as the cost of tuition and fees increased, he found he was unable to finance his education alone.

Through PEF he was able to complete a degree in physical education. As a result, he has received several jobs over the years, each one improving his income. He even reports, “I often receive job offers for full-time work

Miriam Erquiza, a returned missionary from the Philippines, was hired at a travel agency; the job's hours allowed her to serve as Young Women president and as an institute teacher.



HOW TO PARTICIPATE

PEF has outlined a five-step process for those who live in approved areas to participate in the program. For more information about the process or qualifications, visit pef.lds.org. To get started, talk to your local priesthood leader or institute director.

Step 1: Dream—Learn about the PEF program and availability in your area and attend your stake education and employment fireside.

Step 2: Plan and qualify—Attend the Planning for Success workshop at your institute and seek the endorsement and counsel of your priesthood leaders.

Step 3: Apply—Complete the PEF application online, based on what you learn in the Planning for Success workshop.

Step 4: Commit—If approved, participate in the PEF loan interview, where you agree to fulfill your commitments.

Step 5: Study, graduate, improve work, and repay the loan—Exercise your faith and demonstrate effort, integrity, commitment, and self-reliance; work hard to fulfill your dreams.



or substituting for others that I cannot accept because I do not have enough time. And all of this is thanks to the PEF and to the chances that opened up to me because of my schooling.”

Because of opportunities gained through education, Pablo can support his family while serving and building his community as a teacher.

Working long hours to barely earn enough to pay living expenses and tithing can make service in the Church a great challenge, says Brother Allen. This is a struggle for many members throughout the world, but President Hinckley made this promise about PEF participants: “They will become leaders in this great work in their native lands. They will pay their tithes and offerings, which will make it possible for the Church to expand its work across the world.”⁶

Many participants are finding that the education gained through PEF leads to

Vanderlei Lira of Brazil served as a branch president for six years while working as a laborer. After furthering his education thanks to a PEF loan, he found new work with an increased salary. His stake president describes him as “a giant liberated by opportunity.”

better jobs with hours that allow them more time to serve in the Church. Miriam Erquiza, a returned missionary from the Philippines, completed a two-year web design program and, through “mighty prayer,” obtained a job at a travel agency. This position allowed her to support her family and find time to serve as Young Women president and as an institute teacher.

Vanderlei Lira of Brazil served for six years as a branch president, helping his branch grow from 18 to 110 active members, while working as a laborer because he lacked education. When PEF was announced, he was able to study occupational safety and find new work, which helped him increase his salary and quickly repay his loan. He continues to serve in the Church today. His stake president describes him as a great leader and father, “a giant liberated by opportunity.”

President Hinckley told members of the Church that the program would succeed because the Church has “the organization . . . and dedicated servants of the Lord” necessary for success.⁷ Indeed, the Perpetual Education Fund is succeeding because it involves the cooperation of participants and local priesthood leaders under the direction of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and other general Church leaders. The Church’s employment resource centers and



A BRIGHTER FUTURE

“The Perpetual Education Fund . . . breaks the cycle of poverty for our members in many areas of the

world and provides skills and training which qualify young men and young women for gainful employment. This inspired plan has kindled the light of hope in the eyes of those who felt doomed to mediocrity but who now have an opportunity for a brighter future.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “They Marked the Path to Follow,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2007, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 8.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

The success of the fund depends largely on the generosity and assistance of members and volunteers worldwide. Here are a few ways you might be able to help:

- Volunteer part-time at a local PEF service center.
- Serve full-time with your spouse as a senior missionary couple in the PEF program.
- Donate to the Perpetual Education Fund.

seminaries and institutes are also fully engaged in the endeavor.

The effects of the fund are perpetual not only financially, as the money is repaid and then loaned to other students, but also spiritually and socially as participants, donors, administrators, and countless others are blessed indirectly. “Education is the key,” says Brother Allen, “to open a door in a solid wall, not just for individuals but also for their families and communities.”

Over the last 10 years, technology and experience have helped refine the process for participants and facilitators, but the Perpetual Education Fund still seeks to fulfill the prophetic vision established for it. This “bold initiative” will remain a prophetic endeavor. President Monson continues the work of the fund, which, he says, will “go far into the future.”⁸ ■

NOTES

1. See “16th President Fields Questions from Media,” *Church News*, Feb. 9, 2008, 15.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 62, 67; *Ensign*, May 2001, 52, 53.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2001, 62; *Ensign*, May 2001, 52.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2001, 62; *Ensign*, May 2001, 52.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Church Goes Forward,” *Liahona*, July 2002, 6; *Ensign*, May 2002, 6–7.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Reaching Down to Lift Another,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 62; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 53–54.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Liahona*, July 2001, 67; *Ensign*, May 2001, 53.
8. Thomas S. Monson, in “16th President Fields Questions from Media,” *Church News*, Feb. 9, 2008, 15.

Visit pef.lds.org to read more stories from PEF participants and to learn how to get involved.



*Losing our way is easy if our
daily decisions don't connect to
our eternal destination.*

LOST & FOUND



By Adam C. Olson

Church Magazines

Shortly before turning 30, Roberta Tuilimu, realized she wasn't happy. She had three beautiful children, and she loved their father, Daniel Nepia, but Roberta and Daniel weren't married. Daniel wasn't a member of the Church, and it had been a long time since Roberta had attended regularly.

She was a long way from the temple marriage she had always dreamed of as a young girl who went to church every week with her parents in Auckland, New Zealand. But turning her back on her eternal goals wasn't a one-time decision; it had been a slow turn completed gradually through little decisions she made each day.

“I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick” (Ezekiel 34:16).

Decisions Disconnected

For Roberta one decision clearly sticks out as the moment she first stepped off the gospel path, though a number of other choices had likely brought her to that point. As a teenager Roberta skipped going to church a couple of weeks to do homework. “It’s interesting that it can start with something that seemed so small at the time,” she says.

After missing a couple of weeks it was much easier for her not to go the next week. Weeks of only sporadic attendance turned into months. After she turned 18, her friends convinced her to go clubbing late at night on Saturdays, which made it even harder to get to church on Sundays. It also led her to start drinking.

“I knew it wasn’t right, but I thought that I could stop straightaway if I wanted to,” she says. “I tried to justify my decisions.”

She was living a lifestyle incompatible with entering the temple, yet after meeting Daniel, she took him to the Hamilton New Zealand Temple grounds and told him she wanted to be married there.

“I knew that’s where I wanted to go,” she says. But each bad decision seemed to make the next bad decision easier—leading her further from her desired destination. Soon Roberta and Daniel were living together.

“There was a disconnect between what I wanted—what I knew was right—and the decisions I was making,” she says. “I was in the now. I didn’t connect current decisions with where they would take me.”

The Lord Seeks the Lost

As far as she was from where she had intended to go, Roberta was not lost to the Lord. Though Daniel and

Roberta didn’t realize it at the time, the Good Shepherd, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), had been seeking after them all along.

The Spirit had been working on Daniel, such as when Roberta had taken him to the temple grounds and when Roberta’s father had blessed their children. Though they had moved several times, with each move they ran into—and occasionally studied with—the missionaries.

Then, after relocating again in 2006, they ran into some old schoolmates, Dan and Lisa Nathan, who were active members of the Church. Daniel and Roberta had just moved into the Nathans’ ward boundaries.

For three weeks Roberta put off Lisa’s invitations to go to church with her. “I didn’t want to have to explain my situation,” she says. “But I decided I wanted my kids in Primary.”

Soon Daniel and Roberta were meeting with the missionaries again. Daniel began attending church, where a good Gospel Principles teacher made a difference. The visiting teachers visited every month. The couple even met Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles during a special devotional.

Roberta sees in their experiences evidence that Heavenly Father had prepared “a whole bunch of good people who helped us.”

Consider Your Ways

Through various experiences and people, Heavenly Father had provided Daniel and Roberta opportunities to “consider [their] ways” (Haggai 1:7). But they had to “commit [their] way unto the Lord” (Psalm 37:5) before they could make any progress.



“I knew my ways had not been His ways,” Roberta says (see Isaiah 55:8–9), “but I hadn’t known how to connect the two.”

The turning point came when the missionaries asked Daniel and Roberta to decide where they wanted to go, spiritually speaking, and what they needed to do to get there.

“When we decided in the end that what we wanted was to be where His way leads,” she says, “we started looking at what it would take to follow His way there.”

In the months that followed, Roberta worked to turn her back on the poor decisions in her past and return to the path she had left more than a decade earlier. Just as her turn from the gospel path as a teenager began with small decisions, Roberta’s return to the path began with doing seemingly little things each day.

“When I started trying to do the basics every day—individual and family prayers, reading the scriptures, taking the kids to church, helping others when I can—I could feel Heavenly Father looking after us and hearing our prayers,” Roberta says. “Our family was happier.”

Those little decisions helped strengthen Daniel and Roberta when it came time to make the big decisions. They decided to get married. Then, nearly a year after Daniel and Roberta started meeting with the missionaries, their desire to be together with their family forever led Daniel to be baptized.

Finally, after two years of trying to match what they did each day to what they wanted in the future, Daniel and Roberta were sealed in the temple—fulfilling Roberta’s childhood dream.

Live Today for Eternity

As part of Heavenly Father’s plan, Daniel and Roberta have the opportunity to decide each day which way they will choose—theirs or His. The couple is now more conscious of the direction their daily choices will take them.

From personal experience they understand how easy it is to lose their way when daily decisions are made without considering their effect on eternal destinations. But they are also grateful to have learned firsthand that there is a way back.

“I know the Lord loves me and wants me back because He blessed our lives with the people we met along our journey who helped us return,” Roberta says. “He never forgot me during my time away from the Church.”

Thanks to the love—and the atoning sacrifice—of the Good Shepherd, “the wicked [can] forsake his way, and . . . return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . , for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

Now the Nepias are trying to stay focused on where they want to be. “When you realize there is more to this life than what’s *now*,” Daniel says, “it changes your choices.” ■



DECISIONS DETERMINE DESTINY

“It has been said by one, years ago, that history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives. Our lives will depend upon the decisions which we make—for decisions determine destiny.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny,” *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 4.

AS CHRIST COMFORTS US

It was our first Christmas on the North Island of New Zealand—a beautiful and fascinating land. Yet despite the sunshine and the kindness of the Church members, I felt deep pangs of loneliness for my parents and siblings. We had moved from the United States earlier that year, and I felt homesick.

In our new area my husband and I became friends with the Wilsons, a young Irish family of another Christian faith who had also recently arrived in New Zealand. Noleen Wilson was my co-worker, and we soon became good friends, sharing experiences of immigrating and of our love for our new home. As our friendship grew, I became aware that their family was also struggling with

loneliness as well as feelings of being overwhelmed. They had three young children and a fourth on the way.

One evening when I was feeling particularly lonely and sorry for myself, I had the impression that the best way to overcome my loneliness was to serve another—specifically the Wilsons. My husband and I decided that night to begin celebrating the 12 days of Christmas with the Wilsons by anonymously leaving messages and small gifts on their doorstep. Each night my loneliness was replaced with excitement and anticipation as we sneaked up to their home, left our message and gift, knocked on their door, and then ran away with big grins on our faces.


Each day at work Noleen would tell me about the mysterious “Christmas elves” who had visited the night before. She would relay stories of her children anticipating the arrival of their visitors, who were making the family’s Christmas a happy one. On several evenings the ward youth joined us in our fun.

On the final night, Christmas Eve, the Wilsons left a message and cookies on their doorstep, asking that they be able to meet their elves. When we arrived with the youth to sing carols as our final gift, the children were ecstatic and our friends embraced us with hugs and tears of gratitude. The loneliness in my heart was replaced with love and joy, and the bond of friendship between our families was strengthened.

Later we received an e-mail from a man in the Wilsons’ church who said he was so touched by what we had done for the family that he asked about our Church and the acts of service we provide for others. The congregation had never heard of the 12 days of Christmas and now associates this tradition with Latter-day Saints.

I will never forget that first Christmas in New Zealand, where I learned an unexpected way to forget myself, go to work, and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9)—just as Jesus Christ comforts us in our times of need and loneliness. ■

Angela Fallentine, New Zealand



When we arrived with the youth to sing carols as our final gift, the children were ecstatic and our friends embraced us.

MY CHRISTMAS CARD FROM OBREGÓN

While I was serving my mission in Mexico, my companion and I met a man from Obregón, a city in northwestern Mexico near the Gulf of California. He was interested in our message about the Restoration of the gospel, but he had only 10 minutes to talk because he had to catch a train. We taught him all we could in that short time and gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon and all of the tracts we had. At the time, our mission had no missionaries in Obregón.

Several months later I received a Christmas card from someone in Obregón. I looked at the card and wondered who could have sent it. Then I realized it had been sent by the man we had talked to for 10 minutes. I hung up the card in our apartment with the rest of the Christmas cards the other elders and I had received.

After Christmas I was about to throw the card away when I felt an impression to keep it. The impression was not an audible voice but a feeling in my heart. Instead of throwing the card away, I put it in my suitcase.

A few months later as I was reading the monthly letter from the mission home, I noticed an announcement that missionary work would be opened in Obregón. Once again I thought, "What does that city have to do with me?" Then I again remembered the man we



After Christmas I was about to throw the card away when I felt an impression to keep it.

had met from there. I dug through my suitcase and found the Christmas card. I wrote on the card, "These elders are friends of mine, and I am sending them to teach you more about the gospel." Then I sent the card to the elders assigned to serve in Obregón and told them to take it with them and visit the man.

Soon I received a letter from the elders in Obregón. It read: "Dear Elder Ramos, the work here has been so difficult that the mission president was planning to pull us out until we

received your card. We went to see this brother, and he was so excited about our message that he took us to meet all of his family and friends. Because of this brother, we have started a branch."

Years have passed, and now three stakes have been organized in Obregón. I am humbled to know that because I had listened to the promptings of the Spirit, I was blessed to play a small part in helping my brothers and sisters in Obregón receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

Robert Ramos, Oregon, USA

WE HAD NOTHING TO EAT

I woke up early the day before Christmas worried because we didn't have any food for our Christmas dinner that night; nor did we have any money to buy food. I was then living with my sister Edicta in Maracaibo, Venezuela.

When I got out of bed, I knelt down and began to pray. I pleaded with my Heavenly Father to remember us. I asked Him to grant us at least some food for that very special day, *la Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve).

As I prayed, I was filled with peace. I seemed to hear a soft voice saying to me, "Everything is going to be fine. Don't worry." When I had finished my prayer, I knew that something good would happen that day.

After waking up my sister, I went to sweep the front porch. The neighbor across the street saw me and came over to give me 1,000 bolívares that she owed me for a Christmas tablecloth and decorations I had embroidered for her. I was surprised because I hadn't remembered that she owed me money.

I ran to my sister's room and showed her the money I had received. Surprised, she asked me where I had gotten it. "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26), I responded.

A few minutes later we heard someone outside calling for my sister. When we realized it was the same neighbor, we went out to talk to her. She then paid my sister 1,000 bolívares she owed her for some sewing. My sister and I were very happy

because now we could buy breakfast, lunch, *and* dinner.

After we had returned from grocery shopping, we found a friend waiting for us. He asked if he could spend *la Noche Buena* with us because he didn't want to spend Christmas Eve alone. We explained that we would be having just a small dinner at home but that he was welcome to join us. He contributed 2,000 bolívares to help with the cost of dinner. We could hardly believe how much God was blessing us.

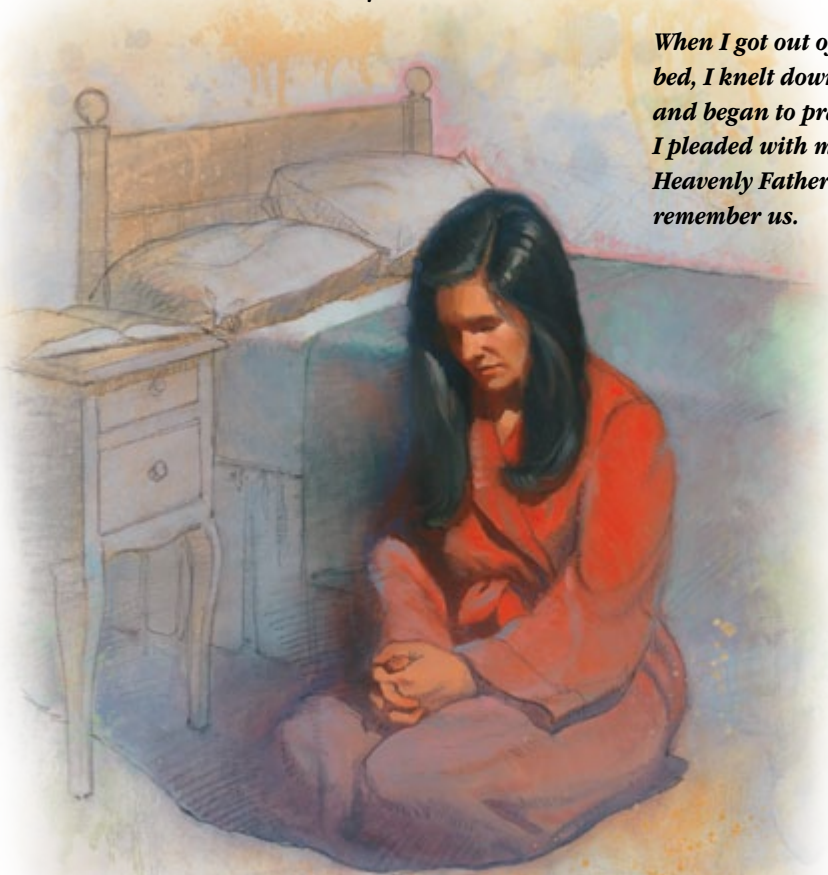
Later my niece called to tell us that she would be arriving that night and would be bringing 33 pounds (15 kg) of marinated meat. And at noon my

nephew arrived with his wife and their children. They asked if they could return that evening with some food and celebrate Christmas Eve with us.

"We're not going to have a grand dinner," we answered, "but we will have enough for everyone."

That evening Edicta and I made baked chicken, potato salad, a lemon dessert, and *majarete*, a traditional coconut pudding dessert, which we enjoyed with all of our guests. But first we gave thanks to Heavenly Father for the great blessings He had given us. That day we were reminded that if we have faith and doubt not, He will bless us when we ask for His help. ■

Estilita Chacin Hart, Utah, USA



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LINDA'S LAST CHRISTMAS

During my sophomore year at Brigham Young University, our ward bishopric signed the ward up for a Sub-for-Santa program, through which we would provide Christmas presents for a family in need.

Our ward name, however, kept disappearing from the list of volunteers. As Christmas neared, we still had no family to help. Then one of the bishop's counselors told us of a family that might be able to use our help instead. When we learned about this family, we all felt certain that we should focus on them.

Linda (name has been changed), who had several sons ages 9 to 15, had fought a grueling battle with breast cancer. During the stress of that illness, her husband had left her. She had just moved from another state to take a job in Provo, Utah, but the job fell through, and she was left with no income.

When we met Linda, we immediately took her into our hearts. We were blessed to see her the way the Savior did—as a great and noble spirit who had overcome many difficult challenges. She was never a *project* to us; rather, she was an eternal friend. Every member of the ward contributed something to help her and her boys. We were all young college students and poor in



While Linda was at our ward Christmas party, several ward members went to her apartment and filled her cupboards and refrigerator with food.

our own right, but we gladly gave because we loved her.

Linda came to our ward Christmas party, during which several ward members went to her apartment and filled her cupboards and refrigerator with food. They decorated a Christmas tree and surrounded it with presents for the whole family. They also left her four new car tires and paid her rent for several months. I'm not sure how our meager contributions managed to accomplish all that, but I knew that Heavenly Father had used our sacrifices to bless her.

A year later I was in another student ward, but I returned at Christmastime to visit my previous bishopric. I learned that Linda's husband had returned to the family and that their finances had stabilized. But then her cancer had returned and claimed her life. I realized that we had helped give Linda her last Christmas.

In feeling "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47) so strongly through that experience, I learned that real charity is a priceless spiritual gift that propels us to act in the Savior's place. ■

J. Audrey Hammer, Utah, USA

By Elder
Patrick Kearon
Of the Seventy



Come, LET US ADORE HIM

Last Christmas while serving at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, I encountered a local weather condition called an inversion. An inversion is a condition in which the air close to the ground is cooler than the air higher up, the opposite—the inversion—of the usual condition. Inversions are not unique to Salt Lake City, but they are more pronounced in effect because the city is located in a valley bounded by high mountains. This traps the city smog and holds it against the valley floor, covering the city and surrounding area in a thick, dark, freezing cloud. The smog is hazardous to the health of those with breathing difficulties and affects the morale of many others, as the air feels dirty and the sun is obliterated for days, even weeks, at a time.

A short drive up the mountains, however, reveals that the smog is only a few hundred feet thick. In a few minutes, you can be in bright sunshine, breathing crystal clear air, staring at pristine, snowcapped mountains. The contrast with the valley below could not be starker. As you climb farther up the mountains, you look down on the smog you have left behind in the valley, and it appears like a dirty blanket beneath an azure sky.

We must recognize that we have the power and capacity to take ourselves out of the filthy air of the valley and into the bright sunlight of the peace and hope that is found only by coming to the Savior.



There are times in our lives when we figuratively find ourselves stuck down in the valley, under the gloom of the dark, smoggy haze. Because of poor choices we have made, behaviors that offend the Spirit, or simply the painful and stretching decisions and challenges common to mortal life, we feel mired in thick, smothering fog. We can't see clearly, we feel confused, and we sense that we have moved ourselves away from the light and warmth of our Heavenly Father's love. We forget that the pure light of the Lord awaits us, beckons us, and is only a few steps of faith away. We must recognize that we have the power and capacity to take ourselves out of the filthy air of the valley and into the bright sunlight of the peace and hope that is found only by coming to the Savior.

At this Christmas time of year, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, who has invited us all to come unto Him and into the light. We can read in the scriptures of the men and women who were blessed to literally come to Him at the time of the Nativity. Some came from afar, while others were closer by. Some received angelic visitations, and others acted on personal revelation. But each accepted the invitation to come to Him.



What can we learn from the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the Wise Men, all of whom were favored to come and see the Christ child with their own eyes? As we ponder their faithful responses to the invitation to come to Christ, we can learn to more effectively lift ourselves out of our own inversions, out of any gloom and confusion we may be experiencing, and bring ourselves into the clear, pure hope offered by the Light of the World. It is there, with Him, that we come to feel who we really are and where we fit into the eter-

nal picture. Our own inversions are reversed, and proper perspective is restored.

Our discipleship doesn't require us to leave our sheep in the fields or to cross deserts. Our journey to the Savior isn't physical; it is spiritual and behavioral. It involves accepting and embracing His Atonement.

The Shepherds

In the well-known verses from Luke 2, we learn significant facts about those first witnesses of Christ's birth, the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. When "the angel of the Lord came upon them, . . . they were sore afraid" (verse 9). But they heard "good tidings of great joy" that the long-foretold Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, had been born (verse 10). They listened to know the sign by which they could recognize the Savior, that He would be "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (verse 12). When the heavenly host had concluded their joyful proclamation, the shepherds responded immediately, saying, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass" (verse 15). They came "with haste" (verse 16) and found the Christ

child just as the angel had said, and then they “returned, glorifying and praising God” (verse 20). Wanting to share the glorious news of the Savior’s birth, “they made [it] known abroad” (verse 17).

Like the shepherds, we must respond immediately, with haste, whenever the Spirit speaks to us. In the words of President Thomas S. Monson, we must “never, never, never postpone following a prompting.”¹ Sometimes after heeding a prompting, we cannot clearly see why we have been guided by the Spirit to act in a certain way. But often, like the shepherds, we see miracles occur, and our faithful response to a prompting is confirmed. We can then take opportunities to share our joy and our witness with others. Doing so can strengthen others’ faith and hope, further confirming our own testimonies and bringing us closer to the Savior and His ways.

Simeon

Another favored witness of the Christ child was Simeon. He was a “just and devout” man who received regular communication from the Holy Ghost (Luke 2:25). It had been revealed to him “that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (verse 26), and he was living in hope and anticipation of that blessed event. The Spirit prompted him to come to the temple on the day Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord” (verse 22). Simeon recognized the baby as the promised Messiah and “took he him up in his arms, and blessed God” (verse 28), prophesying of the destiny of the holy baby as the “light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (verse 32).

Simeon’s righteous and faithful life enabled him to be present in the temple so he could testify of the Light when at last he found it. We, like Simeon, can strive for greater sensitivity and obedience to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost so that our lives can take the path our Heavenly Father has in mind for us. Because Simeon had cultivated his ability to hear and respond to the Spirit, he was in the right place at the right time, and the Lord’s promises to him were fulfilled in the most glorious way.

The same opportunities can be afforded to each of us and can likewise allow the Lord’s plan to unfold in our lives. When we are faced with making decisions of eternal significance, when we are at a crossroads in our lives, we need clarity of thinking and correct perspective. Sometimes the very nature of making these important decisions causes us to feel unsure, unsteady, and even unable to act, down in the dark valley under the inversion. But as we take steps of faith and act according to righteous principles, we gradually see God’s plan taking shape in our lives, and we are brought back into the bright sunlight of God’s love.

Anna

Anna was a woman of “great age,” a widow described as a “prophetess” (Luke 2:36), whose long and faithful life was characterized by her constancy in fasting and prayer and that she “departed not from the temple” (verse 37). Upon beholding the baby Jesus in the temple, she “gave thanks” for the Christ child “and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (verse 38).

We learn from Anna’s experience that we can live faithfully through all weathers if we



ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS, BY DEL PARSON; SIMEON'S PRAYER OF THANKS, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; THE SUBSTANCE OF HOPE, BY ELSPETH YOUNG, MAY NOT BE COPIED; THE ARRIVAL, BY MICHAEL ALBRECHTSEN, MAY NOT BE COPIED



are consistent in our fasting and prayer and if we do not depart from the temple in our hearts. If we haven't yet had the opportunity to travel to a temple and receive its blessings, we can still enjoy the blessings that flow into our lives when we worthily hold a temple recommend. Prophets have repeatedly invited us to hold a temple recommend even if our circumstances do not allow us to attend the temple.² We can lift ourselves from dark moments and into the light of gratitude

As we ponder the faithful responses of the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the Wise Men, we can learn to more effectively lift ourselves out of our own inversions, out of gloom and confusion, and bring ourselves to the Light of the World.



through our temple worship and through testifying of Jesus to all who look for peace and hope.

The Wise Men

Finally, in Matthew 2 we read of the Wise Men, who journeyed far, having “seen his star in the east” and having understood the sign (verse 2). Prepared with gifts of tribute and worship, they came looking for Him, asking, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (verse 2). When their search was finally over and they had found the Christ child, they “fell down, and worshipped him” and presented their treasures (verse 11). Though they met with Herod's deceit, they were “warned of God in a dream that they should not return

to Herod” but should go home “another way” (verse 12). The Wise Men acted on this revelation from God and protected the holy family from Herod's evil intentions.

There is much we can learn from the Wise Men. Like them, we should study the scriptures and know the signs to watch for as we all prepare the earth for the Savior's Second Coming. Then, as we search and ponder the scriptures, we will more fully desire to seek the Lord every day of our lives and, as a gift to Him, give up our selfishness, pride, and rebelliousness. When personal revelation comes to alter the plans we have made, we can obey, having faith and trust that God knows what is best for us. And ultimately, through lives of true discipleship, we must fall down and worship the Savior in humility and love.

This discipleship doesn't necessarily require us to leave our sheep in the fields or to cross deserts. Our journey to Him isn't physical; it is spiritual and behavioral. It involves accepting and embracing the fact that His Atonement is infinite and covers every aspect of our lives—our sin, weakness, pain, sickness, and infirmity (see Alma 7:11–13). It means that we can let go of those things that hold us down in the gloomy fog of our own inversion and live instead in the warmth and love of the Light of the World. As President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught: “The words ‘come unto Christ’ are an invitation. It is the most important invitation you could ever offer to another person. It is the most important invitation anyone could accept.”³ ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 70.
2. See, for example, Howard W. Hunter, “The Great Symbol of Our Membership,” *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 6.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “Come unto Christ,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 49.



Questions & Answers

“How can I keep a positive attitude about the future?”

We all experience times when it seems that there is a constant downpour of discouragement and bad news at a personal and sometimes even a global level. But we must remember that we have reason for hope because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the April 2009 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson reminded us of the Lord’s commandment to “be of good cheer” (D&C 68:6) and gave us these words of encouragement: “Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.”

Even when things appear most grim, without even a glimmer of a break in the storm on the horizon, our understanding of the gospel can help us keep a positive attitude about the future. As President Monson said in that same talk: “The future is as bright as your faith” (“Be of Good Cheer,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 92).

Read, Pray, Smile



A few years ago, the Young Women general presidency gave us the 100 percent challenge: read the Book of Mormon every day, pray every day, and smile. I figured I would try it and keep at it for as long as I could. To my surprise, the challenge brought about a magnificent change in my life. I was happier, I had the Spirit with me, and I had a positive attitude. Even though I still had to face adversity, the strength of the Spirit helped me to endure happily.

Ariana G., age 16, Virginia, USA

Have Hope

I think that the greatest thing we can do to keep a positive attitude is to smile and have hope! Hope has helped me throughout my life in countless ways. We must also think of how greatly blessed we are and know how much our Heavenly Father loves us. We can turn to Him for peace in any situation. His Son suffered for us, so He knows our pains. Through Him we can gain hope, be healed, and, of course, be happy.

Corey D., age 18, Utah, USA

Think of the Atonement

Pondering our Savior’s Atonement will always give hope and will help us be optimistic. We are all experiencing trials in this life. But through the Atonement, all trials and problems, both temporal and spiritual, have solutions. The Atonement enables us to see these solutions. The Atonement is a great demonstration of God’s love for His children. It is infinite, and so is His love for us. This will give us courage and strength to face the future without fear.

Daryl A., age 18, Laguna, Philippines

Remain Faithful



These troubling times are a part of the Lord’s plan and have been foretold since Old Testament times. All throughout the scriptures, the Lord promises that the righteous will be blessed and preserved. As you remain faithful, the Holy Ghost will be there to

guide you throughout these tumultuous times, to comfort you, and to remind you that the Lord has a plan for you. If you have your patriarchal blessing, study it to see what the Lord has in store for you.

Rae B., age 17, Washington, D.C., USA

Think about Your Blessings



One of the things that gives me joy and hope in these troubling times is taking a moment to stop and think about my blessings and about my knowledge of the gospel. Something as simple as having a best friend or something as grand as the plan of salvation fills me with joy and makes me want to share the joy. This is what keeps my attitude positive.

Annette M., age 15, Michigan, USA

Remember the Temple



When I am discouraged, I meditate on the words found at the end of the Young Women theme: “We believe as we come to accept and act upon these values, we will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation.” I can find comfort in these words, and I know they will be fulfilled in my life and in the lives of all virtuous young women. Without a doubt, I have hope in the sacred temple ordinances. The blessings of a righteous life are endless, and as I remember these things,

my heart fills with joy, hope, love, and courage.

Nathalia M., age 18, Mérida, Venezuela

Be on the Winning Team



To keep a positive attitude, you need to know this simple truth: the Lord’s team is the winner in the end. It’s that easy. Satan has no power over God. Because we already know the winner, we need to focus on staying on the Lord’s team. When we live worthy to enter the temple, we are wearing our uniform that shows the Lord we are on His team. By reading our scriptures, saying our prayers, and serving our brothers and sisters, we find true happiness that makes it easier to have a positive attitude.

Brayden F., age 17, Utah, USA

Develop a Grateful Attitude

Don’t focus on the troubling times. I keep a “Thankful Journal.” Every day I write at least one thing I was thankful for that day. No matter how terrible the

day seemed, I can always find something to appreciate. Count your blessings. Developing a grateful attitude can help you focus on the positive things in your life.

Ashlee H., age 18, Oklahoma, USA



YOUR WONDERFUL FUTURE

“The Lord wants you, my young friends, to desire with all your heart to keep these standards and live by the gospel truths found in the scriptures. As you do this, you will see beyond the moment, and you will see your bright and wonderful future with great opportunities and responsibilities. You will be willing to work hard and endure long, and you will have an optimistic outlook on life.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “See the End from the Beginning,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 44.

NEXT QUESTION

“How do I answer my friends’ questions about the temple when I don’t know much about it myself?”

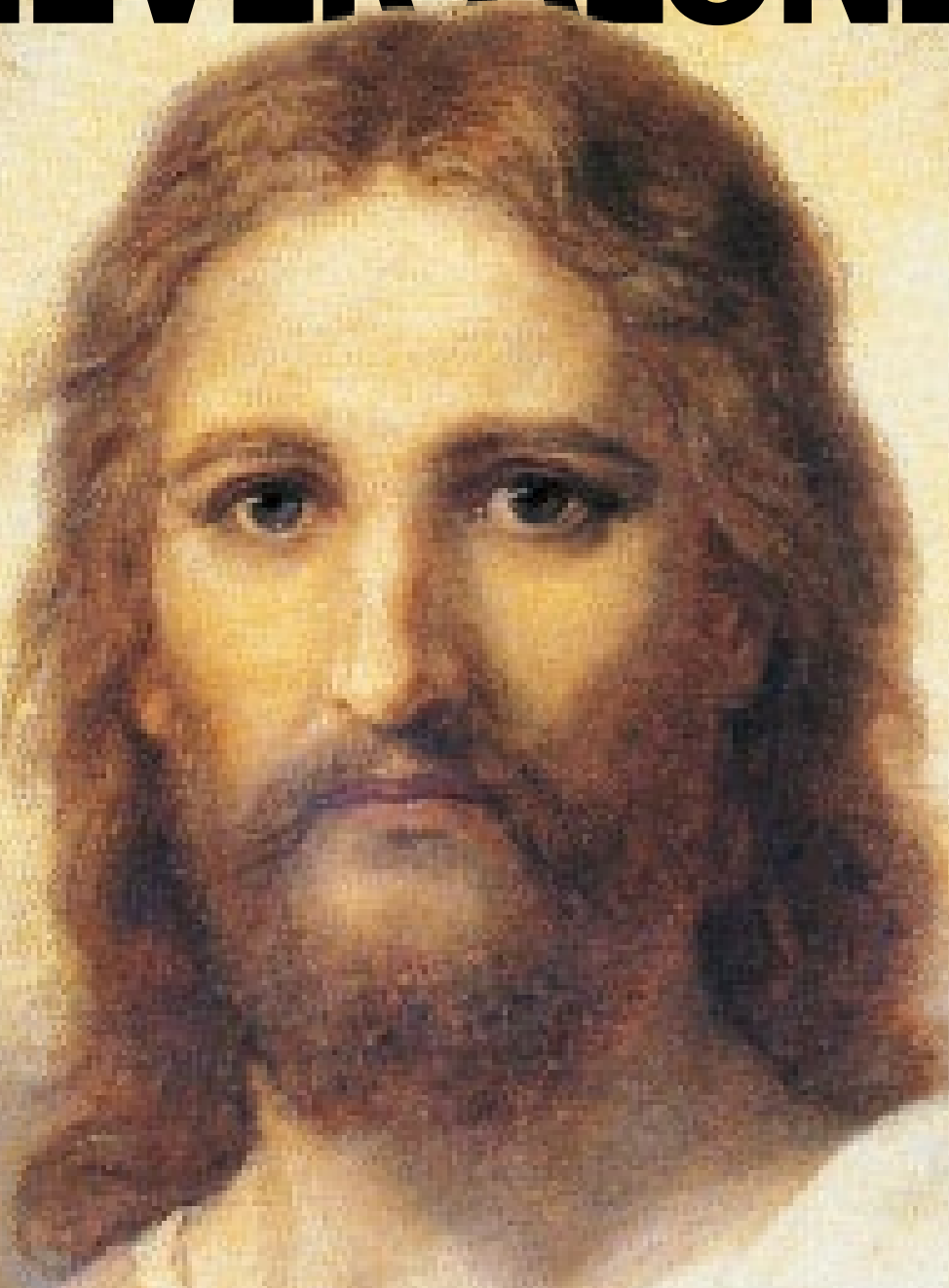
Send your answer by January 15, 2012, to:

Liahona, Questions & Answers 1/12
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA
Or e-mail: liahona@ldschurch.org

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

The following information and permission must be included in your e-mail or letter: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent’s written permission (e-mail is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.

YOU ARE NEVER ALONE



"I will not leave you comfortless:
I will come to you"
(John 14:18).

The Lord Poured Out Blessings

I wondered, “Who is God? Is it Buddha, Jesus Christ, or some other god?”

By Kim Koung

I was born in Cambodia, where most people are Buddhists. After the Khmer Rouge regime killed so many people, many of the survivors didn't understand why, if there was a God, He would let this happen to our people. At 14 years old, I wondered the same thing.

After the regime ended, several religions began taking hold in Cambodia. I was confused because the churches taught so many different things. My family remained Buddhists, but I wanted answers to the questions of my soul: where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going after this life?

One day as I returned from school, my aunt told me that two young men wearing white shirts and ties had come to her home talking about Jesus Christ. She was surprised because they spoke good Cambodian. I wanted to learn about Christ. I wanted to know who created us. I wondered,

“Who is God? Is it Buddha, Jesus Christ, or some other god?”

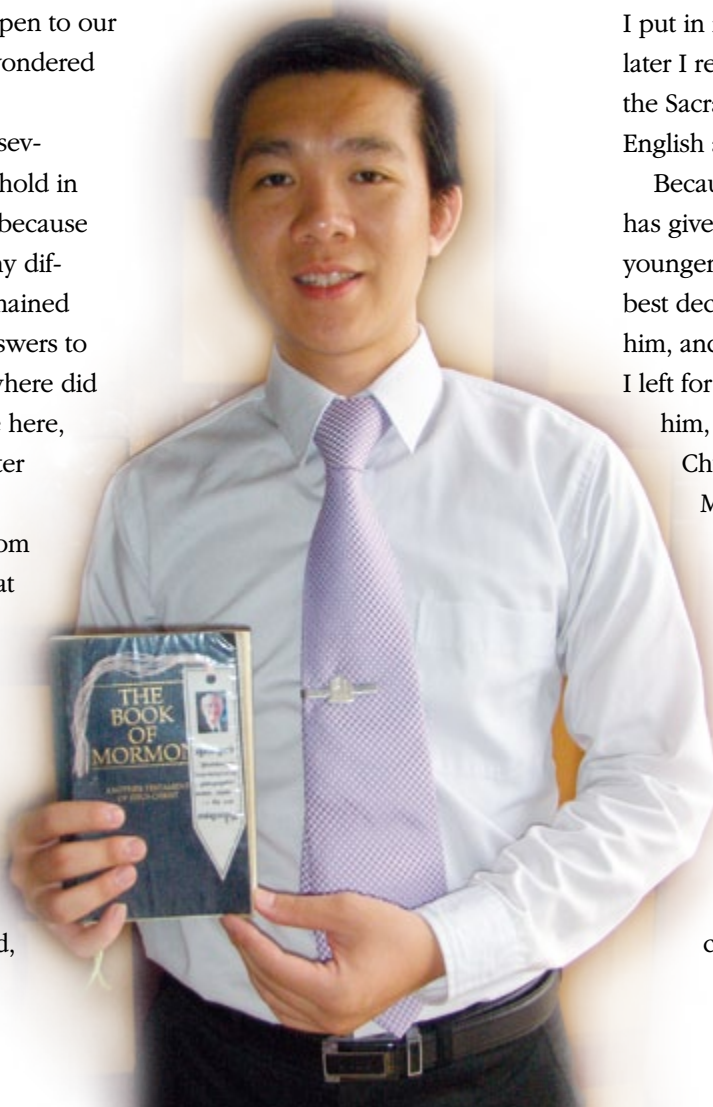
My aunt and I accepted the missionaries. During the first discussion, we felt the Spirit telling us that what they said was true. They gave us a Book of Mormon and promised that if we read it, pondered it, and asked God with a sincere heart, having faith in Him, He would manifest the truth

unto us. It made a lot of sense to me. I accepted the gospel, along with my aunt and her children. About a month later, we were all baptized and confirmed.

I attended seminary for four years and institute for one year and served as a seminary teacher. When I was 19, I felt I should go on a mission. I talked to my parents, and they said perhaps it was a good idea, so I put in my application. A month later I received my call to serve in the Sacramento California Mission, English and Cambodian speaking.

Because I accepted my call, God has given me many blessings. My younger brother wasn't making the best decisions. I fasted and prayed for him, and a miracle happened before I left for my mission. I baptized him, and he is now active in the Church and attending seminary. My family received many other blessings, and the Lord also poured out blessings upon me during my mission.

Jesus is the Christ. He lives. He loves each of us and knows us by name. He knows our challenges and obstacles, and I know He'll bless us as we strive to keep His commandments. ■





By Elder
Carl B. Pratt
Of the Seventy

A SURE WITNESS

Having been raised in an active Latter-day Saint family, I think I grew up having a testimony. I never seriously doubted the truthfulness of the gospel. Like many teenagers, I occasionally questioned things in my mind, but I never felt that the Church wasn't true.

It was this faith that inspired me to serve a mission. I knew I needed to serve. But even though I had no serious doubts about the Church, I realized I had to gain a testimony of my own.

I began my mission in February 1961, leaving Salt Lake City's winter for the heat of an Argentine summer. There was no language training for missionaries at the time, but my mission president promised us we would speak fluent Spanish after reading the entire Book of Mormon out loud. I had learned Spanish as a child and was speaking fluently within the first

few weeks, but still I followed my mission president's instructions.

In the first town I was assigned to, my companion and I stayed in the living quarters behind an old store. We couldn't proselytize in the afternoon during the Argentine siesta, so I used that time to pray and read the Book of Mormon in the front entrance of the old store.

One day, thousands of miles from home in the front of that store, I stopped to think about what I was reading. When you pray and ponder about the Book of Mormon, the Spirit can influence you. I pondered what the Book of Mormon was teaching, I thought about Joseph Smith translating the plates, and I had a sudden feeling come over me. At that moment I knew that everything I had been taught all my life was true. It suddenly became very clear to me that Joseph Smith was a

prophet and that I was reading the word of God. It was all true.

That sudden feeling was electrifying. It went through my whole body from my head to my toes. It wasn't a chill, and it wasn't a burning. But it was a sure witness.

I've never forgotten that day, and I've felt the Holy Ghost many times since. Because of that experience, I recognize the Holy Ghost when He is testifying to me. That feeling isn't always exactly the same, but it's always warm and secure.

Even though the Spirit speaks to us personally, Moroni's promise is to everyone (see Moroni 10:3–5). Moroni's promise in the Book of Mormon is that the Spirit will testify to you of the truth of the Book of Mormon if you will read, study, ponder, and then pray with real intent. That promise applies to me, to you, and to everyone in the world. A sure witness will come to those who seek it. ■

DRAW NEARER TO GOD

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."

Joseph Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.



THIS SHALL BE A

Sign unto You

“All the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?” (Mosiah 13:33).

By Whitney Hinckley

Christmas is a time filled with anticipation—anticipation of presents, good food, and celebrations. Sometimes it seems that the first 24 days in December are just too long to wait. Imagine if you had to wait for 1,000 years!

The first Christmas—the Savior’s birth—had been prophesied for hundreds of years, from Isaiah in the Old Testament to Samuel the Lamanite in the Book of Mormon. The prophets of old knew and anticipated the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, and they waited patiently for those signs. They prophesied of His coming so others would be able to recognize the signs and share in the joy of knowing He had come! The fulfillment of those prophecies was a testimony of His divine calling as Savior and Redeemer.

Read the following prophecies of the birth of Jesus Christ and the miraculous circumstances surrounding it and learn how these prophecies were fulfilled.

Born of Mary, a Virgin

Prophecies: Seven hundred years before she was born, Mary was prophesied to be the mother of Christ. Isaiah wrote, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

Alma the Younger also identified Mary as the Savior’s mother about 80 years before Jesus’s birth and halfway across the world from Isaiah: “He shall be born of Mary,

. . . she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

Fulfillment: Eight decades later, the angel Gabriel appeared “to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:27). Mary was the mother of Jesus, who was the Son of God.

Unto Us a Child Is Born

Prophecy: Isaiah prophesied the birth of the Messiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Fulfillment: The Savior’s ministry fulfilled all that Isaiah prophesied, yet Christ was born in humble circumstances: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11–12).

Born in Bethlehem

Prophecy: The prophet Micah lived about the same time as Isaiah. He prophesied of the Lord being born in the village of Bethlehem: “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet



out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Fulfillment: Seven hundred years later, Herod commanded that his scribes tell him where the new ruler could be found: “He demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea” (Matthew 2:4–5).

Of the Seed of David

Prophecy: The Lord told Jeremiah six centuries before the birth of Christ that He would come from the lineage of David: “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 33:15).

Fulfillment: Matthew gives us Christ’s genealogy, showing how the Lord is descended from that king of long ago: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. . . . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen

generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:1, 17).

Visited by Kings

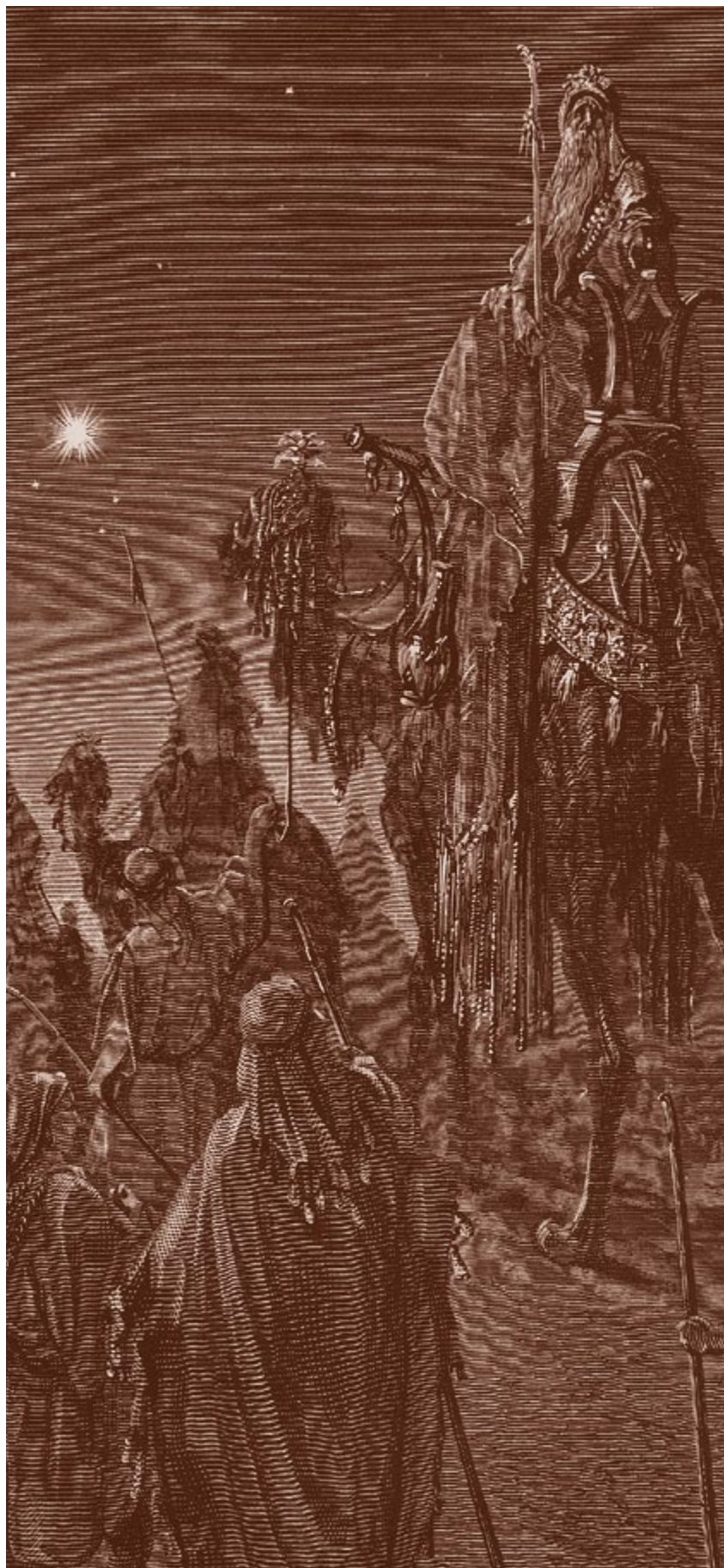
Prophecies: Despite the humble circumstances of His birth, prophets declared that kings would come to see Christ: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:3).

Samuel the Lamanite told the Nephites five years before Christ’s birth of the signs that would herald His coming. One of these signs was the star the Wise Men followed: “There shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you” (Helaman 14:5).

Fulfillment: The Wise Men knew what sign to look for because they must have looked for the fulfillment of prophecies. They said, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2).

In the New World, the Nephites also recognized the signs and knew the prophecies were fulfilled: “And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets. And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word” (3 Nephi 1:20–21).

Think of how you rejoice when you finally get to open your Christmas presents. How would that compare if you had been waiting for the signs of Christ’s birth and finally saw them fulfilled? Our Heavenly Father prepared these signs in advance not only to let the faithful around the world rejoice together at His Son’s birth but to testify of Christ’s divine calling. ■



THE WISE MEN GUIDED BY THE STAR, BY GUSTAVE DORÉ

Thoughtful Gifts

Why did the Wise Men give Joseph and Mary gold, frankincense, and myrrh?

Many people believe that it's the thought that counts when it comes to gift giving. Maybe that's because the thought behind the gift makes it more than just a useful or interesting object—it makes the gift a symbol of the gift-giver's love or consideration for the recipient. Some gifts also mean more than the thought behind the gift; these kinds of gifts have a widely accepted symbolism that adds even more significance. When a gift has all three—practical utility, personal value, and symbolic meaning—it may be the most thoughtful and appreciated gift of all.

Consider the thought behind the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that the Wise Men gave to the Christ child (see Matthew 2:11). The Bible doesn't say why the Wise Men brought these particular gifts, but all three gifts had practical value and perhaps symbolic meaning for the Son of God and His earthly parents.

Gold

Practical use: For a young couple who would soon have the expense of traveling to Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod, the gold would be an invaluable gift.

Symbolic meaning: Gold is the typical gift for kings (see 1 Kings 9:14, 28) because it symbolizes kingship and royalty—a fitting gift for the “King of kings” (1 Timothy 6:15).

Frankincense

Practical use: Aside from its considerable monetary value, frankincense was used as a sweet-smelling incense and perfume.

Symbolic meaning: Frankincense comes from a sweet tree resin and was used in priesthood ordinances, in burnt offerings (see Leviticus 2:1), and in oil for anointing priests. Thus, it can represent the Lord's priesthood and His role as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed on our behalf (see John 1:29).

Myrrh

Practical use: Myrrh, a bitter oil from a tree resin, was also economically valuable but probably more beneficial to Mary and Joseph for its medicinal uses.

Symbolic meaning: In the New Testament, myrrh is usually associated with embalming and burial because of its preservative qualities (see John 19:39–40). Myrrh's medicinal uses can symbolize Christ's role as the Master Healer, and its use in burials can symbolize “the bitter cup” He would drink when He suffered for our sins (see D&C 19:18–19). ■



They SHOULD CHANGE

When I was baptized, my family rejected the Church. Now I had to figure out how to respond when their lifestyle conflicted with gospel principles.

By Francisco Javier Lara Hernández

When I was baptized, I was the only member of my family who accepted the gospel. I was 19 years old, and I was happy about my baptism. I was welcomed by the brothers and sisters of the Panuco First Branch in Veracruz, Mexico. In addition, I began preparing to serve a full-time mission as soon as I had been a member of the Church for one year. It was wonderful to know the true Church, and I wanted to share the gospel with others.

My father, my stepmother (my mom died when I was 12 years old), and my three brothers rejected the Church when I was baptized. Unfortunately, I didn't respond well. I was disrespectful to them. I didn't consider my father or his opinions. When I told him I would serve a mission soon, he was not happy since I would stop working and especially since I might go far away. It bothered me every time my family's lifestyle conflicted with my principles, such as when they watched TV or listened to music

programs that I felt were inappropriate for Sundays or when my father would invite me to have lunch on fast Sunday.

I justified my negative attitude toward my family by telling myself that I wasn't doing anything wrong—as a member of the Church, I should live gospel principles even when my family members bothered me. I told myself *they* were the ones who should change. Due to this reasoning, my relationship with my father was not good. It got worse because of my attitude and pride. I continued this way—not concerning myself with his spiritual welfare.

One day while I was studying for my institute class, I came to 1 Nephi 16, where Nephi breaks his steel bow, making it difficult to get food. Everybody began to murmur—Laman and Lemuel, as was their custom, together with their father, the prophet Lehi. Nephi responded by making a bow and arrow out of wood and asking his father where he should go to obtain food. His father prayed for guidance and was reprimanded by the Lord for having murmured. Lehi reacted favorably and retook his role as leader of his family and as a prophet of the Lord. Nephi did not judge his father in his weakened state, nor did he think that he shouldn't be prophet anymore, even when Nephi had spoken with the Lord and had received visions.

When I read and understood this account, immediately I thought of how badly I had behaved toward my family. I was embarrassed by my attitude—feeling that I was better than they were—and felt especially bad for not treating my father with respect. I was sad for not making it a priority to share the gospel with them.

I had not seen my family as they could become. I had



My attitude and behavior changed gradually. Although I did not often agree with my father, I strived to always respect his opinions.

focused only on their weaknesses. From that day on, my attitude and behavior changed gradually. I strived to always respect my father's opinions, despite the many times I did not agree with him. If he invited me to lunch when I was fasting, I said I was sorry for not being able to share the meal with him. I no longer felt bothered by the programs or music they watched or listened to on Sundays, remembering that they still hadn't made covenants with our Heavenly Father, as I had.

One morning while I was helping my father with a meal, I told him how much I loved him and how sorry I was for my rude behavior. I told him I was proud that he was my father and that I wanted to have a peaceful relationship with him.

Everything began to change. The arguments lessened and disappeared. Although I thought it would be a long time before my family joined the Church, their attitude toward the Church improved. None of these changes would have happened had I not changed first.

After I had been a member of the Church for one year, I served as a full-time missionary in the Mexico Tijuana Mission. Three months before returning, I received a letter saying that my family had accepted the gospel and would be baptized. When I returned, they already belonged to the Church.

In my 15 years as a member of the Church, one of my greatest lessons came from my study of the Book of Mormon and with the children of God I had closest to me: my family. ■



Meet Brother Joseph

You know that Joseph Smith was the first prophet in these latter days, but did you know that he loved to laugh and make people laugh? or that he and his wife, Emma, adopted twins? Here are a few other things you might not know about the Prophet Joseph:

- Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, USA, and was named after his father. Joseph's siblings, in order of age, were Alvin, Hyrum, Sophronia, Samuel Harrison, Ephraim, William,

Katherine, Don Carlos, and Lucy.

- When Joseph was seven, he had typhoid fever. He recovered from the fever but was left with an infection in his left leg. Nine pieces of the bone were removed without any anesthesia (pain-killer). He walked with a slight limp the rest of his life.¹
- Joseph was 14 when he first prayed aloud and saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17).
- Joseph's oldest brother, Alvin, died when Joseph was 17. Almost 13 years later Joseph saw Alvin in a vision of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:5–7).
- Isaac Hale, Emma's father, didn't approve of Joseph and didn't want them to get married. Joseph and Emma decided to elope and were married on January 18, 1827.²
- Emma and Joseph were married for 17 years and had 11 children, 6 of whom died as children.
- After his tooth was chipped when he was attacked by a mob in 1832, Joseph spoke with a lisp.³
- Joseph enjoyed playing games. Such games included playing ball, wrestling, throwing snowballs, fishing, and pulling sticks.⁴
- An early Latter-day Saint described Joseph's voice as being like “the thunders of Heaven.”⁵
- Joseph was strong and tall, around 6'2" (1.9 m), and weighed about 200 pounds (91 kg).⁶
- Joseph wasn't only the President

of the Church, but he also ran for president of the United States.⁷

- After Joseph was martyred, Elder John Taylor (1808–87), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote of him, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). ■

NOTES

1. See *Presidents of the Church* (Church Educational System student manual, 2003), 3–4.
2. See “Life of the Prophet: Joseph and Emma,” JosephSmith.net.
3. See “Life of the Prophet: Friend of Man,” JosephSmith.net.
4. See Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (1993), 137.
5. Joseph L. Robinson, in “Life of the Prophet: Teacher of God's Truth,” JosephSmith.net.
6. See Baugh, “Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature,” 138–39.
7. See “Life of the Prophet: Leading with Love,” JosephSmith.net.





How Can I FOLLOW the SAVIOR?

*Elder Quentin L.
Cook of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles
shares some thoughts
on this subject.*



We show our love for God when we keep His commandments and serve His children.



The sacrament allows us to witness to God that we will remember His Son and keep His commandments as we renew our baptismal covenant.



The Savior declared that we would be known as His disciples if we have love one to another.



Follow our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. He is an excellent example of one who follows the Savior.



We must take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and receive His image in our countenance so that when He comes we will be more like Him.

Those Words

By Angie Bergstrom Miller

Based on a true story

*“Ye shall not swear by my name falsely,
neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God”
(Leviticus 19:12).*

Shelby didn't like hearing bad words, especially when her friends at school took the Lord's name in vain.

“Please don't say those words around me,” she'd say to her friends.

But sometimes they forgot, and she had to remind them.

One day Shelby's friend Beth rolled her eyes and said, “Oh, yeah, I forgot. Nobody says *those* words in front of Shelby. She's trying to make us *good* like she is.”

The other girls laughed.

Shelby was embarrassed. She felt bad for always asking her friends not to say those words around her—especially when they didn't think the words were bad.

When Shelby got home from school, she flopped down on her bed. Her mother came in a few minutes later, and Shelby told her what had happened.

“Try not to worry about it,” Mom said. “You just keep doing the right thing, and eventually your friends won't want to say those words anymore.”

“Why does it matter if my friends say those words?” Shelby asked. “It's not like I am swearing.”

“The prophets have taught us that we should keep ourselves worthy to feel the Spirit at all times. Bad words offend the Spirit,” Mom said.

Shelby remembered times she had felt the Spirit: at family home evening, when she bore her testimony, when she got a blessing from her father. Shelby liked feeling the Spirit, and she didn't want



to do anything that would offend that warm, peaceful comfort.

She made up her mind to keep being an example to her friends and help them to understand that she didn't like to hear those words.

The next day at school, she heard those words again.

"Please don't say those words around me," Shelby asked Becca.

Becca glared at Shelby and then ignored her. Shelby was glad she had said something but felt sad that her friend was upset.

At recess Shelby heard someone say those words again. This time it was Beth.

"Please don't say that around me," Shelby said.

"Sorry," Beth said, rolling her eyes.

Shelby felt silly once again.

At softball practice after school, Shelby hit a ball. It bounced to first base and got there before Shelby did. Shelby heard Bonnie, the new girl on the team, take the Lord's name in vain.

Shelby hesitated. She was tired of asking people not to say those kinds of words around her. She didn't want the other girls to make fun of her.

"Please don't say those words around her."

Shelby turned around to see who had spoken.

Beth was telling Bonnie that Shelby was a Latter-day Saint and that she didn't say those kinds of words and didn't feel comfortable hearing those words either.

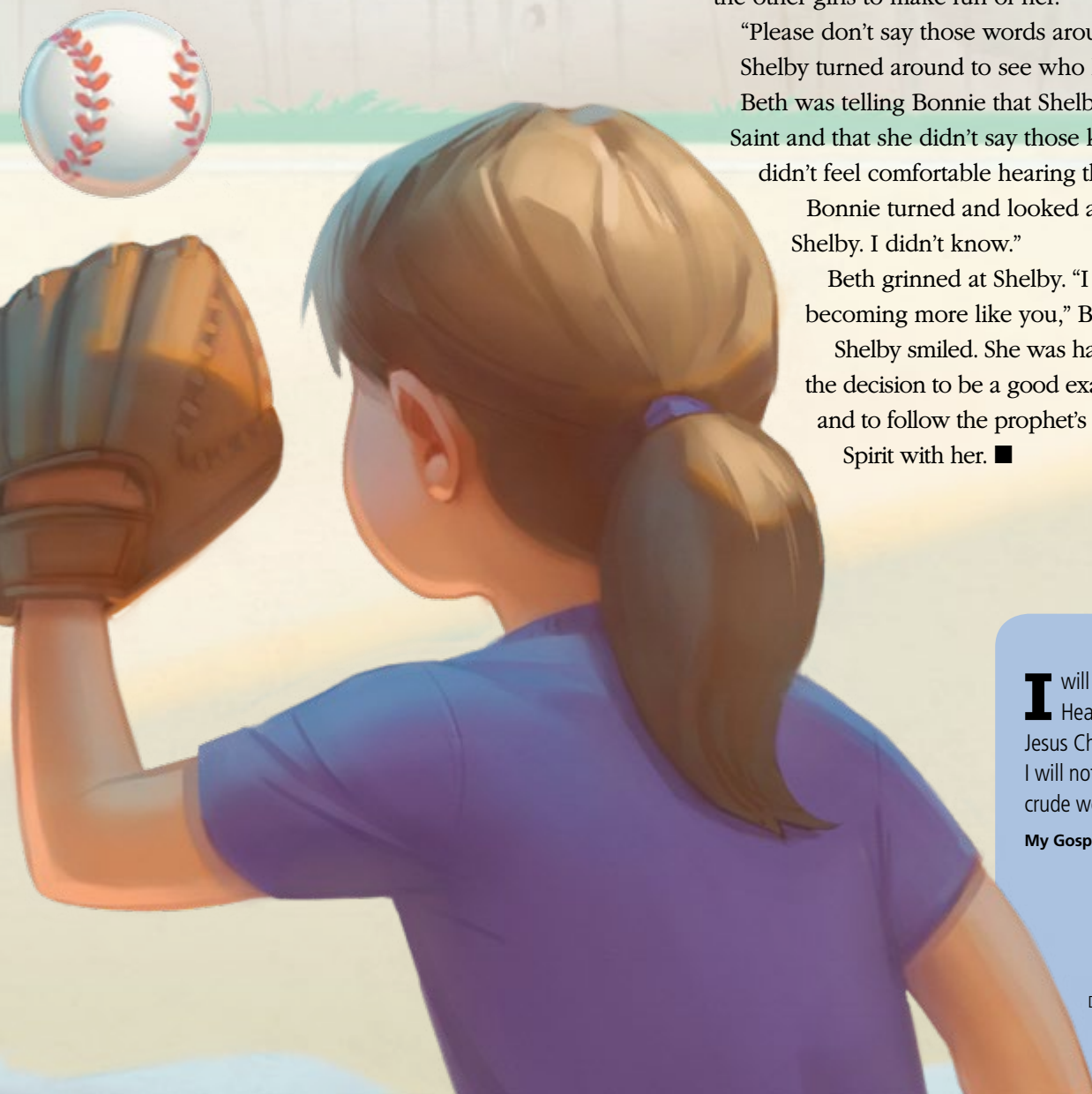
Bonnie turned and looked at Shelby. "Sorry, Shelby. I didn't know."

Beth grinned at Shelby. "I guess we're all becoming more like you," Beth said.

Shelby smiled. She was happy she had made the decision to be a good example to her friends and to follow the prophet's counsel to keep the Spirit with her. ■

I will use the names of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ reverently. I will not swear or use crude words."

My Gospel Standards



Our Page



Angie D., age 11, Peru



Ariana A., age 9, Brazil



The Birth of Jesus, by Angeles R., age 10, Bolivia



Rebecca A., age 7, Venezuela

One Christmas I gave several pass-along cards to my friends and teachers at school. In January a teacher I had given a card to told me she had called the number on the card and received a Christmas DVD. She watched it and liked it very much. I think the pass-along cards are special. When I give them out, I can feel the Spirit. It makes me happy to share the gospel. I know that Jesus Christ lives and loves all of us.

Raiane R., age 11, Brazil



E-mail your drawing, photo, or experience for Our Page to liahona@ldschurch.org with "Our Page" in the subject line. Or mail it to:

Liahona, Our Page
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Each submission must include the child's full name, gender, and age (must be 3 to 12 years old) plus the parent's name, ward or branch, stake or district, and the parent's written permission (e-mail is acceptable) to use the child's photo and submission. Submissions may be edited for clarity or length.

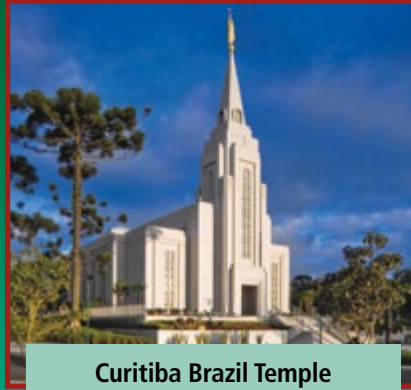
Temple Cards

To make your own Temple Cards, remove this page from the magazine, glue it to heavy paper, and cut out the cards. You can add these cards to the cards that appeared in each issue of 2003 and in the April 2005 and September 2007 issues. To print out more copies of the cards, go to liahona.lds.org.



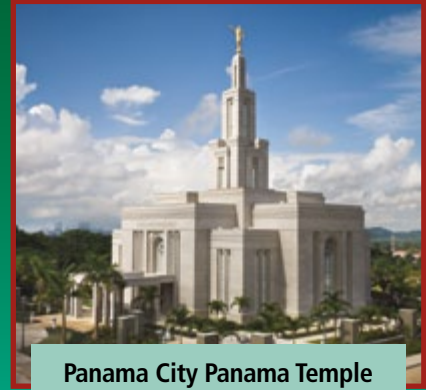
Rexburg Idaho Temple

Dedicated on February 10, 2008,
by President Thomas S. Monson



Curitiba Brazil Temple

Dedicated on June 1, 2008,
by President Thomas S. Monson



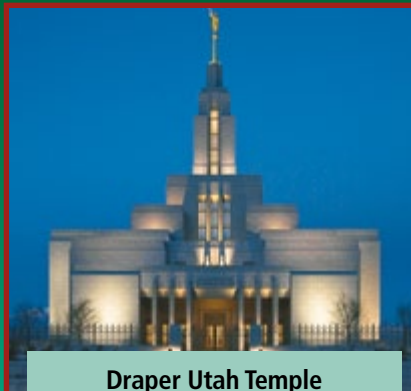
Panama City Panama Temple

Dedicated on August 10, 2008,
by President Thomas S. Monson



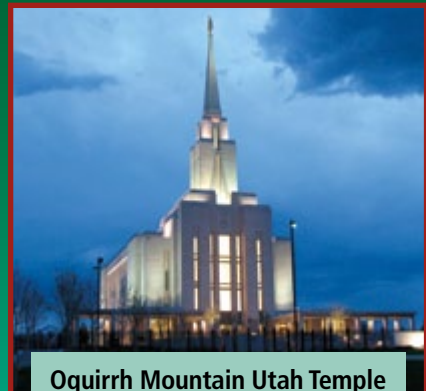
Twin Falls Idaho Temple

Dedicated on August 24, 2008,
by President Thomas S. Monson



Draper Utah Temple

Dedicated on March 20, 2009,
by President Thomas S. Monson



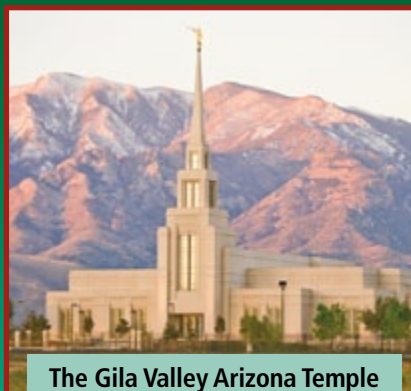
Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple

Dedicated on August 21, 2009,
by President Thomas S. Monson



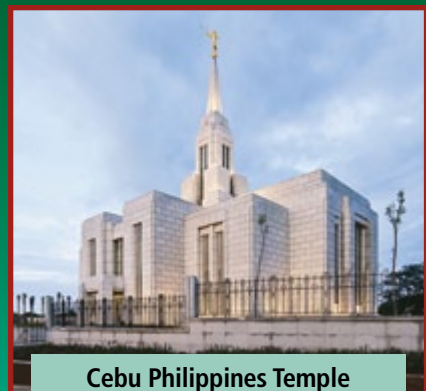
Vancouver British Columbia Temple

Dedicated on May 2, 2010,
by President Thomas S. Monson



The Gila Valley Arizona Temple

Dedicated on May 23, 2010,
by President Thomas S. Monson



Cebu Philippines Temple

Dedicated on June 13, 2010,
by President Thomas S. Monson

PHOTOGRAPHS OF REXBURG IDAHO TEMPLE BY DAVID D. WOJCIK; CURITIBA BRAZIL TEMPLE BY JOHN LUKE; PANAMA CITY PANAMA, VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA, AND CEBU PHILIPPINES TEMPLES BY MATTHEW REIER © IRI; TWIN FALLS IDAHO TEMPLE BY ANDREA NIELSON © IRI; DRAPER UTAH TEMPLE BY CHRISTINA SMITH © IRI; OQUIRRH MOUNTAIN UTAH TEMPLE BY DONALD MEYERS; THE GILA VALLEY ARIZONA TEMPLE BY JOHN LUKE

You can use this lesson and activity to learn more about this month's Primary theme.

The Scriptures Teach Me about the Savior's Birth and Second Coming

By Jennifer Maddy

Church Magazines

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

For thousands of years, prophets testified that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born on earth. In the scriptures, we can read what these prophets said. In the Old Testament, Isaiah said that Jesus would be the Prince of Peace and that He would be the head of the true Church. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi saw Jesus's mother, Mary, in a vision, and he saw Jesus teaching people on the earth. King Benjamin taught his people about the miracles that Christ would perform when He came to earth.

A few years before the Savior was



born, the prophet Samuel stood on a wall to tell the Nephites about the signs that would appear. He said that when the Savior was born, a new star would appear in the sky. In the New Testament we can read about that same star—the Wise Men followed it to find the Christ child.

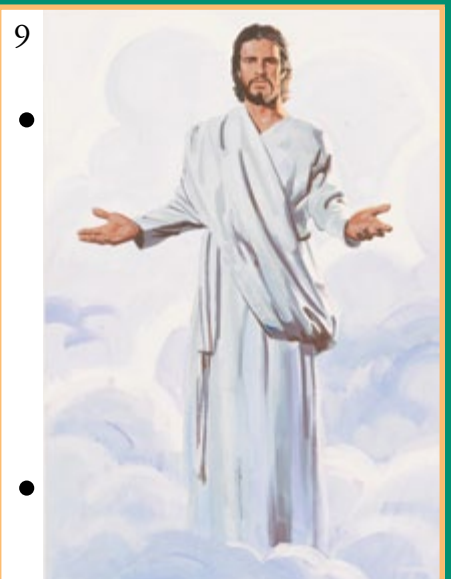
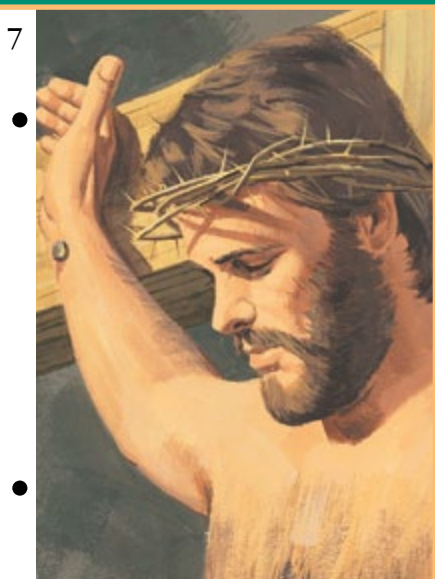
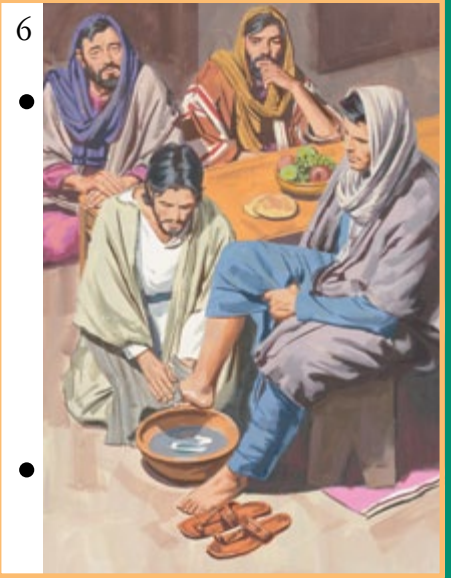
In the scriptures, prophets also teach of Jesus Christ's Second Coming to the earth. In the Book

of Mormon, Moroni testifies of the Savior's return. In the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of what will happen in the last days before the Second Coming.

The scriptures contain prophets' testimonies of Jesus Christ from many different times in history. In the scriptures, we can also read about Jesus's example. We need to follow His example as we prepare for when He comes to live on the earth again.

ACTIVITY

You can make your own picture book of the life of Jesus Christ. Cut out the pictures on page 65. Punch holes on each page where indicated and stack the pages in order. Use string to tie the pages together through the holes. You could look at this book with your family during family home evening and talk about the life of the Savior. ■





The CHRISTMAS Tree

By Harriet R. Uchtdorf

World War II had just ended, and most people in Germany had very little food or money. My birthday was coming up just a few weeks before Christmas. I did not expect to receive any Christmas or birthday presents, knowing quite well—even as a young girl—that our parents were struggling to meet our basic needs. In our big city, hunger was always present. It was a sad and dark time.

On the day of my birthday, to my surprise and delight, a wonderful present—just for me—was placed on the kitchen table. It

was the most beautiful present I could have imagined: a tiny little *Weihnachtsbaum*, a Christmas tree, just one foot (30 cm) tall, covered with delicate handmade ornaments of tinfoil. The tinfoil reflected the light of our living room in an enchanting way. As I inspected the tinfoil ornaments, I realized with amazement that they were filled with small pieces of caramelized sugar. It was like a miracle. Where did my mother get the tiny ever-green tree, the tinfoil, and the rarity of sugar?

To this day, I do not know how she made this miracle happen at a time when none of those precious things was available. It remains in

my heart as a symbol of my parents' deep love for me, as a symbol of hope, love, and the true meaning of Christmas.

During the Christmas season, we still have in our home a Christmas tree, now decorated with electrical lights and ornaments of every variety. When we are together with our children and grandchildren, the beauty of the tree and the sparkling lights warm my heart and bring back sweet memories of a happy family moment that came from a tiny tree with shiny tinfoil ornaments. ■

Harriet R. Uchtdorf is married to President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

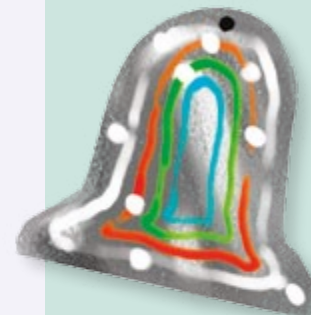
From Harriet R. Uchtdorf, "Der Weihnachtsbaum: Memories Linger of Small Tree," Church News, Dec. 12, 2009, 11.

Handmade Ornaments

Surprise your family by creating some handmade ornaments of your own! Here's what you need:

- a holiday-shaped cookie cutter or a small drinking glass
- stiff paper such as card stock or poster board
- pencil
- scissors
- aluminum foil (optional)
- white liquid glue
- markers (or crayons or colored pencils)
- yarn, ribbon, or string

1. Trace the cookie cutter or glass on the stiff paper.
2. Have a parent help you cut out the shape.
3. Tear off a piece of foil and use it to cover the paper shape. Glue down the edges of the foil on the back of the ornament. (If you are not using foil, skip this step and follow the rest of the steps.)
4. Drizzle lines of glue on the front of the ornament. Let the glue dry completely.
5. Use markers to color in between the lines of glue. (If you are not using foil, you can also use crayons or colored pencils.)
6. Have a parent help you poke a hole in the top of the ornament. Put a small piece of yarn, ribbon, or string through the hole and tie it at the top.
7. Hang your ornament on your family's *Weihnachtsbaum* or give it as a gift.





My Mission Fund

By Spencer S.

I know this might sound strange, but I have been saving money to pay for my mission since before I was born. When my mother learned she was going to have a baby, she took an empty milk can, put a hole in it, and labeled it, “Mission Fund.” Since that day, my family and I have been saving for my mission.

Saving for my mission has been a family effort. After I was born, my uncles and aunts who came to visit would drop Philippine pesos into the mission fund can. And when holidays like Christmas or New Year’s came around, family members gave me money to add to my mission fund.

Sometimes my grandparents give me money for doing well in school and competitions. These gifts go to my mission fund too. Once, when I received

several medals, my aunt counted all the medals I earned and gave me money for each one. After I paid tithing, this money also went into my mission fund.

When I was baptized, my desire to serve a mission grew even more. My family set a goal to save enough money to pay for my mission in full. Because I now have siblings, money we save is added to their mission funds too.

I am now nine years old and almost halfway to the age I will be when I serve my mission. My desire to serve a mission has increased because I know there have been so many people who have contributed to my mission fund.

I will continue to save for my mission. I know that Heavenly Father will bless me so that I can serve Him as a missionary one day. ■



THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



*W*E BELIEVE IN GOD, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2 We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3 We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4 We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5 We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6 We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

7 We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

8 We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9 We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10 We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

11 We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12 We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

13 We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul— We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

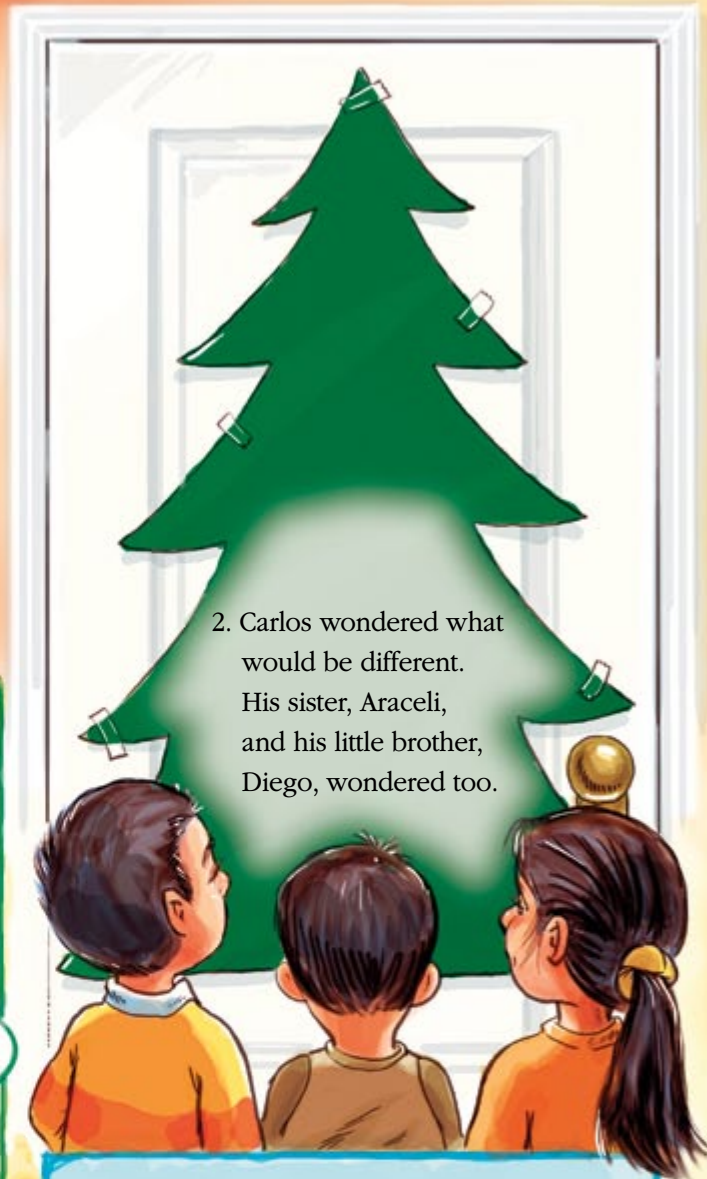
Joseph Smith.

A Different Kind of Christmas Tree

By Eliana Osborn

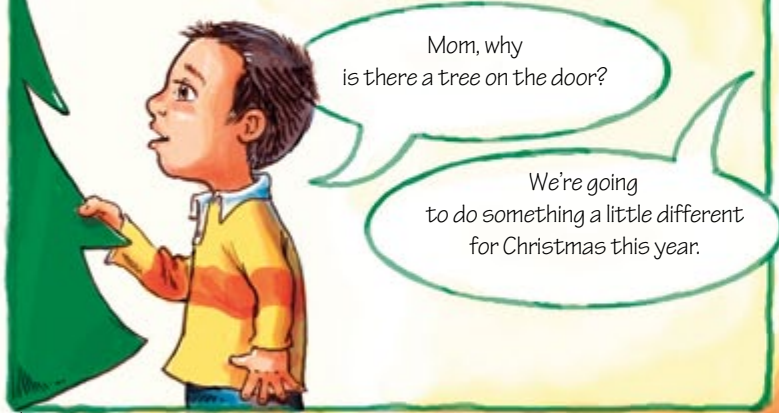
Based on a true story

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me"
(Matthew 11:29).



2. Carlos wondered what would be different. His sister, Araceli, and his little brother, Diego, wondered too.

1. Carlos was excited for Christmas. This year there was something different in his home. A large tree made of shiny green paper was attached to the door.



Mom, why is there a tree on the door?

We're going to do something a little different for Christmas this year.

4. Carlos liked that idea. Araceli ran to the ornaments and grabbed a red pencil.



Jesus was baptized.

I made these paper ornaments for the tree. Each day we will write something about Jesus Christ on an ornament and then put it on the tree. By Christmas Eve, the whole tree will be covered!



3.

That's a good one. Can I write that Jesus did many miracles?

That would be perfect. You both have great ideas!

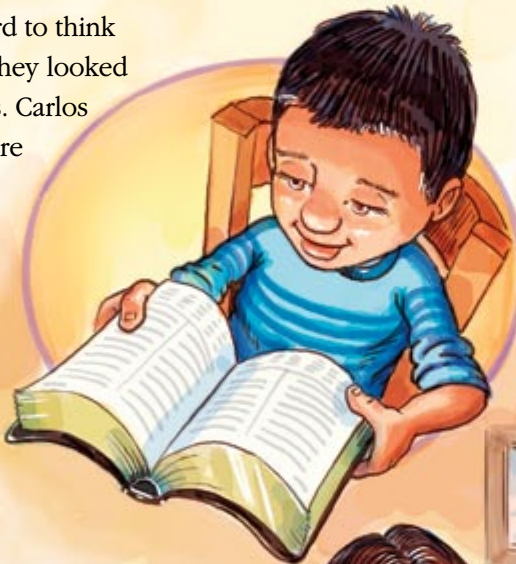
5.



6. Every night after dinner, Araceli and Carlos made another ornament and put it on the tree. Diego helped by telling them that he loves Jesus.



7. When it was hard to think of more ideas, they looked in the scriptures. Carlos didn't know there were so many verses about Jesus!



8. On Christmas Eve the whole family sang songs and read the ornaments they had put on the tree. Carlos was happy he knew so much about Jesus. He knew he was ready for Christmas this year.



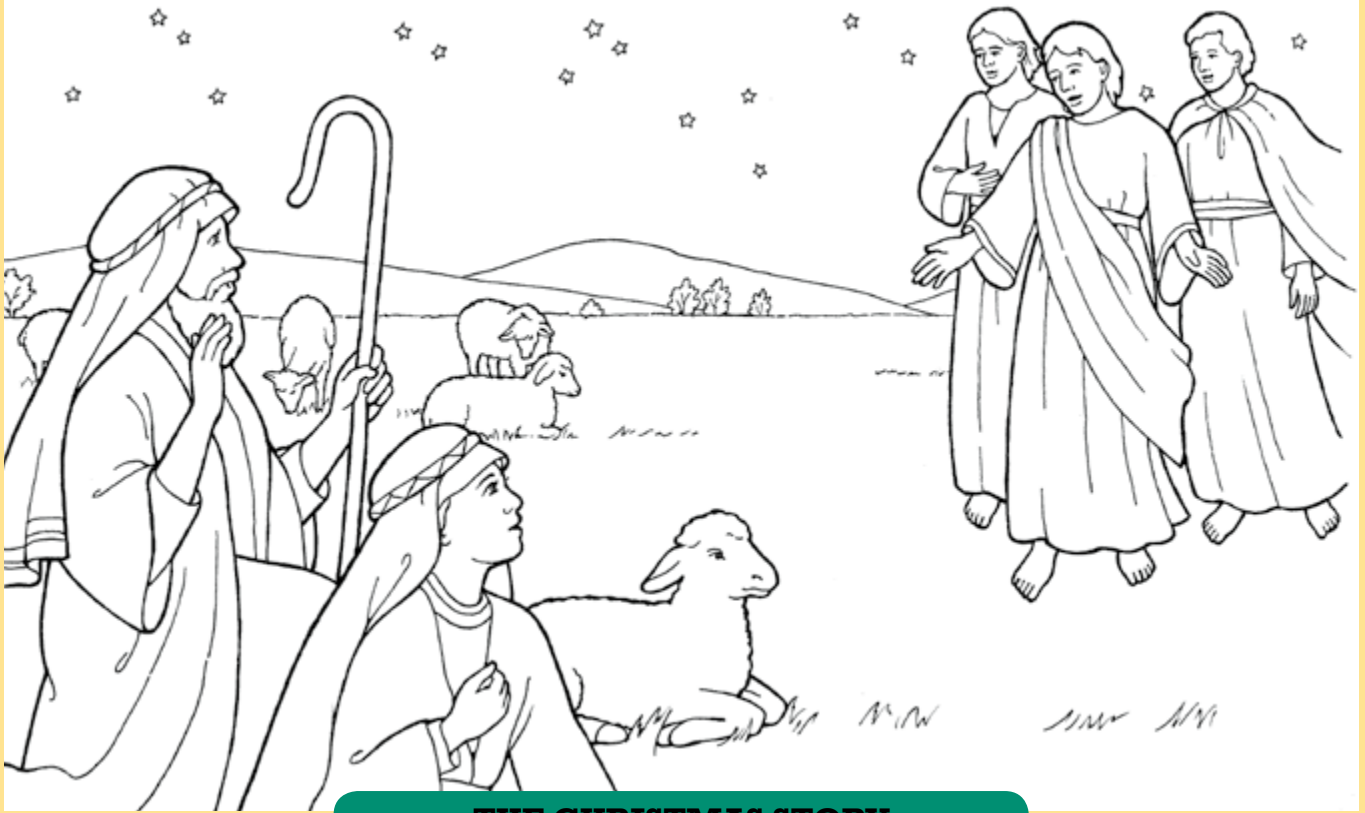
SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

These children are learning about Jesus Christ's birth by acting out things that happened when

Jesus was born. See if you can spot the nine differences between the two drawings.



COLORING PAGE



THE CHRISTMAS STORY



Helps for Parents

Read the story of the first Christmas in Luke 2. As you read, help your child listen for events that are shown in the two pictures and take time to let your children color the pictures.

New Mission Presidents Blessed for Exercise of Faith

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church Magazines

The Church's 128 new mission presidents and their wives were invited to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, USA, to receive instruction before leaving for their assignments.

President Thomas S. Monson opened the four-day seminar, held in June 2011, saying, "You have been chosen from among the most faithful in the Church, and now you have the opportunity to go forth in the Lord's harvest field. . . . I know of no field which produces more fragrant nor bounteous roses than the mission field to which you have been called."

The couples come from all over the world—22 different countries—and will serve worldwide in 18 languages. Their backgrounds are diverse, but already they have something in common.

As these newly called mission presidents and their wives have made sacrifices to prepare temporally and spiritually, they are learning that blessings of exercising faith can sometimes be immediate.

Making Sacrifices

Serving as a mission president is both a challenging and a spiritually exhilarating three-year assignment. In dedicating themselves to this call, many couples essentially put their old lives on hold, including their jobs and families.

The interruption to professional employment can in some cases mean financial loss. While the Church provides mission presidents with a minimal living allowance, the couples usually have the financial means to supplement that allowance with their own funds.

When Marcus Martins and his wife, Mirian, received their calling to the Brazil São Paulo North Mission, the Laie, Hawaii, USA, residents were counseled by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that there would have to be sacrifice, but he told them not to sacrifice too much.

The Martins went home and prayed to know how they could afford to accept this opportunity. They sold everything. "The blessing—we sold everything in one day," Sister Martins said. "It was a miracle for us."

Not all may sacrifice financially, but every mission president and his wife will face faith-testing sacrifice of some kind.

For Gary and Pamela Rasmussen of Tucson, Arizona, USA, accepting the call to the Japan Sendai Mission meant leaving their six children and 23 grandchildren.

"I know that Heavenly Father can take care of the children better than I can," Sister Rasmussen said. "So we're happy to do this and feel like this will be a great blessing to them."

Many who accept the call to serve as mission presidents and mission presidents' companions express that attitude of willing sacrifice.

"I sometimes wonder what exactly is considered a sacrifice, because something that can be very difficult for one person may not be as difficult for another one," President Martins said. "Many times in our lives . . . we've said that we'll put the Lord first and that for the Lord we'll do anything, we'll go anywhere. So we don't really think in terms of sacrifice. . . . It's a privilege; it's an honor to lay down everything."



Being Prepared

In the time before mission presidents and their wives begin their mission assignments a lot of spiritual and temporal preparation takes place. Mission presidents are generally called more than six months in advance, but occasionally that preparation time is compressed. Brent and Anne Scott of Eden, Utah, USA, were called to supervise the Canada Toronto Mission just a week before the mission presidents' seminar and two months before they were to begin their service.

Between telling friends and family and trying to make arrangements for their home, they studied manuals, listened to CDs, and made other spiritual preparations. But they said their greatest preparation was the seminar at the MTC.

"It's just a spiritual immersion of knowledge," President Scott said. "To be with a group of people who have [sacrificed to serve the Lord] and to be taught by prophets, seers, and revelators . . . has absolutely been one of the greatest experiences of our lives."

Learning Wisdom

Over the four-day seminar in June, mission presidents and their wives were spiritually fed with messages from the First Presidency and several members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

"As we listened to them, as they taught us, [we felt] that the Lord was there, that He cares, that this is His work, that these are His servants, and that we have the privilege of going out and representing our Savior," Sister Scott said.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed some of his hopes for the outgoing mission presidents and their companions.

"May you have good physical, emotional, and spiritual health [and] success in learning, teaching, and applying the doctrine of Jesus Christ," he said. "My hopes include your ability to harness the power of the members; to focus on the ordinances; [and] to be one with the Lord, the members of the Church, and those precious missionaries entrusted to your care." ■

Newly called mission presidents attend a four-day training session at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, USA, shortly before they enter the mission field.

Seven Sisters Shine Their Light in the Mission Field

Pleiades, or the Seven Sisters, is a constellation of seven stars that are so far away their light needs 350 years to reach the earth.

Ranging in age from their early twenties to late thirties, seven sisters from Mexico are letting their light shine in their family and in the mission field as they share the gospel with people in five countries.

Marisol (Chile Osorno), Antonia (Argentina Resistencia), Daniela (Costa Rica San José), Florencia (Honduras Comayaguela), Verónica (Chile Santiago East), Anai (Guatemala City North), and Balbina Nava Aguilar (Argentina Bahía Blanca) are concurrently serving missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The sisters' first contact with

LDS missionaries was when they began attending free English classes at a local chapel. In 2006 they—along with another sister and their brother—were baptized. Their parents, Albino Nava and Isidra Aguilar, who had joined the Church three decades earlier, came back into full activity at that time.

Sister Aguilar said she can see the good that has come from having her seven daughters on missions.

"They are in the Lord's hands, working, preaching His gospel to bring more souls [to Him]," she said.

"I love this gospel and I know that the work changes lives," Florencia said. "It changed mine, and it will change the lives of those I teach."

The sisters begin returning home at the end of 2011. ■

General Authorities regularly visit members of the Church across the world. Reports of their ministry can be found on news.lds.org as well as on Prophets and Apostles Speak Today at prophets.lds.org in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Here are brief accounts of recent travels.

- President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, spoke in May 2011 to 800 community, business, and religious leaders attending the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to furthering global understanding. President Uchtdorf talked about the growth of the Church from 1830 to today. Search "Uchtdorf, Los Angeles" on news.lds.org.

- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles organized, in June 2011, the Moscow Russia Stake—the first in Russia and the second in the area covered by the former Soviet Union. More than 1,100 people attended. Search "Nelson, Moscow" on news.lds.org.

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited India, Hong Kong (where he was joined by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles), and then Mongolia in May 2011. Search "Holland, India" on news.lds.org.

- Presiding Bishop H. David Burton visited Higashi Matsushima, Japan, in June 2011 to assess the country's condition since the March 11 earthquake and tsunami and to observe Church relief being offered there. Search "Burton, Japan" on news.lds.org. ■



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANAI NAVA

These seven siblings from Mexico City are simultaneously serving full-time missions in different parts of the world.

Jerusalem Movie Set Dedicated

The Jerusalem Movie Set built by the Church for gospel-themed movie productions has been dedicated and is now being used for filming. It is first being used to create the New Testament Scripture Library Project—a series of vignettes portraying important scenes from the lives of Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

The set is located on the LDS Motion Picture Studio South Campus in Goshen, Utah, USA, fewer than 60 miles (97 km) south of Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. It is not a replica of Jerusalem, but a re-creation of important locations in the city.

The small town of Goshen was chosen because of the surrounding area's similarity to Jerusalem's geography—rolling hills, plains, groves of cedar trees, sand dunes, and a stream. Nearby Utah Lake will stand in for the Sea of Galilee.

In some cases, computerized visual effects will fill in details the set does not accommodate. ■

Senior Missionary Policies Changed

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently approved changes in



The Church's new movie set in Goshen, Utah, will be used to film scenes from Jesus Christ's life as recorded in the New Testament.

the policies regarding length of senior missionary service and missionary housing to encourage more couples to serve full-time missions and to improve their experience.

As of September 1, 2011, couples may now serve for 6, 12, 18, or 23 months. In addition, a cap of \$1,400 (US) per month has been established for housing costs. Couples will continue to pay for food and other personal expenses.

In the past, the policy has been that couples serving outside their country of residence were called for at least 18 months. Those wishing to serve outside their country of residence for less than 18 months may now do so if they pay for their own transportation to and from the field.

Questions about senior missions can be sent to seniormissionaryservices@ldschurch.org. ■

Church Expanding Online Offerings in Languages

LDS.org is expanding its language offerings. Recently 48 new language index pages were added to the Church's official website. By clicking on any language under the "Languages" link in the upper right corner on any page of LDS.org, visitors can see links to Church material currently available online in that language.

Different sections of LDS.org will eventually be available in 10 to 15 languages. At that point, the language page for those languages will be retired. (For example, there is no language page for English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish, because those languages already have much of LDS.org in their language.)

Church employees are also working to make magazines and other translated material from LDS.org available for mobile devices. ■

Quetzaltenango Temple Open House, Dedication Announced

To celebrate the dedication of the Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple, youth of the Church in the country will participate in a cultural music and dance presentation on Saturday, December 10, 2011.

Then on Sunday, December 11, the temple will be dedicated in three sessions, which will be broadcast to all units in Guatemala.

Following the dedication, the temple will open for ordinances on Tuesday, December 13.

Church Hopes to Build Temple in France

President Thomas S. Monson announced in July 2011 that the Church hopes to build its first temple in France on property on the outskirts of Paris.

The Church has been working for

many months with local officials.

There have been several previous attempts to find a suitable site for a French temple, but none were finalized. French members of the Church wishing to visit a temple usually travel to neighboring European countries.

New Format for Audio Scriptures Increases Accessibility

The Church has released an audio version of the LDS standard works for download on iTunes in audiobook (called "enhanced audio content" on iTunes) or MP3 format.

The audio version of the full standard works is available in English and Spanish, and the audio versions of the Japanese, Portuguese, and Korean triple combinations are also available.

To access these new resources, go to the scriptures section of the Church's channel at iTunes.Lds.org. ■

Audio versions of the standard works are now available in several languages at iTunes.Lds.org.



I Was Overcome with Gratitude

Latter-day Saint Voices is always one of the first articles I turn to when my magazine arrives each month. Such was the case when I read “You Were the Angels” (*Liahona*, Dec. 2010, 38). It struck me with great spiritual power, and I was overcome with gratitude for the mission of our Savior and for those who serve so selflessly in His name. I am profoundly grateful to Heidi Windish Fernandez for sharing her amazing experience.

Larry D. Kump, West Virginia, USA

Liahona Makes a Difference

The messages of the *Liahona* have always supported me as a person, father, husband, and leader, and the general conference issues bring a special spirit into our home. I always order separate conference issues for myself, my wife, and each of my sons so we can read and mark the messages as we wish and so we don’t have to take turns with the magazine. At the end of the year we bind the magazines and give any extras to less-active or nonmember friends. I testify that the *Liahona* makes a difference in our lives.

Fabio Allegretti Cooper, Brazil

Please send your feedback or suggestions to liahona@ldschurch.org. Submissions may be edited for length or clarity. ■

This issue contains articles and activities that could be used for family home evening. The following are a few examples.

“My Service as a Single Member,”

page 12: After reading Sister Burdett’s story, consider discussing the blessings that come from serving in the Church. You could invite family members to share a meaningful experience they have had while serving in a calling.

“The Peace and Joy of Knowing the Savior Lives,”

page 18: Consider asking family members what they can do for the Savior next year. Read the final paragraphs of the article under “Our Gift to Him.” What does Elder Nelson say is the greatest gift we could give to the Lord?

“Come, Let Us Adore Him,”

page 42: Before the lesson, prayerfully select the section or sections that best apply to your family. If you choose the section about the shepherds, you may wish to share President Monson’s counsel to “never postpone following a prompting” and discuss with your

family the significance of this statement. To demonstrate this point with younger children, whisper an instruction in their ears and encourage them to follow it.



“Meet Brother Joseph,” page 58: Consider displaying a picture of Joseph Smith as you read the list of facts about him from the article. You may want to play a game after the lesson to see how many facts your family can remember.

“Those Words,” page 60: After reading the story as a family, consider discussing what family members can say if someone around them uses bad language. You may also want to explain to small children why we are commanded in Exodus 20:7 not to use the Lord’s name in vain (see also D&C 63:60–64). ■



Sharing Conversions and the Spirit

When I was in a young adult ward, I had family home evening with my ward family. One of the most memorable family home evenings I ever attended was a night when the full-time missionaries were in charge.

The elders invited several of the converts in our ward to share their conversion stories. As the converts spoke, the Spirit’s presence was undeniable.

After the stories had been shared, my mind returned to my own missionary

experiences—as both a full-time and a lifetime missionary. I reevaluated my own actions in sharing the gospel on a day-to-day basis and continued to reflect on them for weeks to come.

When I was later called to be in charge of family home evening in the ward, I made it a point to continue “the conversion stories night” activity periodically, asking different converts in our ward to participate. ■

Janna McFerson, California, USA

THE LIGHT OF THE SON

By Jeff S. McIntosh

After working in department stores selling men's clothing for several years, I became quite proficient at coordinating shirts and ties with the suits I sold. It was rewarding to pick the perfect assortment, and my customers were usually pleased with the choices I presented them.

However, in one particular store, the suits were in an area illuminated with fluorescent lighting while the shirts and ties were displayed in another area under incandescent bulbs. This difference in lighting proved to be quite challenging.

It often happened that after a customer had decided upon a suit or two, I'd go select an array of shirts and ties that I thought would work well. But once the shirts and ties were moved from one section to the other and placed next to the suits, the result was surprising—the colors “changed” in the new light and did not match at all.

Taking a suit to the area that displayed the shirts and ties worked better. But even with this approach, customers often became confused, noticing that the suits we had in hand didn't look like the ones they had just selected. A suit that looked olive green under the fluorescent lighting now appeared gray, taupe, or brown when viewed under



Light helps us see truth—and see it more clearly.

incandescent lights. Black, charcoal, and navy suits underwent similar transformations.

More often than not, I had to solve the problem by taking customers out a nearby door to look at their selections in the daylight. By seeing with the light of the sun, we could quickly discern true colors and make appropriate choices.

In the real world outside a department store, we are faced with choices every day. Sometimes those choices are discolored by the precepts of men. Others are clouded by the temptations of this world. Options placed before us may not always seem right, or we may be confused about what is or is not real. We may wonder how to discern what is true.

I have found that the solution is to look at those options with the light, or example, of the Son, for He promised, “I will also be your *light* in the wilderness; and I will prepare the way before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments; . . . and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led” (1 Nephi 17:13; emphasis added).

Striving to choose with true light will help us make proper choices for our families and ourselves. And by looking to God through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we will not be deceived but will know good from evil (see Moroni 7:16).

As we make choices to follow Him, our loving Savior has even promised to share His light with us: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). ■



In the Arms of Mary, by Simon Dewey

“Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father

and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given” (3 Nephi 1:14).



“I testify that Jesus the Christ is the divine Son of the living God,” writes Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “He will love you, lift you, and manifest Himself unto you if you will love Him and keep His commandments (see John 14:21). Indeed, wise men and women still adore Him.” See “The Peace and Joy of Knowing the Savior Lives,” page 18.

