

Lihona



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The Denial of Saint Peter, by Gerrit van Honthorst

“A certain maid beheld [Peter] as he sat by the fire, . . . and said, This man was also with [Jesus].

“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

“And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them.

And Peter said, Man, I am not.

“And . . . another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him. . . .

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately . . . the cock crew. . . .

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:56–60, 62).



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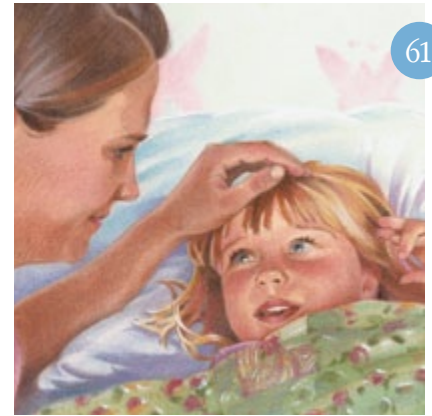
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FOR ADULTS

Several articles in this issue teach and testify of the Savior. Learn more about Him at JesusChrist.lds.org.

FOR YOUTH

Several articles in this issue talk about the blessings of seminary (see pages 20–25 and 46–53). To learn more, visit seminary.lds.org.

FOR CHILDREN

To hear the song "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus" (see pages 64–65), visit liahona.lds.org.

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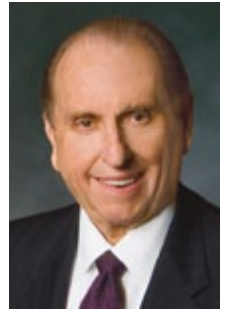
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IN YOUR LANGUAGE

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

By President
Thomas S. Monson



“He Is Risen”

A PROPHET’S TESTIMONY

The clarion call of Christendom,” President Thomas S. Monson has declared, is that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. “The reality of the Resurrection provides to one and all the peace that surpasses understanding” (see *Philippians 4:7*).¹

In the following excerpts, President Monson shares his testimony of and gratitude for the Savior’s Resurrection and declares that because the Son conquered death, all of the Father’s children who come to earth will live again.

Life beyond Mortality

“I believe that none of us can conceive the full import of what Christ did for us in Gethsemane, but I am grateful every day of my life for His atoning sacrifice in our behalf.

“At the last moment, He could have turned back. But He did not. He passed beneath all things that He might save all things. In doing so, He gave us life beyond this mortal existence. He reclaimed us from the Fall of Adam.

“To the depths of my very soul, I am grateful to Him. He taught us how to live. He taught us how to die. He secured our salvation.”²

Dispelling the Darkness of Death

“In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But for the most part, we think of it as the enemy of human happiness.

“The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. ‘I am the resurrection, and the life,’ spoke the Master. ‘He that believeth in me, though he were

dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.’

“This reassurance—yes, even holy confirmation—of life beyond the grave could well provide the peace promised by the Savior when He assured His disciples: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’”³

He Is Not Here

“Our Savior lived again. The most glorious, comforting, and reassuring of all events of human history had taken place—the victory over death. The pain and agony of Gethsemane and Calvary had been wiped away. The salvation of mankind had been secured. The Fall of Adam had been reclaimed.

“The empty tomb that first Easter morning was the answer to Job’s question, ‘If a man die, shall he live again?’ To all within the sound of my voice, I declare, If a man die, he shall live again. We know, for we have the light of revealed truth. . . .

“My beloved brothers and sisters, in our hour of deepest sorrow, we can receive profound peace from the words of the angel that first Easter morning: ‘He is not here: for he is risen.’”⁴

All Will Live Again

“We laugh, we cry, we work, we play, we love, we live. And then we die. . . .



“And dead we would remain but for one Man and His mission, even Jesus of Nazareth. . . .

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again.”⁵

A Personal Witness

“I declare my personal witness that death has been conquered, victory over the tomb has been won. May the words made sacred by Him who fulfilled them become actual knowledge to all. Remember them. Cherish them. Honor them. *He is risen.*”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. “He Is Risen,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 7.
2. “At Parting,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2011, 114.
3. “Now Is the Time,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 68; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 59; see also John 11:25–26; 14:27.
4. “He Is Risen,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 89, 90; see also Job 14:14; Matthew 28:6.
5. “I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 24, 25.
6. *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 7.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

After sharing quotes from President Monson’s message, note the testimony that he bears of the true meaning of Easter. You could ask family members the following questions: “What does it mean to you that a living prophet has testified of these truths today? How can you apply them in your life?” Consider adding your testimony.

YOUTH

I Will See Him Again

By Morgan Webecke

Dad made each of us kids feel special. He loved us and would forgive easily. He did his best to make sure that each of us was happy, and he made it clear that he wanted the best for us. I loved him so much.

When I was in sixth grade, my dad died in a car accident. My family and I were totally devastated. There was a big hole in our family. Dad was the one I leaned on, the one I went to if I was having problems. Instead of seeking help, I let the anger and hurt stay. I finally decided it was God's fault. I stopped reading my scriptures and saying prayers. I went to church only because Mom wanted me to. I tried to stay far away from my Heavenly Father.

Then I went to Young Women camp for the first time. I

liked meeting new friends, but I still didn't read my scriptures. On the last night, we had a testimony meeting. I felt something I hadn't in a long time: the Spirit. I admired the girls who got up and bore their testimonies, but I stayed seated because I thought I didn't have one. All of a sudden I felt like I had to get up. I opened my mouth, wondering what to say. So I said I was glad for Young Women camp. Then I found myself saying that I knew Jesus Christ died for me and that my Heavenly Father loved me and that the Church was true.

I was filled with a remarkable peace. Thanks to this experience I can say that I know I will see my dad again because of the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection.

CHILDREN

He Lives!

President Monson teaches that because Jesus Christ died and was resurrected, we all will live again. Look at the pictures below. Write a number in each box to show the order in which these events happened.

Because Jesus Christ lives, families can be together forever. Draw a picture of your family in the box below.

Prayerfully 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.



Love, Watch Over, and Strengthen

Like the Savior, visiting teachers minister one by one (see 3 Nephi 11:15). We know we are successful in our ministering as visiting teachers when our sisters can say: (1) my visiting teacher helps me grow spiritually; (2) I know my visiting teacher cares deeply about me and my family; and (3) if I have problems, I know my visiting teacher will take action without waiting to be asked.¹

How can we as visiting teachers love, watch over, and strengthen a sister? Following are nine suggestions found in chapter 7 of *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* to help visiting teachers minister to their sisters:

- Pray daily for her and her family.
- Seek inspiration to know her and her family.
- Visit her regularly to learn how she is doing and to comfort and strengthen her.
- Stay in frequent contact through visits, phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages, and simple acts of kindness.
- Greet her at Church meetings.
- Help her when she has an emergency, illness, or other urgent need.
- Teach her the gospel from the scriptures and the Visiting Teaching Messages.



- Inspire her by setting a good example.
- Report to a Relief Society leader about their service and the sister's spiritual and temporal well-being.

From the Scriptures

Luke 10:38–39; 3 Nephi 11:23–26; 27:21

NOTES

1. See Julie B. Beck, “What I Hope My Granddaughters (and Grandsons) Will Understand about Relief Society,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 113.
2. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 112.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 119–20.
4. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.
5. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 36–37.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I know what my sisters need?
2. How will my sisters know that I care deeply about them?

Faith, Family, Relief

From Our History

“Visiting teaching has become a vehicle for Latter-day Saint women worldwide to love, nurture, and serve—to ‘act according to those sympathies which God has planted in [our] bosoms,’ as Joseph Smith taught.”²

A sister who had recently been widowed said of her visiting teachers: “They listened. They comforted me. They wept with me. And they hugged me. . . . [They] helped me out of the deep despair and depression of those first few months of loneliness.”³

Help with temporal tasks is also a form of ministering. At the October 1856 general conference, President Brigham Young announced that handcart pioneers were stranded in deep snow 270–370 miles (435–595 km) away. He called for the Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City to rescue them and to “attend strictly to those things which we call temporal.”⁴

Lucy Meserve Smith recorded that the women took off their warm underskirts and stockings right there in the tabernacle and piled them into wagons to send to the freezing pioneers. Then they gathered bedding and clothing for those who would eventually come with few belongings. When the handcart companies arrived, a building in the town was “loaded with provisions for them.”⁵

April Conference Notebook

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

Getting More Out of General Conference

By Michael Barber and David Marsh
Curriculum Department

Even though we say "amen" at the end of the last session of general conference, the spiritual feast doesn't have to end there. It can continue as we study and apply the teachings from that conference. Over the years, prophets have encouraged us to do just that. For example, in 1946, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) urged members to let the conference talks "be the guide to their walk and talk during the next six months." He explained, "These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day."¹

In 1988, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) echoed that counsel when he taught, "For the next six months, your

conference edition of the *Ensign* should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently."²

In closing the October 2008 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson reaffirmed the importance of studying conference talks. He said: "May we long remember what we have heard during this general conference. The messages which have been given will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study them and to ponder their teachings."³

As you study and ponder the conference messages, what can you do to make them more meaningful in





WRITE IT AND REFLECT ON IT

“Out of all we have heard,

there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “An Humble and a Contrite Heart,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 103; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 88.

your life? Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for, receive, and act upon the inspired words:

Prepare to receive inspiration. Whether you watch, listen to, or read the conference talks, you must open your heart and mind to divine inspiration. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that no matter how effectively a speaker may teach, “the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.” He explained that receiving inspiration “requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception.”⁴

The following ideas can help you prepare to be taught by the Spirit:

1. Set aside time and create a distraction-free environment in which you can receive spiritual promptings.
2. Seek divine guidance through prayer.
3. List personal questions or concerns for which you are seeking answers.

Understand the messages. Living prophets and apostles teach, expound, exhort, warn, and testify.

Taking a close look at their talks will help you understand their messages more fully. Here are some effective study methods:

- *Ask questions.* For example: What does the Lord want me to learn from this message? How does this talk enhance my understanding of a gospel principle or a verse of scripture? What stories are used to illustrate gospel principles, and what do I learn from them?
- *Write an outline.* Pay attention to what the speaker’s outline seems to be. Divide the talk

into sections and write a summary that explains the main idea presented in each section.

- *Identify various elements within the talk.* Take note of such things as doctrines, scriptures, stories, warnings, lists, testimonies, invitations to action, and blessings promised for obeying counsel.
- *Study the talk more than once.* It is necessary to study gospel truths more than once to grasp

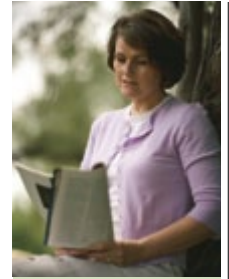
their full meaning and significance. Each time you study, make note of new insights you receive.

Act upon what you learn. If you prayerfully study the talks, you will see how the messages apply in your life. You can know how to make meaningful changes by asking questions like, What does the Lord want me to do with what I learn? and What have I learned that will help me in my family, work, or Church calling? Write down impressions so you do not forget them. As you do so, you will be inspired to live the teachings and you will receive the promised blessings.

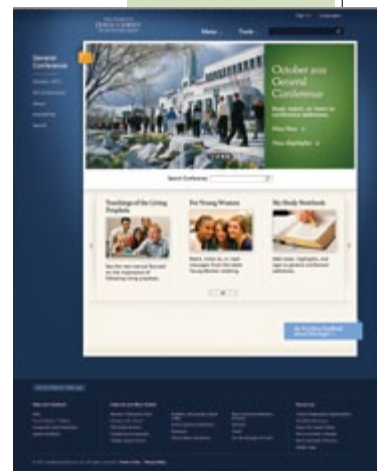
General conference is the time when the Lord reveals His will through His servants to you. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught of conference talks, “No text or volume outside the standard works of the Church should have such a prominent place on your personal library shelves—not for their rhetorical excellence or eloquence of delivery, but for the concepts which point the way to eternal life.”⁵ ■

NOTES

1. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, 68.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Come unto Christ, and Be Perfected in Him,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 84.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 106.
4. David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 17, 20; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61, 64.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, *In the World but Not of It*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (May 14, 1968), 3.



To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.





IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD

“With faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his gospel, a step at a time improving as we go, pleading for strength, improving our attitudes and our ambitions, we will find ourselves successfully in the fold of the Good Shepherd. That will require discipline and training and exertion and strength. But as the Apostle Paul said, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ (Philippians 4:13).”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), “Developing Spirituality,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 26.

AMAZING Grace

By Kristen Nicole Cardon

I depend on the grace of Jesus Christ every day.

In our Church meetings, we don’t often talk about grace,” said my Brigham Young University religion teacher, “but we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *do* believe in grace.”

Indeed, I couldn’t recall any Young Women or Sunday School lessons on grace, but my thoughts drifted back to my high school choir and singing “Amazing Grace.”

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)

That sav’d a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.¹

“Grace is the power of God from the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” my teacher explained. “I divide grace into four powers: resurrection, redemption, healing, and strengthening.” He proceeded to explain each power, but my mind had again returned to my memories.

That same high school choir once traveled to California, USA, to compete in a music festival. I became ill just before departure, and my sore throat meant that I wouldn’t be able to sing with my choir in the festival—or if I did, I would sing poorly, accompanied by pain. I asked my father for a priesthood blessing and spent the next day praying for recovery.

Perhaps I didn’t fully understand then, as I sang “Amazing Grace” with a fully mended throat at the festival, that I was singing about the very power that had healed me just the day before. The Savior’s Atonement had blessed me that day; His grace was the source of my healing.

“And he 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).

After high school, like many freshmen, I was overwhelmed by my college courses



and the challenges of simultaneously living away from home but also with five roommates.

This was when I learned to understand the strengthening and enabling power of Christ's grace. I spent my days working and studying, but I depended on daily prayers in which I pled to Heavenly Father for the ability to complete the necessary tasks. As the school year continued, I discovered to my joy that with the strengthening and enabling power of Christ's Atonement, I could function not only well but without difficulty.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Though I have yet to experience the other two aspects of His grace—resurrection and the fulness of redemption—I still depend on the Atonement of Jesus Christ each day. Grace, the power of God from the Atonement of Jesus Christ, has healed me and strengthened me. As I strive to obey God's commandments and adhere to His will, I receive heavenly help far surpassing my own ability.

"It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). ■

NOTE

1. John Newton, "Amazing Grace," *Olney Hymns* (1779), no. 41.

HOW DOES THE LORD'S GRACE AFFECT OUR LIVES?

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helps answer this question in "The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality" in this issue on page 12:

- "The Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us."
- "Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon 'the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah' (2 Nephi 2:8)."
- "The enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity."

Consider writing in your journal and sharing with your family about times when you have felt the Lord's grace healing, helping, or strengthening you.



**By Elder
David A. Bednar**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The grand objective of the Savior’s gospel was summarized succinctly by President David O. McKay (1873–1970): “The purpose of the gospel is . . . to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature.”¹ Thus, the journey of mortality is to progress from bad to good to better and to experience the mighty change of heart—to have our fallen natures changed (see Mosiah 5:2).

The Atonement

AND THE JOURNEY OF MORTALITY

*The enabling power
of the Atonement
strengthens us to do
and be good and to
serve beyond our own
individual desire and
natural capacity.*

The Book of Mormon is our handbook of instructions as we travel the pathway from bad to good to better and strive to have our hearts changed. King Benjamin teaches about the journey of mortality and the role of the Atonement in navigating successfully that journey: “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and *putteth off the natural man* and *becometh a saint* through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

I draw your attention to two specific phrases. First—“*putteth off the natural man*.” The journey from bad to good is the process of putting off the natural man or the natural woman in each of us. In mortality we all are tempted by the flesh. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. But we can increase our capacity to overcome the desires of the flesh and temptations “through the atonement of Christ.” When we make mistakes, as we transgress and sin, we can repent and become clean through the redeeming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



Second—“becometh a saint.” This phrase describes the continuation and second phase of life’s journey to make “good men better” or, in other words, to become more like a saint. This second part of the journey, this process of going from good to better, is a topic about which we do not study or teach frequently enough nor understand adequately.

I suspect that many Church members are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.

Most of us know that when we do wrong things, we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives. The Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to become clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. We may mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves, through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

The gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. Help from the Savior is available for the entire journey of mortality—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not suggesting that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the

Atonement are connected and complementary; they both need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that *both* of these essential elements of the journey of mortality—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient for us to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly, we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement

In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote enabling power:

“[*Grace* is] a word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is *divine means of help or strength*, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. *It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals*, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, *receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power* that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.”²

Grace is the divine assistance or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus, the enabling power of

the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and to serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study, I often insert the term “enabling power” whenever I encounter the word *grace*. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we

that journey. As we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew, understood, and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. Recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist

Ishmael and his household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their journey that Nephi’s brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Please note Nephi’s prayer: “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even *give me strength that I may burst these bands* with which I am bound” (1 Nephi 7:17; emphasis added).

Do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been tied up by my brothers?

“Please get me out of this mess NOW!” It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And I believe he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew, understood, and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement.

I do not think the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then



Nephi did not pray to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances.

can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we will insert “enabling and strengthening power” each time we find the word *grace* in the scriptures.

Illustrations and Implications

The journey of mortality is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew, understood, and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making

“in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords, and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

The implication of this episode for each of us is straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who act rather than objects that are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:14).

Consider the example in the Book of Mormon as Alma and his people are persecuted by Amulon. The voice of the Lord came to these good people in their affliction and indicated:

“I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs. . . .

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, *the Lord did strengthen them* that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:14–15; emphasis added).

What was changed in this episode? It was not the burden that changed; the challenges and difficulties of persecution were not immediately removed from the people. But Alma and his followers were strengthened, and their increased capacity and strength made the burdens they bore lighter. These good people were empowered through

the Atonement to *act* as agents and impact their circumstances. And “in the strength of the Lord” Alma and his people were then directed to safety in the land of Zarahemla.

You legitimately may be wondering, “What makes the episode with Alma and his people an example of the enabling power of the Atonement?” The answer is found in a



comparison of Mosiah 3:19 and Mosiah 24:15.

“And putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and *becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*” (Mosiah 3:19; emphasis added).

As we progress in the journey of mortality from bad to good to better, as we put off the natural man or woman in each of us, and as we strive to become saints and have our very

The voice of the Lord came to Alma and his people in their affliction and indicated: “I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs.”

natures changed, then the attributes detailed in this verse increasingly should describe the type of person you and I are becoming. We will become more childlike, more submissive, more patient, and more willing to submit.

Now compare these characteristics in Mosiah 3:19 with those used to describe Alma and his people: “And they did *submit* cheerfully and *with patience to all the will of the Lord*” (Mosiah 24:15; emphasis added).

I find the parallels between the attributes described in these verses striking and an indication that Alma’s good people were becoming a better people through the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ the Lord.

Recall the story of Alma and Amulek contained in Alma 14. In this incident many faithful Saints had been put to death by fire, and these two servants of the Lord had been imprisoned and beaten. Consider this petition offered by Alma as he prayed in prison: “O Lord, *give us strength* according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (Alma 14:26; emphasis added).

Here again we see Alma’s understanding of and confidence in the enabling power of the Atonement reflected in his request. And note the result of this prayer:

“And they [Alma and Amulek] broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. . . .

“And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for *the Lord had granted unto them power*, according to their faith which was in Christ” (Alma 14:26, 28; emphasis added).

Once again the enabling power is evident as good people struggle against evil and strive to become even better and serve more effectively “in the strength of the Lord.”

Another example from the Book of Mormon is

instructive. In Alma 31, Alma is directing a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites, who, after building their Rameumptom, offer a prescribed and prideful prayer.

Notice the plea for strength in Alma’s personal prayer: “O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me *that I may have strength*, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people” (Alma 31:31; emphasis added).

Alma also prays that his missionary companions will receive a similar blessing: “Wilt thou grant unto them *that they may have strength*, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people” (Alma 31:33; emphasis added).

Alma did not pray to have his afflictions removed. He knew he was an agent of the Lord, and he prayed for the power to act and affect his situation.

The key point of this example is contained in the final verse of Alma 31: “[The Lord] gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, *save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ*. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith” (verse 38; emphasis added).

The afflictions were not removed. But Alma and his companions were strengthened and blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” What a marvelous blessing. And what a lesson each of us should learn.

Examples of the enabling power are not found only in the scriptures. Daniel W. Jones was born in 1830 in Missouri, and he joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe snowstorms. After the rescue party had found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made

arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company's possessions. The food and supplies left with Daniel and his colleagues were meager and rapidly expended. The following quote from Daniel Jones's personal journal describes the events that followed.

"Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. . . .

"Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. . . . Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving.

"We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and *adapt them to this food*. . . . On eating now all seemed to relish the feast. We were three days without eating before this second attempt was made. We enjoyed this sumptuous fare for about six weeks."³

In those circumstances I probably would have prayed for something else to eat: "Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo." It likely would not have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted

to the food we had. What did Daniel W. Jones know? He knew about the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He did not pray that his circumstances would be changed. He prayed that he would be strengthened to deal with his circumstances. Just as Alma and his people, Amulek, and Nephi were strengthened, Daniel W. Jones had the spiritual insight to know what to ask for in that prayer.

The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.

Sister Bednar is a remarkably faithful and competent woman, and I have learned important lessons about the strengthening power from her quiet example. I watched her persevere through intense and continuous morning sickness—literally sick all day every day for eight months—during each of her three pregnancies. Together we prayed that she would be blessed, but that challenge was never removed. Instead, she was enabled to do physically what she could not do in her own power. Over the years I have also watched how she has been magnified to handle the mocking and scorn that come from a secular society when a Latter-day Saint woman heeds prophetic counsel and makes the family and the nurturing of children her highest priorities. I thank and pay tribute to Susan for helping me to learn such invaluable lessons.

The Savior Knows and Understands

In Alma chapter 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power:

"He 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.

“And 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

No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally

run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying only upon our own power.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I declare my witness of and appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both

His redeeming and enabling power, and I testify that these powers are real and available to each of us. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” we can do and overcome all things as we press forward on our journey of mortality. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on October 23, 2001. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. See Franklin D. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 136–37; see also David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, 26.
2. Bible Dictionary, “Grace”; emphasis added.
3. Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians* (n.d.), 57–58.



There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first.

know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12; emphasis added).

The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us. There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands.

Throughout the world, seminary is bringing youth like you closer to Jesus Christ.



The Blessings of SEMINARY

By Brittany Beattie

Church Magazines

You are not alone in your decision to attend seminary. Throughout the world, hundreds of thousands of youth make seminary a part of their lives, reaching their classrooms by bus, canoe, bicycle, and more. Some youth wake up early and travel long distances to arrive in time, others make the journey in the evenings, and still others study at home for several days of the week.

Attending seminary requires sacrifice, but youth throughout the world are finding that seminary participation is worth every effort. And those who participate have something in common: their seminary experience brings them closer to the Savior and to our Heavenly Father.

Receiving Promised Blessings

Why is seminary so important for you? Some of the reasons include these promises from latter-day prophets and apostles:

- It “become[s] a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel in a most challenging hour.”¹
- It “will prepare you to present the message of the restored gospel to those you have opportunity to meet.”²
- It helps you “gain vital understanding of truth.”³

- Seminary “provides wonderful opportunities to learn the doctrines that will make you happy. It provides wonderful opportunities for socializing with those of your own kind.”⁴
- “Your knowledge of the gospel will be increased. Your faith will be strengthened. You will develop wonderful associations and friendships.”⁵
- “It yields . . . spiritual enrichment, moral strength to resist the evil that is all about us, as well as a tremendous increase in gospel scholarship.”⁶
- It is “one of the best preparations for a mission.”⁷

Finding a Way to Attend

Going to seminary often means you’ll have to give up something else you enjoy doing in order to find the time to attend. But it’s a sacrifice that’s worth making. Elijah Bugayong of the Philippines chose to make that decision during her last year of high school. Throughout high school, she had always been second in her class. She was determined to place first her senior year and had even considered foregoing seminary, which she had attended in the years before, in order to meet her goal.

Then one day her thoughts changed. “I



A BLESSING WITH LIFELONG EFFECTS

"Many years ago I had the privilege of teaching early-morning seminary. The class was held between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. each school day. For two years I watched sleepy students stumble into class, challenging their instructor to wake them up. After prayer was offered and an inspirational thought given, I watched bright minds come alive to increase their knowledge of the scriptures. The most difficult part of the class was to terminate the discussion in time to send them on to their regular high school classes. As the school year progressed, I watched each student gain greater confidence, closer friendships, and a growing testimony of the gospel.

"A few years ago I was in a grocery store in a city not far from here when I heard someone call out my name. I turned to greet two of my former seminary students. They were now husband and wife. They introduced me to their four beautiful children. As we visited I was amazed with the number of seminary classmates they still had contact with after all these years. It was an evidence of a special bonding that had occurred in that very early morning seminary class."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Receive Truth," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 62.

[looked at] my study table," she says. "I saw a pile of books near it, my quadruple combination together with my seminary notebook and manual. Deep inside I asked myself, 'Which matters most?'"

Elijah found her answer in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." She decided to faithfully attend seminary and find other ways to balance her time in order to work on her academics. At the end of the year, she was named valedictorian and even won a university scholarship.

Spencer Douglas of Alabama, USA, decided to give up some social events so he could get the most from seminary. For his first two years of seminary, he woke up at 4:00 a.m. to attend, and the last two years he woke up at 5:00 a.m. He says, "I couldn't participate in a lot of late-evening activities with my friends because I would need to be in bed early. If I didn't, I would not be able to fully participate and learn the next morning." For Spencer, it wasn't just about showing up to class, it was also about being awake and prepared to learn.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "Just because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time

available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives."⁸ That is important counsel to remember as you decide how to prioritize seminary in your schedule.

Preparing for Missions

Seminary also serves as a great preparation for the missionary work you will do—as a member missionary today and also if you serve as a full-time missionary in the future. Franco Huamán Curinuqui of Peru knows that his scripture study in seminary has been helping him prepare for his mission.

He says this preparation is worth getting up for seminary at 4:00 a.m., riding canoes when months of flooding hit the area, and then wading through mud to get to class. He says, "I want to finish seminary and start institute classes in order to be prepared for a mission. I am going to keep growing in the Church." Seminary is important to him because he learns about the scriptures and memorizes important verses, which will help him be a better missionary.

Being Blessed in All Aspects of Life

As youth around the world make the effort to attend seminary, they're receiving strength in much more than scripture study. Cameron Lisney of

England found that he was blessed in all areas of his life. “Not only does seminary help with the spiritual side of things, but it also helps with school and education,” says Cameron.

He says that “an early start to the day gets your brain into gear. Some of my friends said they were too busy to attend—well, it’s not like you’re going to be reviewing math at 6:00 a.m., are you?” As you study, “the Lord will help you in your exams, and if you go to seminary, He will help you even more,” says Cameron.

Of course, seminary helped Cameron strengthen his testimony as well. He says, “The beginning of my testimony came from the seminary program. At the youthful age of 14, I was really struggling in the gospel. I did not enjoy church, and I got up to things that I shouldn’t have. It was only a matter of months before I would have given up entirely.” But when a friend invited Cameron to attend seminary, he decided to go with her. Then the blessings really began to come.

“I began to feel the Spirit again,” says Cameron. “I started paying more attention in church and attended my Sunday School and priesthood lessons. It became easier, and I started to feel happier. I finally gained a

testimony of the gospel for myself.”

After two months of seminary, Cameron met with his bishop and was ordained a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Cameron knows that seminary helps him stand strong against the temptations of the world. “As seminary continued,” he says, “I found it easier to deal with the challenges that the world presents. It’s pretty tough being a youth in the world we live in—sin is surrounding us from all sides. I testify to you that if you attend seminary, you will find the strength to defend yourself against it. Seminary creates a spiritual shield to protect you. Many different trials and temptations have been thrown my way, and seminary has been such a huge help in keeping me on the strait and narrow.”

Strengthening One Another

Seminary also lets you gather with other teens who share your beliefs. Vika Chelyshkova of Russia says, “I am inspired by like-minded people who hold similar moral standards and who believe in God as I do.” She adds, “If I have any questions, I can discuss them with my seminary teacher and other students. I can share my thoughts and my testimony with others to strengthen my own and others’ faith. By reading the scriptures together and pondering on their spiritual content, we get closer to God and each other.”

Ksenia Goncharova of Ukraine has seen similar results. She says, “When we share our experiences with each other, we become stronger and we understand the scriptures better. When we





SEMINARY INFLUENCED THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

Mildred Bennion was among the first class of seminary students at the Granite Seminary in 1912. She would later become the mother of President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

She understood the importance of seminary in her life, and she wanted her children to have the same blessings she had felt from seminary, so her family made a big decision: “We moved to Utah at a considerable financial sacrifice in order that our sons could attend Seminaries and Institutes and find friends among our own people. That should answer the question of my feelings about such things” (quoted in C. Coleman, *History of Granite Seminary*, 142).

The importance of Church education continued in the Eyring family as President Henry B. Eyring in 1971 became president of Ricks College (now BYU–Idaho), a Church-owned college, and served as Commissioner of Church Education from 1980 to 1985 and again from 1992 to 2005.

talk about examples from our lives during the lessons, I see the way the gospel works in my life and in the lives of others.”

Coming to Know Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

A group of youth were recently asked how seminary has blessed them. Their answers reveal a major theme—that seminary helps them draw closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: “All of the topics that you study in seminary are important. Each year as you focus on one of the volumes of scripture, the central focus is the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹

Here’s what several of the teens said about how seminary has brought them closer to Jesus Christ:

- “I’ve learned what the Savior does for me, reading all of these accounts from numerous prophets and realizing how important I am to Him. I realize that He loved me enough to die and suffer for my pain.”
- “Seminary is a great way to start my day. No matter how tired I am, I feel the Spirit and feel strengthened so that when hard things come up in my day, I know without a doubt that my Savior loves me, and I’m more confident to stand up for what is right.”
- “I am a convert to the Church. I started taking seminary before I even got baptized. Without seminary, I don’t know if I would have got baptized at all. Without seminary, I wouldn’t have the Savior in my life right now or know that I can be forgiven for my sins. I never really had Heavenly Father or Jesus Christ in my life. Seminary helped me find Them and have Them become forever a part of my life and my future kids’ lives.”
- “Going to seminary every day helped me grow closer to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through learning about His teachings, His great love for me, and how I can return to live with Him.”
- “When I am in seminary, I find a deeper meaning in the scriptures. It helps remind me every morning to be Christlike in my daily doings.”
- “Seminary taught me how to read my scriptures and not only to enjoy it but also to find application in the text. I learned doctrines and principles that helped strengthen my testimony of a loving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, which I will take with me for the rest of my life.”

With so many blessings that come from attending seminary, it’s easy to see why youth around the world are making it a priority in their schedules. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach the Scriptures* (address to Church Educational System educators, Oct. 14, 1977), 3.
2. L. Tom Perry, "Raising the Bar," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 48.
3. Richard G. Scott, "Realize Your Full Potential," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 42.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand True and Faithful," *Ensign*, May 1996, 93.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Miracle Made Possible by Faith," *Ensign*, May 1984, 47.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The State of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1991, 52.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, "Our Responsibility to Share the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 1985, 7.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 104.
9. David A. Bednar, "Conclusion and Testimony," *Welcome to Seminary 2010–2011*, seminary.lds.org/welcome.

THE HISTORY OF SEMINARY

Here's a look at how seminary has grown over the years.

- 1888: President Wilford Woodruff oversees the formation of the Church Board of Education to direct the Church's educational efforts, including after-school religion classes.
- 1912: Organization of the first daily released-time seminary classes, totaling 70 students who leave high school for one class period to attend seminary. Classes are taught across the street from Granite High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.
- 1925: Enrollment reaches 10,000 students.
- 1948: Made available in Canada, the first country outside of the United States to have seminary.
- 1950: Organization of daily seminary (previously called "early-morning seminary") classes in California, where students meet in Church meetinghouses before school starts.
- 1958: Enrollment reaches 50,000 students.
- 1958: Made available in Central America, introduced first in Mexico.
- 1962: Made available in Europe, introduced first in Finland and Germany.
- 1963: Made available in Asia, introduced first in Japan.
- 1965: Enrollment reaches 100,000 students.
- 1967: Launch of home-study seminary in rural communities, where students study at home four days a week and meet together for one day each week.
- 1968: Made available in Australia.
- 1969: Made available in South America, introduced first in Brazil.
- 1972: Made available in Africa, introduced first in South Africa.
- 1983: Enrollment reaches 200,000 students.
- 1991: Enrollment reaches 300,000 students.
- 2012: Available in 134 countries and territories worldwide, with around 370,000 students enrolled.



A CALLING FOR A CONVERT

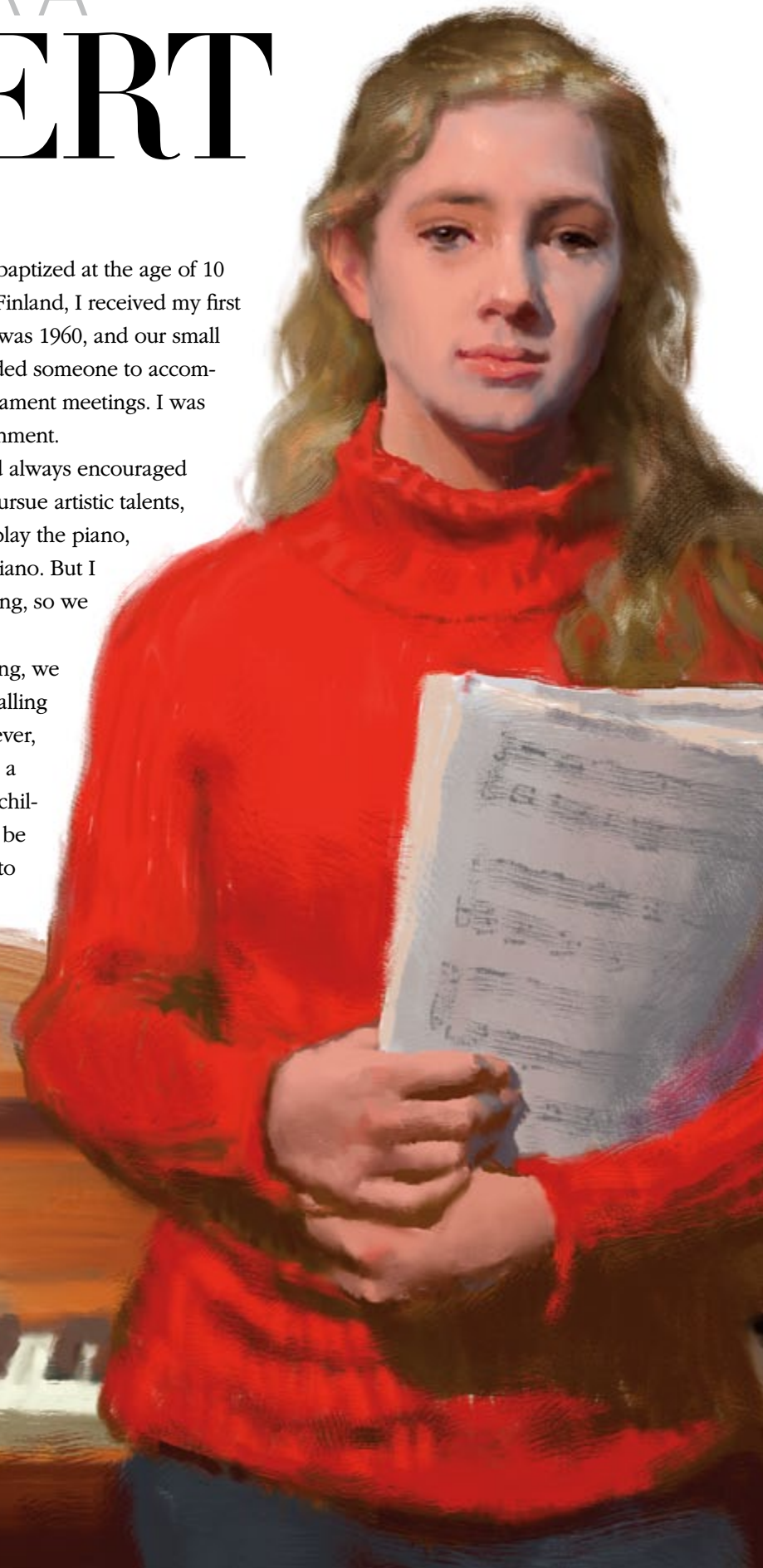
By Helena Hannonen




Shortly after I was baptized at the age of 10 in Lappeenranta, Finland, I received my first Church calling. It was 1960, and our small branch desperately needed someone to accompany the hymns for sacrament meetings. I was asked to fulfill this assignment.

While my mother had always encouraged my brother and me to pursue artistic talents, I did not know how to play the piano, and we did not own a piano. But I wanted to fulfill my calling, so we made a plan.

In family home evening, we talked about what this calling meant to all of us. However, because my mother was a widow with two young children, we knew it would be a great challenge for us to





I was a new convert and had no piano-playing skills. But how grateful I am for my life-changing call as branch accompanist.

purchase a piano and pay for lessons. We decided that we were all willing to make the needed sacrifices.

The first sacrifice my family made was financial. We decided that from spring to autumn we would ride our bicycles rather than the bus. My brother, Martti, was courageous and became especially good at biking—even on snow and ice. I gave up most of my clothing purchases and learned to sew. We also learned to live providently. We started a garden in the countryside near my grandparents' house and preserved food for the winter. Our "vacations" became our mother's trips to the temple in Switzerland or picnics and camps close to home.

The second sacrifice my family made was with time. We divided the chores and rescheduled our other activities and homework so I had enough time to practice the piano. Because of our sacrifices and hard work, Mother often remarked that we had no free time to get into trouble like others our age. In reality, my calling became a family calling long before I ever played a note.

I began taking lessons with a music teacher at the local school. I practiced using a paper keyboard and on a piano at the church. When my piano teacher moved away, we purchased his piano, and I was accepted to study with a renowned piano teacher in the area.

I learned the hymns on my own and practiced a lot with the branch music director. Everyone encouraged me—even if a "sour" note slipped in. My teacher was horrified after she found out that I played in front of people

before I had thoroughly learned and memorized the pieces. But playing with one hand was better than having no music at all.

I rode my bike to my lessons, and when winter came, I tried to walk or ski if possible. On Sundays I walked alone to Church meetings so I could arrive an hour early and have time to practice. I resolved to ride the bus only when temperatures reached below -15°C (5°F). Rain and snow didn't really bother me; time went by quickly as I walked because I had so many beautiful hymns to keep me company. As I walked, I was crossing the plains with the pioneers (see "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30), walking high on the mountain top in Zion (see "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5), and standing with youth who would never falter (see "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254). I could never falter with that support—even though my family and I were the only Latter-day Saints in our community in eastern Finland, in the shadows of the Russian border.

Over the years I became better at playing and could make music rather than just play the right notes. I learned to be prayerful in selecting the music so the Spirit would be in the meeting. And most important, my testimony of the gospel came to me through music. I could easily recall the feelings, words, and messages of the hymns if I ever questioned something. I knew that the gospel principles and ordinances were true, having learned them line upon line and note after note.

I remember one particular day when my commitment to those principles was put to



the test. I was 14 years old; I loved to swim and dreamed of swimming in the Olympics. I did not compete on Sundays, but still I progressed. Finally, as the Olympics in Mexico City were approaching, a coach invited me to participate in special training.

The training, however, was every Sunday morning during Sunday School. I rationalized that I could go to practice and miss Sunday School because I would be back at church in time for the evening sacrament meeting. I saved for the bus fare and planned everything. The Saturday before the first training, I told my mother of my plan.

I saw the sadness and disappointment in her eyes, but her only reply was that the decision was mine and I had been taught what was right. That night I could not get the words to “Choose the Right” (*Hymns*, no. 239) out of my mind. The words sounded in my head like a broken record.

On Sunday morning, I had my swim bag in one hand and my music bag in the other, hoping to lead my mother to believe I was going to church. I went outside to the bus stop. It so happened that the bus stop going to the swimming hall was on my side of the street

One bus would take me to my Church calling, the other to my childhood dream of world-class swimming. The phrases of hymns I had played so many times provided my answer.

and the one going to the chapel was on the opposite side. While I waited, I became irritated. My ears were ringing with the music of “Have I Done Any Good?” (*Hymns*, no. 223)—the hymn planned for Sunday School that day. I knew from experience that, with the difficult rhythm, complicated lyrics, and high notes, this hymn would become a disaster without strong accompaniment.

As I was deliberating, both buses approached. The bus to the swimming hall stopped for me, and the driver of the bus to the church stopped and looked at me, puzzled because he knew I always took his bus. We all stared at each other for a few seconds. What was I waiting for? I had chosen the Lord (see “Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*, no. 260). I had promised to go where He wanted me to go (see “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270). My decision to keep the commandments had been made long before (see “Keep the Commandments,” *Hymns*, no. 303).

Before my brain caught up with my heart, my body took over. I made a mad dash across the street and waved the other bus driver on. I paid the fare and went to the back of the bus

headed to the church, watching my swimming dreams drive in the opposite direction.

Everyone thought I cried that day because I felt the Spirit. But really I cried because my childhood dream had just come crashing down and because I was ashamed that I had even entertained the idea of swimming on the Sabbath. But that Sunday, like those before and after, I fulfilled my calling.

By the time I was ready to go to college, I had trained several branch members to lead the music and play the piano. In college I continued to play the piano and took organ lessons. I thought my chance of going to Latin America was gone forever when I gave up competitive swimming, but after I completed my master's degree at Brigham Young University, I served a mission to Colombia. While on my mission, I taught piano lessons. I wanted to leave those Saints with the gift of music. Children and youth of Colombia walked miles in the hot sun to have the opportunity to learn to play the piano. They too started with one hand until they progressed to play with both hands. And they made more sacrifices than I did in their efforts to learn to play the piano.

It has been more than 50 years since I was baptized. I have traveled far and wide from my home in Finland, but no matter where I've gone, there has always been a need for someone to play the hymns. The universal language of music has built bridges of understanding and love in many places.

On my mission to Colombia, I taught piano lessons. Children and youth walked miles in the hot sun to learn, making great sacrifices to obtain the gift of music.

Today my hands are slow and arthritic. Many more capable musicians have taken my place. My mother often feels sad as she looks back at my early years in the Church and the sacrifices I made, the miles I walked, and the things I went without. She fears that the cold contributed to my arthritis. However, I wear my "battle scars" with joy. I poured my joys and sorrows into music. I learned to laugh and cry through my fingers.

My heart sings with gratitude when I think that Heavenly Father and my leaders cared enough to ask a young girl to fulfill such a challenging assignment. That calling helped me gain a firm understanding of the gospel and allowed me to help others feel the Spirit through music. I am living proof that new converts need a calling—even little girls with no skill at the piano. Through my first calling, I discovered that with God nothing is impossible and that He has a plan and a purpose for each of His children. And through music, I gained an unshakable testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. ■



Ward Councils

AT WORK

By LaRene Gaunt

Church Magazines

Latter-day Saints are using ward and branch councils to bless the lives of those in need.



On the night of May 22, 2011, amid the sound of blaring sirens, a massive tornado touched down in the heart of Joplin, Missouri, USA, destroying homes and lives. The Joplin First Ward was hit hard by the twister, but right away Bishop Chris Hoffman and the ward council started accounting for ward members.

“We had a response plan in place because we had talked about these preparations in ward council before they happened,” he said. “We also relied on the Spirit to know what to do. Power lines were down. Cell phones didn’t work. We prayed and listened for answers, and they came—they always came. It was gratifying for me as a bishop to hear members say, ‘This is what I’ve done,’ instead of, ‘What do you want me to do?’”

The response in Joplin shows the power of a united ward council. “The ward council meeting is one of the most important meetings in the Church,” wrote Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “because priesthood quorum and auxiliary leaders can discuss and plan with the bishopric. . . . Of all the councils and committees in the Church, I believe the ward council can have the greatest impact in helping our Father’s children.”¹

LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND



United by Love and Faith

In Puerto Francisco de Orellana, an isolated village in the jungles of Ecuador, members have a strong bond of love and faith. The monthly branch council reflects their caring. They focus on individuals and families first, then how programs can help. Inspiration follows.

Many members need help finding work. The branch council finds that the members' challenges can often be solved at the local level. As the council discussed the needs of a single mother with a young daughter who has health problems, the Relief Society president knew of a job where the mother could work and still be near her daughter.

The branch council also draws on Church resources, such as the LDS Employment Services career workshop materials.² They established a class taught by a branch member, which helped another branch member find a better job.

Ramiro Reyes, first counselor in the branch presidency, says of the branch council: "We are instruments in the hand of the Lord. He will achieve His goals through our works."



ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE COUNCILS

In his book *Counseling with Our Councils*, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gives the following three suggestions:

"First, focus on fundamentals." Follow the guidelines in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, chapter 4, which can be found online in the Serving in the Church section of LDS.org.

"Second, focus on people, not programs." Pursue "the integration of new members, activation of the less active, concerns of the youth, the economic plight of individual members, and the needs of single mothers and widows."

"Third, councils are for counsel and the exchange of ideas, not just reports and lectures." Establish a climate conducive to openness, where every person and group is important and every opinion is valuable." Individuals have different viewpoints and backgrounds, so each can add a helpful perspective to understanding members' needs.

See Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, *Counseling with Our Councils* (1997), 106, 109, 112.



A Path to the Temple

In Liverpool, New York, USA, as Primary president Melissa Fisk attended ward council meeting, she gained insight into its power. When she reached inside her bag for a notebook, she came across a picture of 28 Primary children on the steps of the Palmyra New York Temple. All were covered with wasp stings. For a moment, the picture pulled her attention away from the meeting, and she focused briefly on the day the ward Primary had gone to Palmyra to enjoy the sacred feeling of the temple grounds. Unfortunately, when the children spread out

their blankets, they had accidentally upset a wasps' nest.

After everyone had been cared for, the leaders invited the children to touch the temple. The children refused because they were afraid that there might be more wasps. So parents and leaders stood in a line and created a path to the temple. This gave the children courage to move forward.

As Melissa turned her attention back to the ward council meeting, she thought, "If only everyone could be surrounded by such loving friends and leaders as they progress toward the temple."

Her thoughts were interrupted as she heard the Relief

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE WARD OR BRANCH COUNCIL?

The following priesthood and auxiliary leaders attend the council in two capacities: (1) as ward council members who help the bishop find solutions to the needs and concerns of the ward and (2) as representatives of their

Bishopric

The bishopric is responsible for all ward members, organizations, and activities. The bishop presides over the ward council, but he can make better decisions after discussions with his counselors and with the ward council, when appropriate.

(See Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 4.1; 4.2.)

Ward Clerk

"The ward clerk keeps a record of assignments and decisions made during ward council meetings. . . . He also provides relevant statistical information from Church record-keeping software."

(Handbook 2, 4.6.4.)

Executive Secretary

"The executive secretary prepares agendas for ward council meetings. . . . The bishop may also ask him to help follow up with ward council members on their assignments. . . . [He] can also provide continuity between the ward council and the priesthood executive committee."

(Handbook 2, 4.6.5.)

Melchizedek Priesthood Leaders

The high priests group leader and the elders quorum president are responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the men over whom they preside. The bishop can delegate to quorum and group leaders some of the work he does with families.

(See Handbook 2, 7.)

Ward Mission Leader

The ward mission leader coordinates the ward's efforts to do missionary work. He works with the full-time and ward missionaries. The bishop may ask him to lead discussions on missionary work in ward council meetings.

(See Handbook 2, 5.1.3.)

Society president comment on a sister in need: “She wasn’t at church last Sunday. I’ll make sure her visiting teachers let her know about the upcoming temple trip.”

“They’ve got some hard things going on right now,” added the elders quorum president. “I’ll follow up with their home teachers and see if there’s anything we can do.”

“The young women could help with babysitting,” said the Young Women president.

As Melissa looked at the faces of the members of the ward council, she saw genuine affection and concern. A smile spread across her face. “The Lord *has* prepared ways

for His children to be protected and loved,” she thought. “The ward council!”

Just as in Joplin, Puerto Francisco de Orellana, and Liverpool, Church leaders worldwide continue to discover the blessings of ward and branch councils. As they do, they will harness the extraordinary power of these councils to help the Lord bless His children and accomplish His work. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family* (1997), 102.
2. *The Career Workshop Participant’s Workbook* (item no. 35163) is available through store.lds.org, Distribution Services, or Church employment resource centers.

organizations. They work together in love to serve and strengthen individuals and families in the ward or branch. (References to wards and bishoprics also apply to branches and branch presidencies.)

Relief Society President

The Relief Society president represents the women in the ward over the age of 18. She does all she can to help the women increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need.

(See *Handbook 2*, 9.)

Young Men President

The Young Men president seeks to strengthen the ward’s young men ages 12 through 18. Assisted by his counselors, he helps the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood (bishopric) and oversees the Scouting program where it’s available.

(See *Handbook 2*, 8.3.4.)

Young Women President

The Young Women president seeks to strengthen the young women ages 12 through 18. She is responsible to “help each young woman be worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and receive the ordinances of the temple.”

(*Handbook 2*, 10.1.1.)

Primary President

The Primary president represents the children of the ward ages 18 months through 11 years. Her perspective will be beneficial when the ward council is considering an issue that affects the children of the ward.

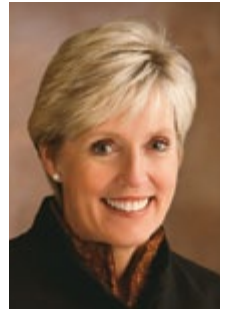
(See *Handbook 2*, 11.)

Sunday School President

The Sunday School president is responsible for all gospel instruction during Sunday School. “He comes to ward council meeting prepared to suggest ways members can improve learning and teaching at church and in their homes.”

(*Handbook 2*, 12.2.2.)

To learn more about succeeding in your calling, visit the Leadership Training Library, available in several languages at leadershiplibrary.lds.org.



By Rosemary M. Wixom
Primary General President

Taking Time to Talk and Listen

Our intentional effort to communicate better today will bless our families eternally.

In a perfect world every child would return home from school to be greeted with a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, a tall glass of cold milk, and a mother ready to take the time to talk and listen about her child's day. We do not live in a perfect world, so you can skip the cookies and the milk, if you like, but don't skip the "take the time to talk and listen."

Twenty-nine years ago, President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, lamented that families have so little time together. Think about that—29 years ago—he said in general conference: "One of the main problems in families today is that we spend less and less time together. . . . Time together is precious time—time needed to talk, to listen, to encourage, and to show how to do things."¹

As we spend time together and talk with our children, we come to know them and they come to know us. Our priorities, the real feelings of our heart, will become a part of our conversation with each child.

What is the number-one message from your heart you would choose to share with your child?

The prophet Moses teaches us in Deuteronomy:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt *talk* of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:5–7; emphasis added).

And may I add one more: "And when thou eatest at the dinner table together."

If we desire our families to be together forever, we begin the process today. Spending time talking with our children is an investment in our eternal family as we walk the path toward eternal life together.

One mother from Illinois, USA, shared how she made time to talk with her children:

"When our children were small, I got into the habit of watching a few favorite television programs. . . . Unfortunately, the programs came on at the same time the children went to bed.

". . . At one point I realized I had put my



PHOTOGRAPH OF SISTER WIXOM © BUSATH PHOTOGRAPHY; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRADLEY SJADE

programs at the top of my list and my children farther down. For a while I tried reading bedtime stories with the TV set on, but I knew in my heart it wasn't the best way. As I pondered about the days and weeks I had lost to my TV habit, I began to feel guilty and decided to change. It took a while to convince myself that I could really turn off the TV.

"After about two weeks of leaving the television off, I felt a burden somehow lifted. I realized I felt better, even cleaner somehow, and I knew I had made the right choice."²

Bedtime is a perfect time to talk.

Helaman said of the stripling warriors, "They rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it" (Alma 56:48).

It was "the words of their mothers" that taught them. While talking to their children, those mothers taught the word of God.

Preserving Personal Communication

Much good comes from talking, and the adversary is aware of the power of the spoken word. He would love to diminish the spirit that comes into our homes as we talk, listen, encourage each other, and do things together.

Satan futilely attempted to prevent the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this dispensation when he tried to halt a critical conversation between Joseph Smith and God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

In Joseph's words, "Immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame



me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15).

The adversary would love to bind our tongues—anything to prevent us from expressing verbally the feelings of our hearts face to face. He delights in distance and distraction; he delights in noise; he delights in impersonal communication—anything that would prevent us from the warmth of a voice and the personal feelings that come from conversing eye to eye.

Listening to the Hearts of Our Children

Listening is just as important as speaking. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “If we listen with love, we won’t need to wonder what to say. It will be given to us . . . by the Spirit.”³

When we listen, we see into the hearts of those around us. Heavenly Father has a plan for each of His children. Imagine if we could get a glimpse of the individual plan for each of our children. What if we could know how

to enhance their spiritual gifts? What if we could know how to motivate a child to reach his or her potential? What if we could know how to help each child transition from child-like faith to testimony?

How can we know?

We can begin to know by listening.

One Latter-day Saint father said: “I do a greater amount of good when I listen to my children than when I talk to them. . . . I have gradually learned that my children don’t want my ready-made, time-proven, and wise answers. . . . To them, being able to ask their questions and to talk about their problems is more important than receiving my answers. Usually when they get through talking, if I have listened long and well enough, they really don’t need my answer. They have already found their answer.”⁴

It takes time to focus on the things that matter most. Talking, listening, and encouraging do not happen quickly. They cannot be rushed or scheduled—they happen best along the way. They happen when we *do* things together: work together, create together, and play together. They happen when we turn off media, put down worldly distractions, and focus on each other.

Now, that is a difficult thing to do. When we stop and turn everything off, we must be prepared for what will happen next. At first the silence may be stifling; an awkward sense of loss may ensue. Be patient, wait just a few seconds, and then enjoy. Give your full attention to those around you by asking a question about them and then begin to listen. Parents, talk about an interest of your child. Laugh about the past—and dream about the future. Silly conversation can even unfold into a meaningful discussion.

Prioritizing Our Eternal Purpose

Last spring, while I was visiting a class of young women, the teacher asked the class to write our 10 priorities. I quickly began to write. I have to admit, my first thought began with “Number 1: clean the pencil drawer in the kitchen.” When our lists were complete, the Young Women leader asked us to share what we had written. Abby, who had recently turned 12, was sitting next to me. This was Abby’s list:

1. Go to college.
2. Become an interior designer.
3. Go on a mission to India.
4. Get married in the temple to a returned missionary.
5. Have five kids and a home.
6. Send my kids on missions and to college.
7. Become a “cookie-giving” grandma.
8. Spoil the grandchildren.
9. Learn more about the gospel and enjoy life.
10. Return to live with Father in Heaven.

I say, “Thank you, Abby. You have taught me about having a vision of the plan Heavenly Father has for all of us. When you know you are walking a path, in spite of whatever detours may occur, you will be OK. When your path is focused on the ultimate goal—that of exaltation and returning to Heavenly Father, you will get there.”

Where did Abby get this sense of eternal purpose? It begins in our homes. It begins in our families. I asked her, “What do you do in your family to create such priorities?”

This was her answer: “Besides reading the scriptures, we are studying *Preach My Gospel*.” Then she added, “We talk a lot—at family home evening, at dinner together, and in the car while we drive.”

Nephi wrote: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ.” Why? “That our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

Talking, listening, encouraging each other, and doing things together as a family will bring us closer to our Savior, who loves us. Our intentional effort to communicate better today—this very day—will bless our families eternally. I testify that when we talk of Christ, we also rejoice in Christ and in the gift of the Atonement. Our children will come to know “to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” ■

From a Salt Lake City stake conference satellite broadcast address given on October 24, 2010.

NOTES

1. James E. Faust, “Enriching Family Life,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 41.
2. Susan Heaton, “Talk Time Instead of TV Time,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 73.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Witnesses unto Me,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 16; *Ensign*, May 2001, 15.
4. George D. Durrant, “Pointers for Parents: Take Time to Talk,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1973, 24.



BLUEBERRIES AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

A few years ago our family moved from a fast-paced, congested metropolitan area to a small, rural property outside a quiet little village. Nearby was an abandoned blueberry farm, and through friends of the owner, we obtained permission to pick all the blueberries we wanted.

Several mornings each week that summer we piled into the car with buckets and bags and spent a delightful, delicious hour gathering

blueberries. One morning our youngest son, Hyrum, seemed reluctant to accompany us. He was sure we had picked every blueberry and that it would be a waste of time to go again. How surprised he was to find as many blueberries as ever. There were clusters in places he had overlooked, and some of the juiciest berries were growing on branches he was sure he had explored earlier.

At this same time, ward youth

leaders challenged our teenagers to read the entire Book of Mormon before school started that August. Our children brought the challenge home, and our family committed to join them in their efforts.

No sooner had we finished the Book of Mormon when our August 2005 *Ensign* arrived, with the challenge of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) to read the entire Book of Mormon by the end

Hyrum was sure we had picked every blueberry and that it would be a waste of time to go again to the blueberry farm.



of the year. Hyrum and his brother Joseph were thrilled—to think that we had already obeyed the prophet! Then their older siblings, Seth and Bethany, reminded them that President Hinckley had asked us to read it again, regardless of how many times we had already done so.

“But why?” the boys asked. “We have read every word, and what else is there to learn besides what we have already read?”

After a few moments of silence, somebody mentioned the blueberries. “Remember when we thought we had picked every blueberry? But when we went back, there were always more blueberries—always! No matter how many times we went, no matter how recently, there were always blueberries by the bunches.”

We quickly recognized the connection. Like the nearby farm and its abundant supply of delicious blueberries, the Book of Mormon is a constant source of spiritual nourishment with new truths to be discovered. So we began once again to read the Book of Mormon.

As I accepted the prophet’s challenge, I read things in the Book of Mormon that I had read many times before, but I saw them in a different way or understood them as they applied to new circumstances or challenges. I know that each time we sincerely read the Book of Mormon, we can receive new insights and come closer to the Savior. ■

Suellen S. Weiler, Georgia, USA

I FELT I SHOULD COME

Two and a half years after my baptism in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the words of one of the elders who had taught me still resounded in my ears: “I know you’re a missionary.” I also remembered the powerful answer I had when I prayed to know if the feeling that had pierced my heart was really true. At age 20, I knew I should be preparing for a mission.

But how could I be a missionary? I was nothing like the angelic young men who had taught me the gospel. And how could I leave my job? Where would I live after I came home? It had been very difficult to find the place I had, even though it was just a little room at the back of someone’s house.

On my way home one evening, these feelings and doubts again came to mind. When I got home, I tried to make a decision. I decided to kneel down and offer a prayer for help. As I did so, I had a strong impression that I should go see Leandro, a friend who had been a great strength to me in sad times.

But the thought of waking him up at midnight caused me to resist the idea. I knew he got up early to go to work, and I didn’t dare knock on his door at that hour. I struggled against the thought but continued to feel the impression to go see him. Still, I chose to ignore it.

Instead, I decided to walk around the block for some fresh air. When I



As I entered, I saw Leandro sitting in my room. The Spirit fell upon me, and I felt breathless.

remembered that I had left my door open, however, I started back home. As I entered, I saw Leandro sitting in my room. The Spirit fell upon me, and I felt breathless. With a voice somewhat choking with emotion, I asked him, “What are you doing here?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “I just felt I should come to see you.”

I told him about the doubts I’d been having about a mission. He bore his testimony to me and encouraged me. Then he helped me fill out my mission papers, which I took to my bishop the next morning. Two months later I received my call to the Argentina Salta Mission.

I know my friend was an instrument in the hands of the Lord that night, and with all my heart I know that Heavenly Father listens to and answers prayers that are uttered with a sincere heart and with real intent. ■

Aldo Fabio Moracca, Nevada, USA

I'M GOING TO DIE!

As a nurse of a busy post-surgical recovery unit, I received a call one day regarding a patient named Bill who had just undergone surgery. He should have gone to a critical care unit but was diverted to me because that unit was full.

The patient soon arrived with his family. I was relieved to see that he was alert, oriented, and in no apparent distress.

After taking his vital signs and familiarizing him and his family with his room, I stepped into the hall to make a note on his chart. Just as my pen hit the paper, I heard a voice say, "Go back into his room." I stopped

writing and looked behind me. There was no one there. I thought I had imagined the voice, when suddenly I heard it a second time—only louder.

I ran back into Bill's room to discover that his neck had doubled in size, and he was having trouble breathing. Thinking that his carotid artery had been perforated, I applied direct pressure to his neck with my right hand while using my left hand to call the neuroradiologist who had performed his procedure. The surgeon said he would send a team up to get Bill as soon as possible. "And do not remove your hand!" he said.

As I continued applying pressure, I noticed a familiar Church book near Bill's bed. "You're a member of the Church?" I asked.

The surgeon said he would send a team up to get Bill as soon as possible. "And do not remove your hand!" he said.

He tried to nod and then told me he was an ordinance worker in the Atlanta Georgia Temple. He then blinked back tears and said, "I'm going to die!"

I told him he was not going to die, stating adamantly, "I'm getting married in the Atlanta Temple next month, and you are going to be there." The surgical team then arrived and whisked Bill away.

In the excitement of my wedding plans over the next month, I nearly forgot about Bill, who it turns out had had a reaction to medication. But as the matron led me to the sealing room on my wedding day, I saw a familiar face: Bill's wife, Georgia. When I told her I was about to be married, she went to find Bill. Moments before the ceremony began, the door opened and he entered. After weeks of headaches, nausea, and fatigue, Bill had felt well enough that day to travel to the temple, not realizing it was my wedding day.

Two years later my husband and I were called to be ordinance workers in the Nashville Tennessee Temple. When we arrived at the temple to be set apart, a gentleman held the door open for me and said, "Welcome to the Nashville Temple!" It was Brother Bill.

We served together for three years. Bill told everyone I had saved his life, but I knew that the Lord had saved him. In the process, He had taught me the importance of heeding promptings from the Spirit. ■

Ramona Ross, Tennessee, USA




MAYBE WE SHOULD PRAY

In the spring of 1975 my family and I were living among beautiful green farmland in the Rheinland-Pfalz area of West Germany. Driving home from church one rainy Sunday, we stopped to have a look at an automobile that had rolled onto its side in the wet roadbed at the edge of a forest. Inside the forest it was already dark because of the thick canopy created by the trees and the oncoming night.

After looking at the wrecked vehicle, we returned to our car and discovered it was stuck in the mud. I couldn't back up, but I could drive forward—into the forest. We had previously driven through the forest and found that many forest roads were interconnected and would eventually lead back out, so I decided to move forward into the blackness.

I quickly realized that I had made the wrong decision. The narrow, wet road was filled with deep ruts of mud and kept leading farther and farther into the dark forest. I tried to keep up speed, fearing that if we stopped, we would become mired. I saw a high spot just ahead that looked firm enough to sustain the weight of the car. My plan was to get the car out of the mud to give myself time to think. The car lunged up and out of the mud.

I turned off the car and climbed out. With the headlights off, I couldn't see a thing. I turned the headlights back on, grabbed our



I turned the headlights back on, grabbed our flashlight, and after looking the car over, decided that my best bet was to back into the forest.

flashlight, and after looking the car over, decided that my best bet was to back into the forest and then make a mad dash out the way we came.

I backed as far into the forest as possible, revved the engine a little, lunged back onto the road, and sank deep into the mud. Now we were really in trouble. Outside the car it was total darkness and silence. Inside the car my wife and I sat with three terrified children.

I asked my wife for any ideas. After a moment she said, "Maybe we should pray." The children calmed down almost immediately. I offered a humble but desperate prayer for help. As I prayed, a thought came clearly

into my mind: "Put on the tire chains."

Standing in 10 inches (25 cm) of mud in her Sunday dress, my sweet wife held the flashlight while I cleaned the rear tires with my bare hands and put the chains on. With faith and confidence, we prayed again and started the engine. Slowly we drove through the mud and eventually back onto the pavement.

In the excitement of being freed from the mud and the darkness, I almost forgot who had helped us out of the forest. Our five-year-old daughter reminded me when she said, "Daddy, Heavenly Father really does answer prayers, doesn't He?" ■

Scott Edgar, Utah, USA

Everybody Knows Bleck

By Adam C. Olson

Church Magazines

For Honoura “Bleck” Bonnet, basketball was everything. By age 15, Bleck was a rising star in French Polynesia—one of the best players playing for one of the best teams in the top adult division in the country. Though his nickname was a misspelling of the English word *black*, there was no mistaking his talent.

But he wanted more. He wanted to play professionally in Europe. And more than anything, he wanted to win a gold medal at the South Pacific Games.

Honoura “Bleck” and Myranda Bonnet have long been involved in basketball in Tahiti.

The only obstacle that seemed to stand in his way was the Church.

A Man on a Mission

Though the team Bleck played for at the time was Church sponsored, Bleck had little interest in the Church or the prophet’s call for every worthy and able young man to serve a mission.

He had already told his bishop he wouldn’t be going on a mission. He didn’t see how he could play professionally if he gave up two years.

What’s more, the South Pacific Games—held every four years—would take place during his mission, and the Tahiti Basketball Federation was interested in having him play for the national team. He would finally have an opportunity to put an end to those words his father said every time Bleck started thinking too highly of himself: “Everybody knows Bleck, but he doesn’t have a gold.”

Bleck’s father, Jean-Baptiste, meant those words good-naturedly. But they drove Bleck crazy. They were a reminder that even though basketball fans throughout Tahiti knew of him, he didn’t have a medal from the games. His father had won a gold medal with the men’s team during the first South Pacific Games.





Bleck's love for basketball has been both a test and a blessing.



“Happiness comes from living the way the Lord wants you to live.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Preparation Brings Blessings,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 67.

It was Bleck’s mission to put those words to rest. He didn’t have time for any other mission.

A Change of Mind, a Change of Heart

Regardless of his feelings about a mission, Bleck still participated in Church activities. At a Church dance when he was 16, Bleck mustered up the courage to ask Myranda Mariteragi to dance. Myranda was a good basketball player too—with dreams of winning her own gold medal. Her father was also on that original medal-winning team.

Seconds after he asked her, the song ended. So they danced during the next song, which turned out to be the last of the evening. By then Bleck didn’t want the dance to end.

Bleck hadn’t planned on marrying in the temple or even marrying a member for that matter. But that began to change as he got to know Myranda better over the next two years. At her home one day, something she had made in Young Women caught his attention. It read, “I will marry in the temple.”

Bleck’s interest in Myranda and her firm commitment to temple marriage were enough to make him reconsider his plans. He decided to start taking the Church seriously. His decisions led to actions that allowed the Holy Ghost to work in his life.

The Decision

One of those decisions was to prepare to receive a patriarchal blessing at age 18. When the patriarch stated in the blessing that Bleck would serve a mission and marry in the temple, he felt the Spirit. “I knew that’s what God wanted me to do,” he says.

Though the national team looked like it had a chance to medal, Bleck decided with his family’s support that he would put what God wanted ahead of what he wanted. The decision wasn’t easy. The pressure to play was great. And he quickly learned that his resolve to submit to God’s will would be tested more than once.

After he had served as a missionary in Tahiti for a year, the basketball federation asked if he could return to the team for just one month to participate in the games.

Bleck’s mission president, concerned about the effect the experience would have on Bleck’s ability to return and serve, felt inspired to tell him, “You can leave if you want, but you can’t come back.”

Bleck wanted that medal, but he no longer wanted it more than anything else. His mission had been amazing. He wasn’t willing to give up his last year, even for basketball.

Bleck stayed.

The team won gold.

Different Circumstances, Same Decision

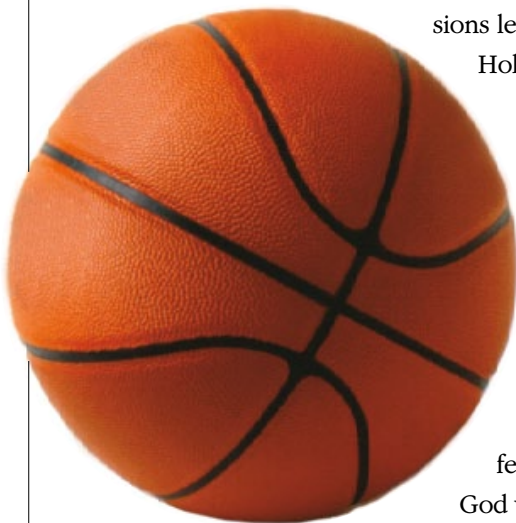
After Bleck honorably completed his mission, he married Myranda in the Papeete Tahiti Temple, and they began a family. He also resumed playing for the national team.

Myranda was playing point guard on the women’s national team and preparing for the South Pacific Games herself.

However, as the games approached, the couple began to feel strongly that they should have a second child.

With the upcoming games less than a year away, it would have been easy to put off another baby long enough for Myranda to play. The women’s team had a good chance of medaling.

But the couple had learned from experience that submitting their wills to God





brought greater blessings than anything they could hope for from following their own desires. After careful study and prayer, they decided to put their family first.

In 1999, while Myranda was eight months pregnant, the women's team won gold.

Everybody Knows Bleck

Bleck and Myranda have been able to play basketball at the highest levels in French Polynesia over the past decade—winning national league championships and tournament cups and playing for the national team during the 2003 and 2007 games.

At the 2011 games, both participated, only this time Bleck was there as coach of the men's team. While Myranda and the women's team won the gold medal, the men's team earned bronze, again falling short of Bleck's dream of gold.

Bleck sometimes wonders what his life might have been like if he had done what

he wanted instead of what God wanted.

"I'd probably have a gold medal," he says. "Maybe I would have played professionally, maybe not."

But the couple doesn't regret the decisions they've made. They're not sure how they could be happier.

"I married in the temple," Bleck says. "I have a great wife, four beautiful children, and I'm still in the Church. Basketball alone couldn't give me any of that. Those are blessings that have come as a result of putting the Lord first."

Putting the Lord first hasn't put his father's teasing to rest, but it has given those words new meaning. A few years ago when the federation considered scheduling league games on Sundays, the club presidents met to discuss it. Someone asked, "Did you ask Bleck?"

The proposal was dropped.

Because Bleck has put the Lord first, not only does everybody know Bleck—they know what he believes. ■

For Bleck and Myranda, success in their sport has taken a backseat to success in their family.

Questions & Answers

“Why do I need to go to seminary if I can just study the scriptures on my own?”

You will have the rest of your life to study the scriptures by yourself, so if it is available to you, take advantage of the opportunity in seminary to study the scriptures with excellent teachers and friends now.

Learning and studying under the direction of a good teacher helps you gain new insight about scriptures that you may not have truly understood before. The teacher might also share teachings from prophets and other Church leaders that give you a better understanding of the scriptures.

Also, it's often more enjoyable to learn with your class. You will have a chance to talk about the things you discover as you read. Your classmates may have had experiences that made certain scriptures their favorites. Hearing their experiences can bring the scriptures to life for you. And because you study the gospel with others, you can enjoy this promised blessing: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, . . . there will I be in the midst of them” (D&C 6:32).

Seminary also creates a structure for your study. You are motivated to read at a certain rate, which helps you finish each book of scripture. You have the opportunity to discuss and memorize scripture mastery verses. You can be guaranteed to gain more from the scriptures by taking seminary than almost any other way at this time in your life.

New Friends, New Ideas



In seminary you meet new friends, and you become close to each other, like a family. You learn many new things that you would not know on your own. It is fun and very spiritual. It makes sure you start your day off right. If you don't participate now, start and it will change your life.

Katarina B., age 16, California, USA

Happiness



Seminary opens up my day. It makes me a happier person and more willing to discuss the gospel with other people. We go more in depth in the scriptures, so I understand more.

Madi S., age 15, Colorado, USA

Perfect Combination



Seminary is an uplifting experience. Sometimes just studying on your own isn't enough. Personal study and seminary are the perfect combination.

The teachers are amazing, and if you have any questions, your teachers and classmates can help you answer them.

Dawson D., age 15, Idaho, USA

More Understanding



When I study the holy scriptures alone, I don't have as much fun as when I study with others. Plus, we can learn interesting ideas from others when we study the scriptures together. Through seminary I've learned about a lot of interesting stories, and I know more about the background of scriptures, which makes the study much more exciting! I am glad I decided to join seminary.

Rebecca M., age 16, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

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

Stronger Testimony



First, the Lord says that where two or three people gather in His name, He will be with them (see Matthew 18:20; D&C 6:32). Feeling His Spirit can help us ponder what He has done for us. Second, when studying scriptures with others, we can better understand what is written. While listening to each other, we can hear something that we have not noticed ourselves, and the same can happen with others when we share our knowledge. Third, when I go to seminary, my testimony is strengthened. Seminary is an opportunity to share our testimonies and listen to other people's testimonies. It helps us stay on the right path.

Dmitri G., age 16, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine

Learning from Others



Going to seminary is a must for me. Not only does my devoted teacher teach and explain the truths found in the scriptures, but I also learn so much from our class discussions. Other students share their experiences on things they've learned, and they have helped me gain more knowledge about the gospel and the Savior and His Atonement. It is not enough to study on my own, for I have found some of the answers to my problems in class discussions. I can testify that seminary plays a vital part in nourishing my testimony of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Denzel J., age 15, Western Samoa

Light and Truth



When I go to seminary, I seek light and truth and put on the whole armor of God (see D&C 27:15–18). That armor helps me recognize His voice at all times and in all places. Daily scripture study strengthens my faith and my testimony and helps me be strong in my trials. Attending seminary is one of the best ways to find light and truth and to study the scriptures and meditate.

Nohemi M., age 17, Puebla, Mexico

Three Reasons

First, because I want to serve a mission, I attend seminary. Missionaries need to get up early and study the gospel in the morning. Attending seminary helps me develop the good habit of getting up early. Second, in the morning, we are clearheaded, so we can concentrate on our learning and study. It is wise to use the best hours in a day to learn about God. Third, if I study on my own, I might

not have understanding as deep as my teacher does. With her guidance and teaching, I can learn much more than I do by myself.

H. Chen Yuan, age 16, T'ai-chung, Taiwan



BLESSINGS OF SEMINARY

"I know the power that comes from associations in the seminary and institute programs. It has enriched my life, and I know it will do the same for you. It will put a shield of protection around you to keep you free from the temptations and trials of the world. There is a great blessing in having a knowledge of the gospel. And I know of no better place for the young people of the Church to gain a special knowledge of sacred things than in the institute and seminary programs."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Receive Truth," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 61–62.

NEXT QUESTION

"How do I explain to my friend why breaking the law of chastity is a bad idea?"

Submit your answer by May 15, 2012, at liahona.lds.org, by e-mail to liahona@ldschurch.org, or by mail to:

Liahona, Questions & Answers 5/12
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

The following information and permission must be included: (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.

WHY Seminary?

PARTICIPATE IN SEMINARY

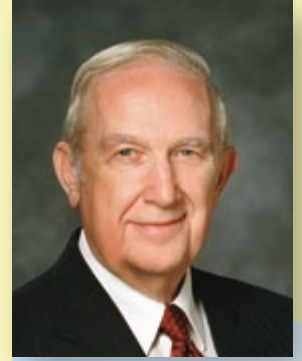
"Seminary will help you to understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ. You will feel the Spirit of the Lord as you learn to love the scriptures. You will prepare yourselves for the temple and for missionary service.

"Young people, I ask you to participate in seminary. Study your scriptures daily. Listen to your teachers carefully. Apply what you learn prayerfully."

President Thomas S. Monson,
"Participate in Seminary,"
seminary.lds.org.

What would you say is the most important thing a student can gain from seminary and institute? When a group of seminary students asked the Commissioner of the Church Educational System, Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy, this same question, he answered that the most important thing you could gain is "the real testimony that Jesus is the Christ. The understanding that the *real* knowledge is the spiritual knowledge. It's what comes from the Holy Ghost to our souls individually. That's the most powerful truth, the most powerful thing that can come out of seminary and institute. It doesn't just change what you know; it changes who you are, and it changes how you look at the world. And that kind of higher education helps to make your other education complete" ("A Higher Education," *New Era*, Apr. 2009, 15).

Elder Johnson is one of the many General Authorities who have spoken about the wonderful blessings that come from attending seminary and institute. So if you're wondering why you should go to seminary, here are more good reasons from prophets and apostles.



LAY A FOUNDATION FOR HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS

"The seminary programs will help you as a young man or woman to lay a foundation for happiness and success in life."

**Elder Richard G. Scott of
the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles,** "Now Is the Time
to Serve a Mission!" *Liahona
and Ensign*, May 2006, 88.





LEARN THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL

“I wish every boy and girl could go to seminary, because that is where they learn many of the truths of the gospel. Seminary is where many of them get their ideals settled in their minds about what they are going to do, and they go on missions.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), “President Kimball Speaks Out on Being a Missionary,” *New Era*, May 1981, 49.

GIVE IT PRIORITY

“Students, if your values are in place, you will not hesitate to forego an elective class that may decorate your life in favor of instruction which can hold together the very foundation of it. Then, once enrolled, attend, study, and learn. Persuade your friends to do the same. You will never regret it; this I promise you.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Agency and Control,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 67.



INVITE BLESSINGS INTO YOUR LIFE

“I am grateful for the seminary system in the Church and for the institute program of the Church. I want to urge every high school student here to take advantage of the seminary program. Your lives will be blessed the greater if you do.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1995, 67.

DISCOVER THREE THINGS SEMINARY CAN DO

“There are three powerful things seminary can do. First, it puts young people together who share the same values. Youth like to be with others who share their faith and who love the scriptures. Second, it puts youth together with a teacher who has a testimony, and they can feel the fire of it when it is borne. Third, seminary gets young people into the scriptures.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Discussion on Scripture Study,” *Liahona*, July 2005, 11; *Ensign*, July 2005, 25.

BE A SEMINARY GRADUATE

“Regularly attend seminary and be a seminary graduate. Seminary instruction is one of the most significant spiritual experiences a young man [and woman] can have.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “To the Youth of the Noble Birthright,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 44; “To the Young Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 82.



PHOTOGRAPH OF SPENCER W. KIMBALL COURTESY OF LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES





SEMINARY in the Jungles of Ecuador

In a remote jungle, seminary is making a huge difference for these youth.

By Joshua J. Perkey
Church Magazines

East of Quito, Ecuador, past the volcanoes and Andes Mountains, the terrain drops swiftly to the Amazon jungle. There you'll find thick forests, abundant rivers, monkeys, toucans, and even pink dolphins.

You'll also find a city called Puerto Francisco de Orellana. It's a long ways from, well, everything else in Ecuador. Fifteen years ago, there were relatively few people in the area. But the discovery of petroleum brought industry, people seeking jobs, and members of the Church.

Seminary in a Small Branch

A few of the youth, like Oscar R., were already members when the branch was formed, but most are recent converts. And a fire burns in their hearts. "We are strong," Oscar says.

In September 2010, just a year after it was created, the branch started a seminary program. "When we first started gathering a few years

ago," says Oscar, "there were very few of us. I was the only youth. But we kept growing. Soon we had 6, then 10, and now even more youth."

Because some of the youth attend school in the morning and others in the afternoon, they organized two seminary class schedules—one in the morning from 8:00 to 9:00 and one in the afternoon from 4:30 to 5:30.

There may not be a lot of youth in the program, but for those youth who attend, seminary has changed their lives.

Why Go?

"Seminary is a great blessing for me," says Luis V., a recent convert. "It helps prepare me to be a good missionary. I have faced many challenges and temptations since I joined the Church, but I have been able to keep myself strong because I know I'm doing what's right."

And it's not just Luis who feels that way. "I have been a member of the Church for just a short while," says Ariana J., "but I have been attending seminary since I was baptized. I'm happy attending because I'm

Seminary strengthens youth such as these in Ecuador, many of whom are recent converts.



learning many true things regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ that fill my heart with hope and my mind with understanding.”

Attending seminary has helped ground Ariana in the gospel. “For me, it is a blessing to be a part of these classes,” Ariana says. “They strengthen my spirit and help me prepare so



that one day I can be a good spouse, mother, leader in the Church, and perhaps a full-time missionary.”

Ariana’s brother, Gerardo, feels the same. “I’m grateful because seminary has become an important part of my life,” he says. “It’s preparing me to serve a mission someday. There I have learned about the plan of salvation that God prepared for me. Each class I attend gives me hope that I can inherit the celestial kingdom and gives me the certainty that I have received the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Gerardo is pretty tired during class sometimes. He has to take his little brother to school first and then return home quickly to pick up his

sister so they can go to seminary. But he doesn’t mind.

“All of this is so new for me, but I am full of happiness,” says Gerardo. “I know I am on the correct path that will give me the opportunity to see my Heavenly Father again. The Holy Spirit gives me this assurance. I just have to make an effort and persevere unto the end.”

No Need to Be Nervous

For Walter A., seminary was initially a little intimidating. “I was nervous the first time I came,” he says. “But when I entered the class, I felt special because I felt the love you feel when you study the scriptures. And when I left, I felt strengthened with happiness in my heart for what I had learned. One of the greatest blessings Heavenly Father has for the youth is seminary.”

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has changed my life,” says Abel A., who is also preparing to go on a mission. “I’m learning about the teachings of the prophets. I love Joseph Smith. He was valiant in bringing to pass the Restoration of the true Church in

spite of all the problems this caused him. I want to be valiant like he was.”

A lot of youth have to make sacrifices to attend seminary. It’s not always easy, but for the youth in Puerto Francisco de Orellana, Ecuador, it’s worth the effort.

“When I think about pressing forward, like the scriptures say,” Abel explains, “I think it means to set our priorities for life. Seminary is one of these. Just as it has changed my life, it can do the same for other youth.”

Even in the deepest reaches of a jungle in Ecuador, the Church of Jesus Christ and its seminary program for youth are thriving and changing lives for those who choose to let it. ■



WHAT COMES AFTER SEMINARY?

Seminary graduation isn't the end of your religious studies. Something wonderful is still in store for you.

By David A. Edwards

Church Magazines

In seminary you study the scriptures and probably meet with others your age regularly. You feel welcome, and you can feel the Spirit. So when you've completed seminary, are these experiences over? Absolutely not.

The Church's institute program is the next step, and you'll love it. Whether you're going to college or not, you can continue to learn about the gospel, prepare for a mission and temple marriage, and share experiences with others your age.

Here are some answers to basic questions about institute. You can find out more at institute.lds.org.

What is institute?

Institute consists of gospel study classes, including classes on the scriptures, teachings of the prophets, and preparation for a mission or temple marriage. In some institutes you can choose from multiple classes.

Who can attend?

All young single adults are strongly encouraged to attend institute classes. Anyone—married or single—between the ages of 18 and 30 can attend.



FACTS ABOUT INSTITUTE

Number of students:
over 350,000

Number of locations:
over 2,500

Number of courses available: 15 basic courses, plus several other custom courses

First institute: Moscow, Idaho, USA (1926)

First institute outside the U.S. and Canada: Mexico (1959)

Purpose of institute: To help young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven.

Where can I find institute?

Some areas have institute buildings near colleges and universities. In other areas classes are held in Church buildings or other locations. Contact your bishop or branch president to learn about the institute program in your area, or go to institute.lds.org to find an institute near you.

Why should I take institute classes?

President Thomas S. Monson has said: "Make participation in institute a priority. . . . Think of it. Friends will be made, the Spirit will be felt, and faith will be strengthened. I promise you that as you participate in institute and study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased" (institute.lds.org, Apr. 21, 2009). ■



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MEDIA SERVICES

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Apostle Paul taught how the scriptures bless our lives.



All Scripture

“When we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

“If you have not heard His voice speaking to you lately, return with new eyes and new ears to the scriptures. They are our spiritual lifeline.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 26–27.

Good Works

What kinds of good works do the scriptures help you prepare to do? Here are a few of the more obvious ones. Can you think of more? Write about them in your journal.

- Serving as a full-time missionary
- Fulfilling Church callings (such as quorum and class presidencies)
- Teaching the gospel
- Bearing testimony
- Sharing the gospel
- Answering friends’ questions about the Church

Correction

The original Greek word used in the Bible literally means “straightening up again.” So the scriptures help keep you in line and following the straight and narrow path (see 2 Nephi 9:41).

16 “All ^bscripture is given by ^cinspiration of God, and is ^dprofitable for ^edoctrine, for ^freproof, for ^gcorrection, for ^hinstruction in ⁱrighteousness:

17 That the man of God may be ^jperfect, thoroughly ^kfurnished unto all ^lgood works.

Reproof

Reproof—rebuke, chastening, scolding, or correction, usually in a kind manner.

Furnished

Furnished—equipped, supplied.



Doctrine

“True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Do Not Fear,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2004, 79.

Editors’ note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture verse, only a starting point for your own study.



DON'T CRASH

Prevent big problems later by fixing small problems now.

By Adam C. Olson
Church Magazines

SPIRITUAL CHECKUPS



"We need to conduct regular spiritual checkups on ourselves to determine the areas in which we need to improve.

"Usually we perceive these small failings with the aid of the Holy Spirit. . . . We need to listen carefully to what is being pointed out to us by the Spirit, Church leaders, loved ones, coworkers, and friends."

Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis of the Seventy, "Honesty in the Small Things," *Ensign*, Sept. 2003, 30.

Andrei has loved airplanes since he was little. But while there are many who dream of flying, Andrei's head isn't in the clouds; his interest is in the nuts and bolts. This 16-year-old from Romania is studying to be an aircraft mechanic.

In Romania teens can choose to attend a high school to prepare for college or a trade school. Because of Andrei's love for airplanes, his decision to attend the aviation trade school was easy.

Aircraft mechanics don't just fix airplanes that are broken. One of the most important things they do is inspect and maintain airplanes so they don't break down. They regularly inspect everything on a plane, from propellers to landing gear and each piece in between.

"It can be hard to find the tiny problem that could cause a plane to crash," Andrei says. "But finding it is easier than trying to put the whole plane back together again."

Keeping a regular maintenance schedule and refusing to skip it are important—both for airplanes and for Church members—in order to identify and correct problems before they become either mechanically or spiritually life threatening.

Spiritual Maintenance

Andrei lives in Bucharest, a city of nearly two million people. However, the Church is relatively young in Romania, and there are only enough members in Bucharest for two branches. Andrei and his family live far from other members of their branch. Andrei feels the pull of the world all around him at school and among his friends. He knows how easy it would be to crash—spiritually speaking—if he doesn't keep up regular spiritual maintenance.

Life can be hectic. Along with the time Andrei spends on his school studies, football, and the computer, he makes time for praying, fasting, studying the scriptures, and fulfilling his responsibilities as a priest. He also makes sure he "goes" to seminary, which he does online because of distance.

Doing those things is part of the regular spiritual maintenance that helps identify and correct weaknesses before they lead to a life-threatening crash of a spiritual nature.

"There are some things you just have to do regularly—creating a habit," he says. "You can't let life take over."

Spiritual Crashes

Andrei has learned that if we do not perform spiritual maintenance regularly, forces such as stress or peer pressure can overcome our resistance to temptation. When that happens, it isn't long before we lose our direction, our control, and ultimately our spiritual power.

Just as a plane without power will lose altitude, when we sin, we lose spiritual power and altitude, distancing ourselves from heaven and leading sooner or later to a spiritual crash.

While it is possible for the Savior's Atonement to put us back together again after we crash, it is so much better to rely on His power to help us fix the problem when it is small—before it causes a spiritual catastrophe.

The Danger of Skipping

The thought of skipping mechanical maintenance on an airplane has never crossed Andrei's mind. Skipping isn't an option. "There are laws about that," he says. But if he *did* skip maintenance—just once—he admits that "probably nothing would happen."

Perhaps the biggest problem with skipping is not that the plane will immediately crash but that it won't.



“If nothing bad happens when I skip today, I will be more easily tempted to skip tomorrow,” he says.

When maintenance is skipped regularly, the forces and stresses exerted upon the plane—or on us—will cause something to fail sooner or later. “Eventually we will crash,” he says.

That’s why God has given us laws about regular spiritual maintenance too. “Meet together [at church] *oft*” (3 Nephi 18:22; emphasis added). Pray *always* (see 3 Nephi 18:19).

Search the scriptures *diligently* (see 3 Nephi 23:1–5). “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts *unceasingly*” (D&C 121:45; emphasis added). Visit the temple *regularly*.¹

Keeping those laws and performing regular spiritual maintenance will keep us flying right.

“A plane is built to get off the ground, to leave the world,” Andrei says. “That is what Heavenly Father wants for us. With regular maintenance, we’ll safely get where we want to go—back to heaven.” ■

NOTE

1. See Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 92.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

SPiritual MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Aircraft mechanics often have a checklist of items they need to inspect regularly. Church leaders have suggested conducting our own regular spiritual checkups.¹ Here are some questions that can help you examine your spiritual health from time to time. If you have concerns about any of your responses, talk to your parents or bishop or branch president.

- Do I pray regularly and sincerely?
- Do I feast upon the word of God in the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets?
 - Do I keep the Sabbath day holy and attend Church meetings regularly?
 - Do I fast and pay my tithes and offerings willingly?
 - Am I willing to forgive others?
 - Do I regularly find ways to serve others?
 - Do I remember the Savior at all times and follow His example?
 - Do I keep my thoughts and language clean?
 - Am I honest in all things?
 - Do I keep the Word of Wisdom?

NOTE

1. See Joseph B. Wirthlin, “True to the Truth,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 17.

GET INTO THE SCRIPTURES

Let seminary transform you.

(See 1 Nephi 19:23.)



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CARY HENRIE; LEHI AND HIS PEOPLE ARRIVE IN THE PROMISED LAND, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; YOUNG NEPHI SUBDUES HIS REBELLIOUS BROTHERS, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; ABINADI APPEARING BEFORE KING NOAH, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI

Talk Time

"I will honor my parents and do my part to strengthen my family" (My Gospel Standards).



By Hilary Watkins Lemon

Based on a true story

All right, everyone. Let's have talk time," Mom called. Josie had been looking forward to talk time all day. Every evening, Josie and her two little brothers, Ben and Wes, gathered in the living room with Mom and Dad to talk about what was going on in their lives.

Tonight Dad had said he would help Josie practice her script for the morning announcements. Reading the morning announcements was a special privilege at Josie's school. Tomorrow Josie would play a small part of her favorite song over the school's speakers and use the microphone to announce the day's activities and lunch menu.

Josie ran to the living room, excited to rehearse her script.

"There's our famous announcer!" Dad said when Josie hopped on the couch next to him. "How are you feeling about tomorrow?"

"I'm excited but a little nervous.

I'm afraid I'll mess something up in front of the whole school," Josie said.

"That's why we practice," Dad said. "Go ahead and read through your script, and I will listen for places you can improve."

"Thanks, Dad," Josie said.

She and Dad reviewed the script so many times that Josie lost count. Then Josie stood and performed her script one last time for her family. Mom and Dad cheered. Ben gave her a high five, and Wes smiled and clapped his hands.

Josie went to bed happy and confident.

The next day everything went

smoothly. Even though she was nervous, Josie smiled when she heard her music play on the school's speakers. She was glad she had practiced the script with Dad, and she read it slowly and clearly without any mistakes.

"You did an excellent job," Mrs. Blake, the assistant principal, said.

At the end of the school day, Josie stood in line for the bus. An older boy turned around and asked, "Are you the girl who read the announcements today?"

Josie smiled. "Yes," she said.

"Why did you pick that song?" the boy asked. "It was a dumb song. You really ruined morning

announcements.” Then he called her a mean name and laughed with his friends.

Josie sat alone in the front seat of the bus. She felt sick to her stomach.

When Josie got home, she found Mom playing with Wes.

“Mom, I know it’s not talk time yet, but I was wondering if we could still talk right now,” Josie said.

“Of course, Josie,” Mom said. “What happened? Did something go wrong with the morning announcements?”

“No,” Josie said. “Everything was perfect. At least I thought so, until a boy told me I picked a dumb song. He called me a really mean name too.”

Mom patted the floor next to her. Josie walked over and sat down. Mom gave her a big hug. Josie and Mom talked about everything that happened that day, including Mrs. Blake’s compliment.

“I’m sorry that boy and his friends were rude to you,” Mom said. “But it sounds like other people you respect, like Mrs. Blake, were very pleased with the way you read the announcements. Dad and I are so proud of you. You worked very hard, and it paid off!”

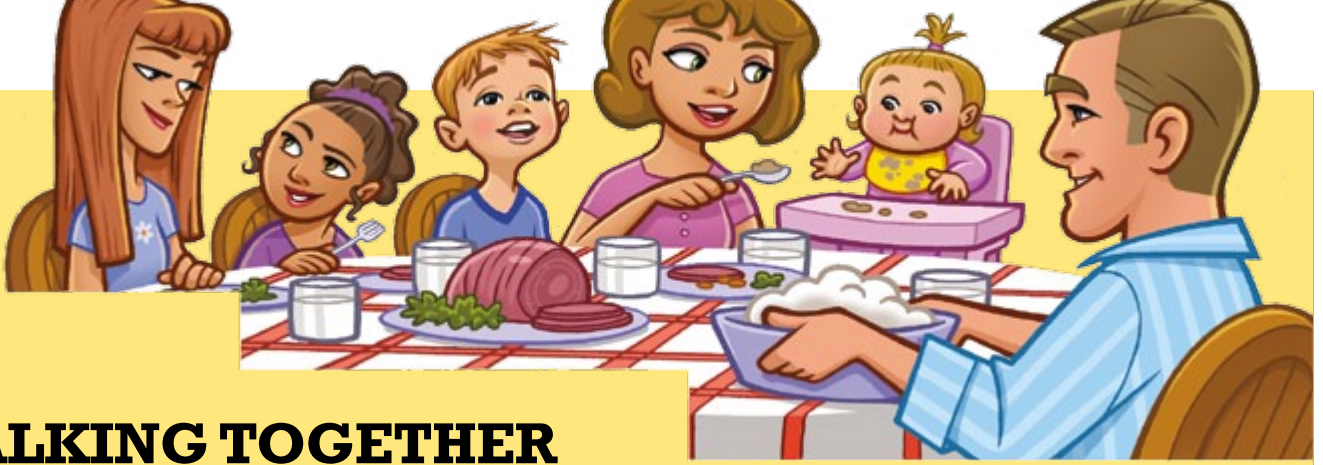
Josie hugged Mom again. “Thanks, Mom,” Josie said. “I feel a lot better.” Josie was glad that any time could be talk time. ■



Nothing is more important to the relationship between family members than open, honest communication.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Like a Flame Unquenchable,” *Liahona*, July 1999, 103; *Ensign*, May 1999, 86–87.





TALKING TOGETHER

Here are some suggestions for having your own family “talk time”:

- Ask your parents about setting aside a few minutes each day for your family to talk together.
- It could be during a meal or at a certain time of day.
- Make sure everyone takes turns talking and listening. Include everyone!
- Be respectful of the opinions of your family members. Make sure everyone feels that what he or she says is important.

CONVERSATION GAMES

Need some ideas for talk time? Try these games:

Beanbag Toss: If your family is large or has a hard time taking turns, use a beanbag to show whose turn it is to talk. After the person with the beanbag says what he or she would like to say, toss the beanbag to another family member to take a turn to talk.

Interviewer: Split into groups of two and take turns pretending to be interviewers. Think of a few questions for your partner and then ask him or her questions. You can even use a real microphone or sound recorder for your interviews.

What Would You Do? Take turns asking your family different questions that begin with “What would you do . . . ?” Some examples are “What would you do if you got lost?” and “What would you do if you could go anywhere in the world?”



HELP FOR PARENTS: ONE-ON-ONE TIME

As fun as it is to talk as a family, it is also important for parents and children to spend one-on-one time together. Take advantage of moments during the day to visit with your children individually. Invite one child at a time to help you complete a household chore, accompany you on an errand, or chat with you in your room for a few minutes. Just a few short moments can lead to meaningful conversations.



He Broke the **BANDS OF DEATH**



By Elder Patrick Kearon
Of the Seventy

“They have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death” (Mosiah 15:23).

One night when our children were younger, we were having family scripture time. We read about the Savior and talked about how He never made any mistakes.

Later that night my wife tucked our three-year-old daughter, Susie, into bed. Susie looked up at her mother and said, “Mummy, Jesus did make a mistake.”

“What do you mean?” her mother asked.

“He broke something,” Susie said. Somewhat puzzled, her mother asked, “What did He break?”

“Jesus broke the bands of death,” Susie answered.

My wife realized that she and Susie had sung the Primary song “On a Golden Springtime” many times, and Susie had learned the words “On a golden springtime, Jesus Christ awoke and left the tomb where He had lain; the bands of death He broke.”¹ Susie’s mother explained that breaking the bands

of death means that Jesus was resurrected so that we can all live again after we die.

That conversation has given my wife and me many opportunities to teach our daughters, Lizzie, Susie, and Emma, about what the Atonement really means for each of us. Susie was right: Jesus did break the bands of death. But it wasn’t a mistake. It was the greatest gift He could give us! (See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.)

The Savior died and was resurrected so that we can live again with our Heavenly Father and our families according to our righteousness. If we are worthy, we can enjoy the blessings of immortality and eternal life someday. I am grateful that Jesus broke something—the bands of death! ■

NOTE

1. “On a Golden Springtime,” *Children’s Songbook*, 88.



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

JESUS CHRIST

Teaches Me to Choose the Right

For Tanner, Easter would not be the same this year. His grandpa had died, and Tanner was sad he would never share this special time with him again.

But during Primary, Tanner was reminded that the reason we celebrate Easter is because Jesus lives! When He was resurrected, His spirit

was forever reunited with His body, never to experience death again. Tanner learned that because Jesus was resurrected, everyone would be resurrected someday, including his grandpa!

An Easter song filled Tanner with happiness as he sang:
 "Jesus has risen,
 Jesus, our friend.

Joy fills our hearts; He lives again."¹ Tanner wanted to share this good news with everyone. He decided that before Easter, he would place on his neighbors' doorsteps small bundles of spring flowers with scriptures about Jesus's Resurrection. He imagined the smiles on their faces when they found his gift on Easter morning. ■

NOTE

1. "Jesus Has Risen," *Children's Songbook*, 70.



Songs and Scripture

- John 13:15
- Song of your choice about Jesus Christ
- Suggested songs from the *Children's Songbook*: "Jesus Has Risen" (70), "Did Jesus Really Live Again?" (64), "He Died That We Might Live Again" (65), "Easter Hosanna" (68–69)

LEFT: ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIMINI BLOCKER; PAINTING BY PAUL MANN © 1999 IRI; RIGHT: CHRIST AND THE BOOK OF MORMON CHILDREN, BY DEL PARSON © 1995; THE RESURRECTION, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI; DETAIL FROM JESUS CHRIST VISITS THE AMERICAS, BY JOHN SCOTT © IRI; THE ASCENSION, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI; CHRIST APPEARING IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; BEHOLD MY HANDS AND FEET, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI; BRING FORTH THE RECORD, BY GARY L. KAPP © 1999; MAY NOT BE COPIED; GO YE THEREFORE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BY HARRY ANDERSON © IRI

CTR Activity

Where in the World?

After Jesus Christ was resurrected, He visited people not only in the Jerusalem area but also the righteous people in the Americas as well. As a family, draw a line from each picture to the land (Jerusalem or the Americas) where it happened. Take turns reading the scriptures to learn more about what happened in the pictures.



Jesus blesses the children
3 Nephi 17:11–25



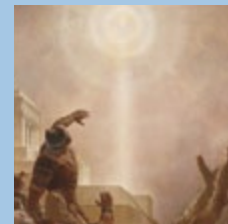
Jesus appears to
Mary Magdalene
John 20:14–18



Jesus teaches in the
Americas
3 Nephi 11:8–11



Jesus ascends into heaven
Acts 1:9–11



Jesus appears to
the righteous people
3 Nephi 11:1–8



Jesus shows His wounds
to His Apostles
Luke 24:36–40



Jesus asks for the
Nephite records
3 Nephi 23:7–13

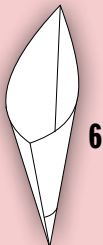
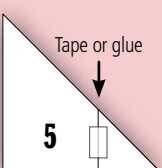
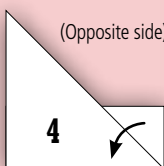
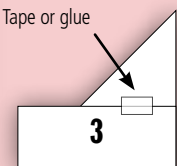
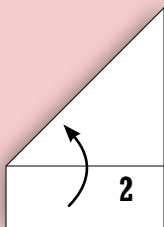
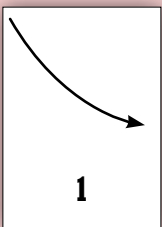


Jesus appears to
His Apostles
Matthew 28:16–20

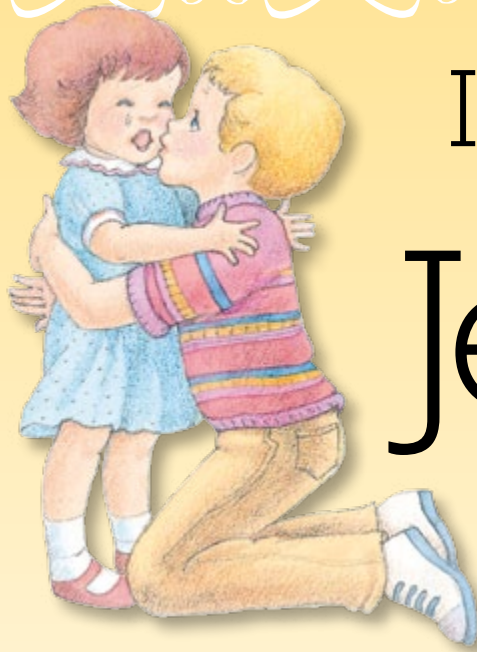
Just You

You can make your own Easter bundles like Tanner. Use a rectangular piece of white or colored paper and follow the steps below. Fill the cone with small flowers or treats to surprise a friend or family member!

123456



Americas



I'm Trying to Be like Jesus

Simplified

With commitment ♩ = 104-116

Words and music by Janice Kapp Perry

1. I'm try - ing to be like Je - sus; I'm fol - low-ing
(2. I'm) try - ing to love my neigh - bor; I'm learn - ing to

in serve His ways. I'm try - ing to love as
my friends. I watch for the day of

He glad - ness in all that I do and say. At
- ness when Je - sus will come a - gain. I

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times I am tempt-ed to make a wrong choice, But I try to
 try to re-mem-ber the les-sons He taught. Then the Ho-ly

lis-ten as the still, small voice whis-pers, "Love one an-oth-er as
 Spir-it en-ters in-to my thoughts, say-ing:

Je-sus loves you. Try to show kind-ness in all that you

do. Be gen-tle and lov-ing in deed and in thought, For

these are the things Je-sus taught." 1. I'm taught."

Sisters in Name *and* Faith

By Heather Wrigley

Church Magazines

Maria and Diana Ursu are not just sisters; they are best friends too. Diana is 10 years old, and Maria turned 12 last August. They live in Romania, where there are about 3,000 members of the Church. They keep their faith in Jesus Christ strong by going to church, reading the scriptures, and praying.

“In church I’ve learned to have faith in God,” Maria says. One day she had a test, so she prayed to Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ for help. When she got a good grade, she felt like Heavenly Father had helped her.

Diana says the Book of Mormon helps her have faith. “Every day that I read the Book of Mormon, I have a good day,” she says. Her favorite scripture story is the story of Joseph Smith. “He prayed, and God and Jesus Christ helped him,” she says. ■



CHOCOLATE

Both sisters' favorite dessert is chocolate: Maria likes brownies, and Diana likes chocolate cake.

FAVORITE SONG

Maria and Diana both play the piano. Maria's favorite song is "Love One Another." It is about Jesus's commandment to love other people. Diana can almost play it perfectly, but the end is the hardest part, she says.

**I LOVE TO SEE THE TEMPLE**

Maria and Diana both want to be married in the temple one day. They live in the Kyiv Ukraine Temple District.

When Diana is older, she will go to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple to do baptisms for the dead. Maria is now old enough to go. The temple is about 500 miles (805 km) away.

FAMILY FIRST

Maria and Diana love their parents. "Mom makes us feel better when we're sick," Maria says. "Dad takes us to school," Diana says.

HYMNS

Diana's favorite hymn is "Far, Far Away on Judea's Plains," which tells about when Jesus Christ was born. Members in Romania use the Church's green hymnbook. "Imnuri" means "hymns" in Romanian.





What can I do to follow **HEAVENLY FATHER'S** plan for me?

*Elder Richard G. Scott of
the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles shares some
thoughts on this subject.*



Learn about the great plan of happiness
by studying the scriptures.



Listen to the voice of current and past prophets.



Obey the inner feelings that come as
promptings from the Holy Ghost.



When needed, seek counsel and guidance from
parents and your priesthood leaders.

From "The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness," Ensign, Nov. 1996, 75.

MY GOSPEL STANDARDS

I will follow Heavenly Father's plan for me.

I will remember my baptismal covenant
and listen to the Holy Ghost.

I will choose the right.

I know I can repent when I make a mistake.

I will be honest with Heavenly Father, others, and myself.

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

I will do those things on the Sabbath that will help me feel
close to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

I will honor my parents
and do my part to strengthen my family.

I will keep my mind and body sacred and pure, and
I will not partake of things that are harmful to me.

I will dress modestly to show respect for
Heavenly Father and myself.

I will only read and watch things that are
pleasing to Heavenly Father.

I will only listen to music that is pleasing to Heavenly Father.

I will seek good friends and treat others kindly.

I will live now to be worthy to go to the temple
and do my part to have an eternal family.

I AM A CHILD OF GOD

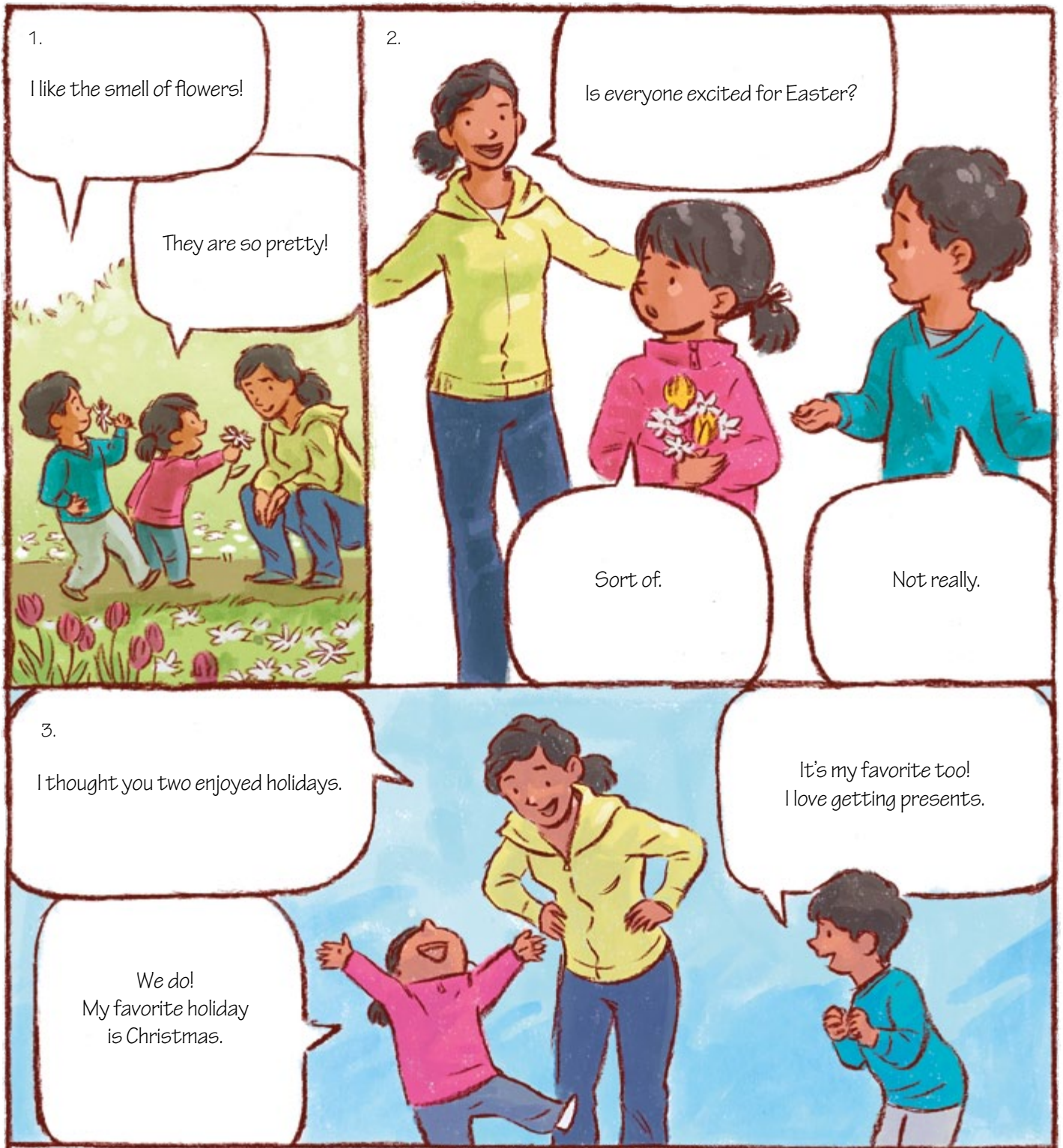
I know Heavenly Father loves me, and I love Him.

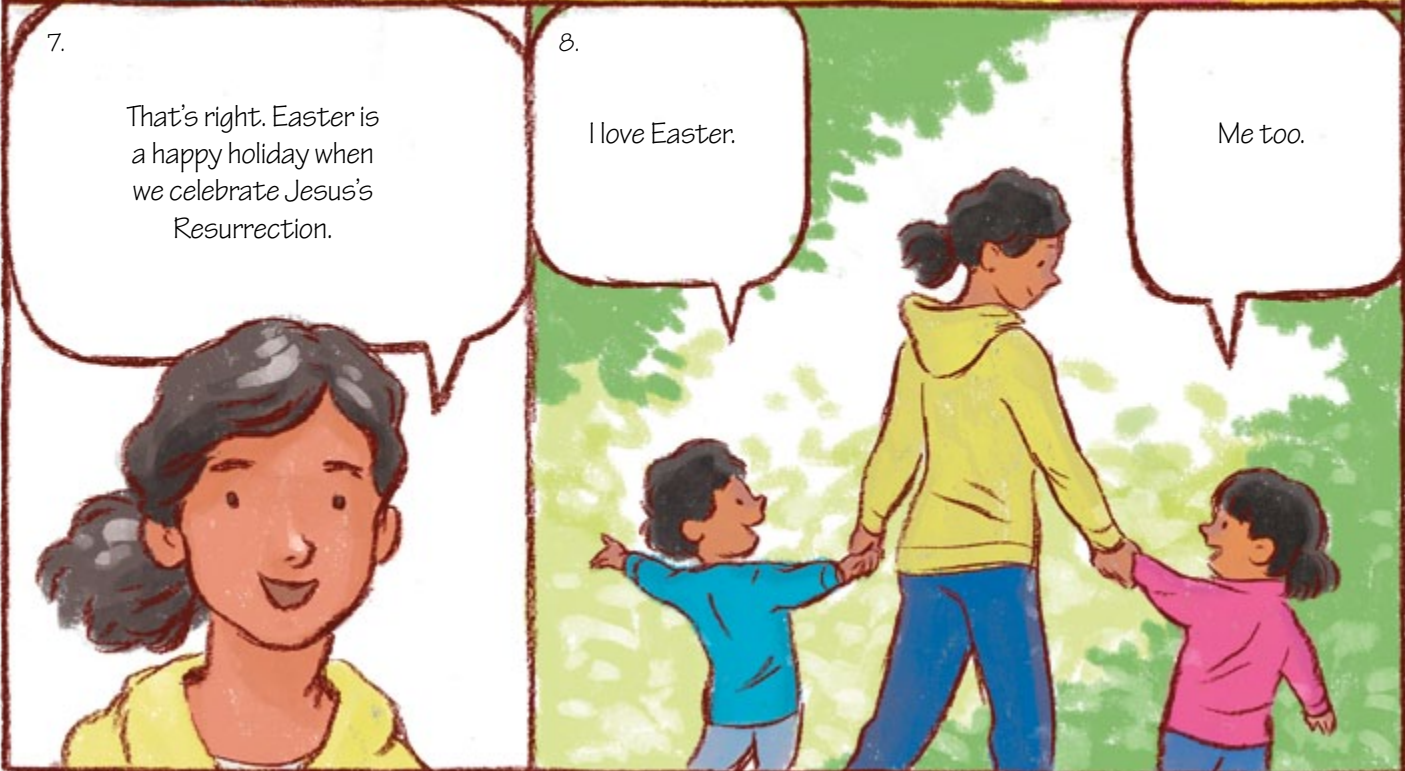
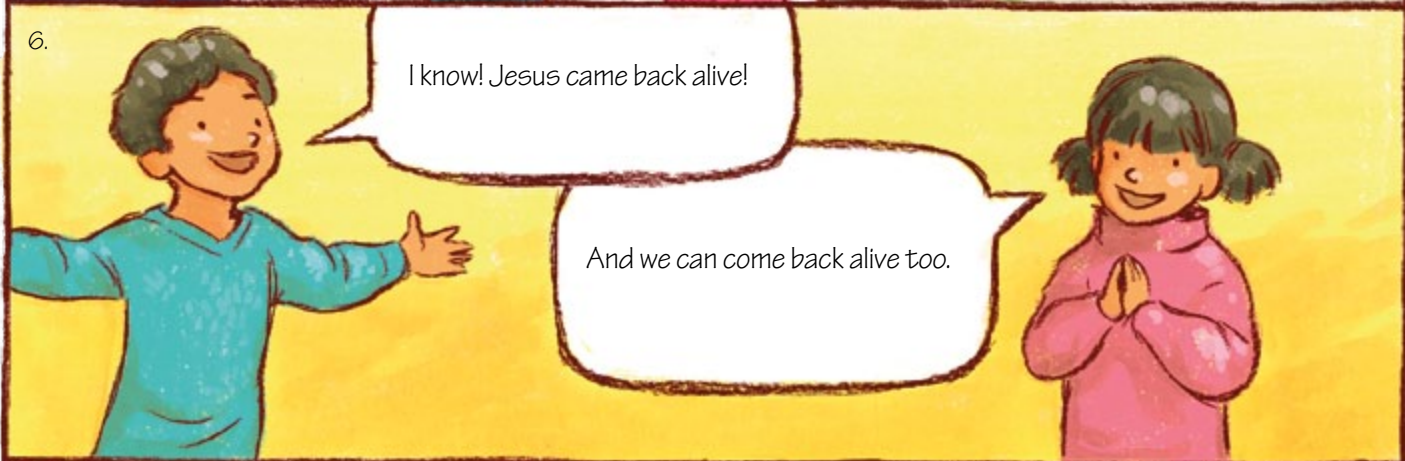
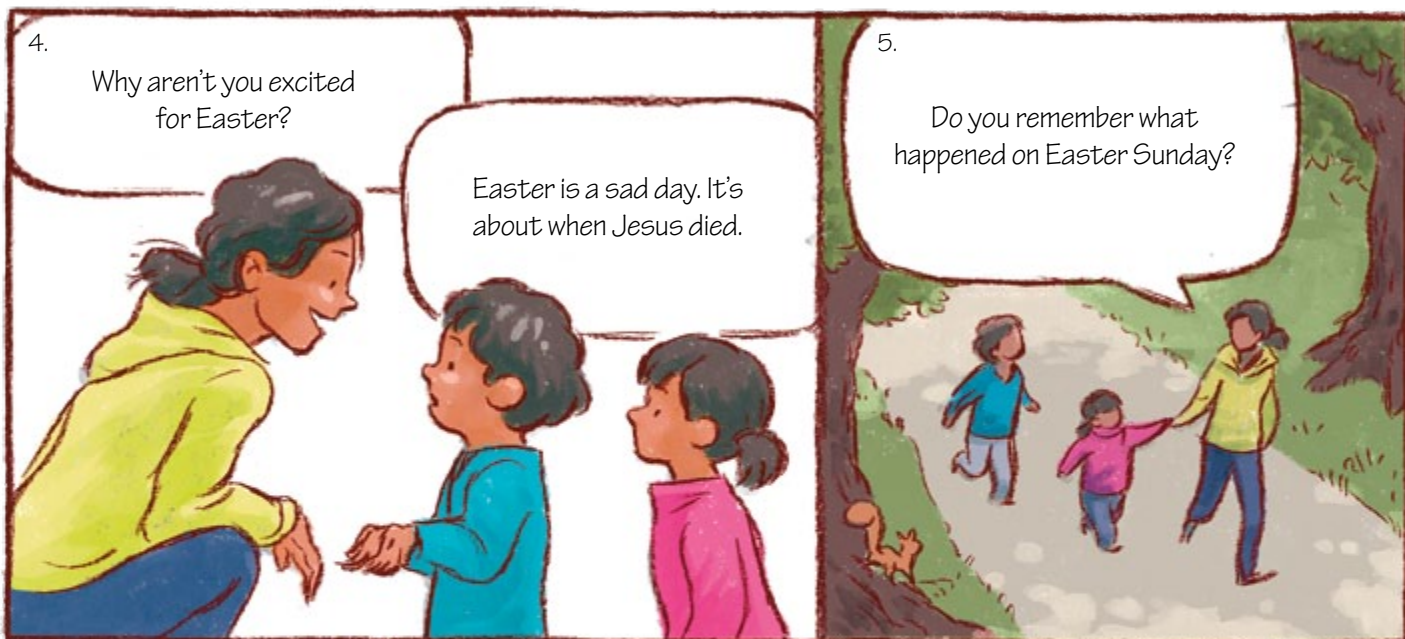
I can pray to Heavenly Father anytime, anywhere.

I am trying to remember and follow Jesus Christ.

Seeing the Joy of Easter

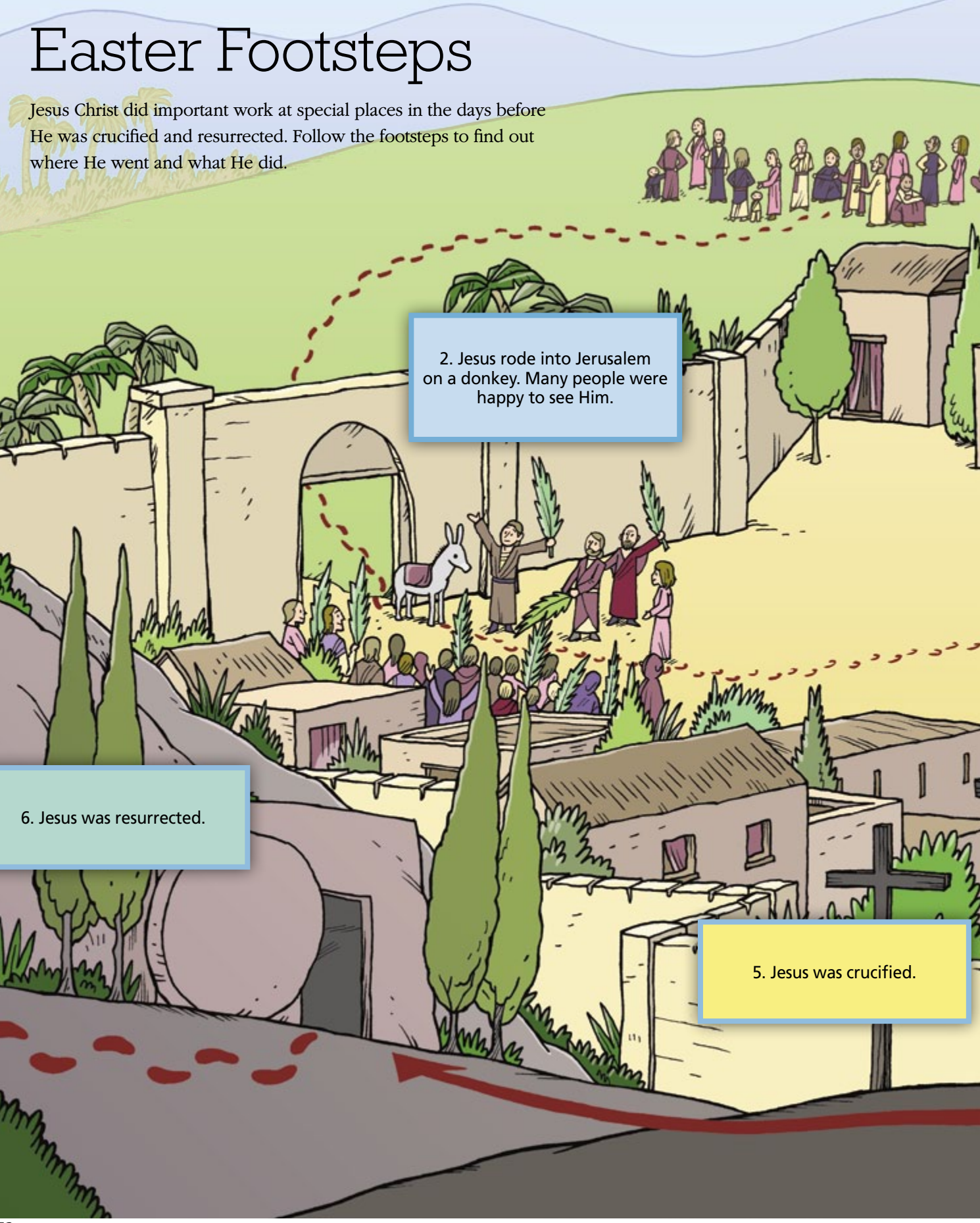
Based on a true story





Easter Footsteps

Jesus Christ did important work at special places in the days before He was crucified and resurrected. Follow the footsteps to find out where He went and what He did.



2. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Many people were happy to see Him.

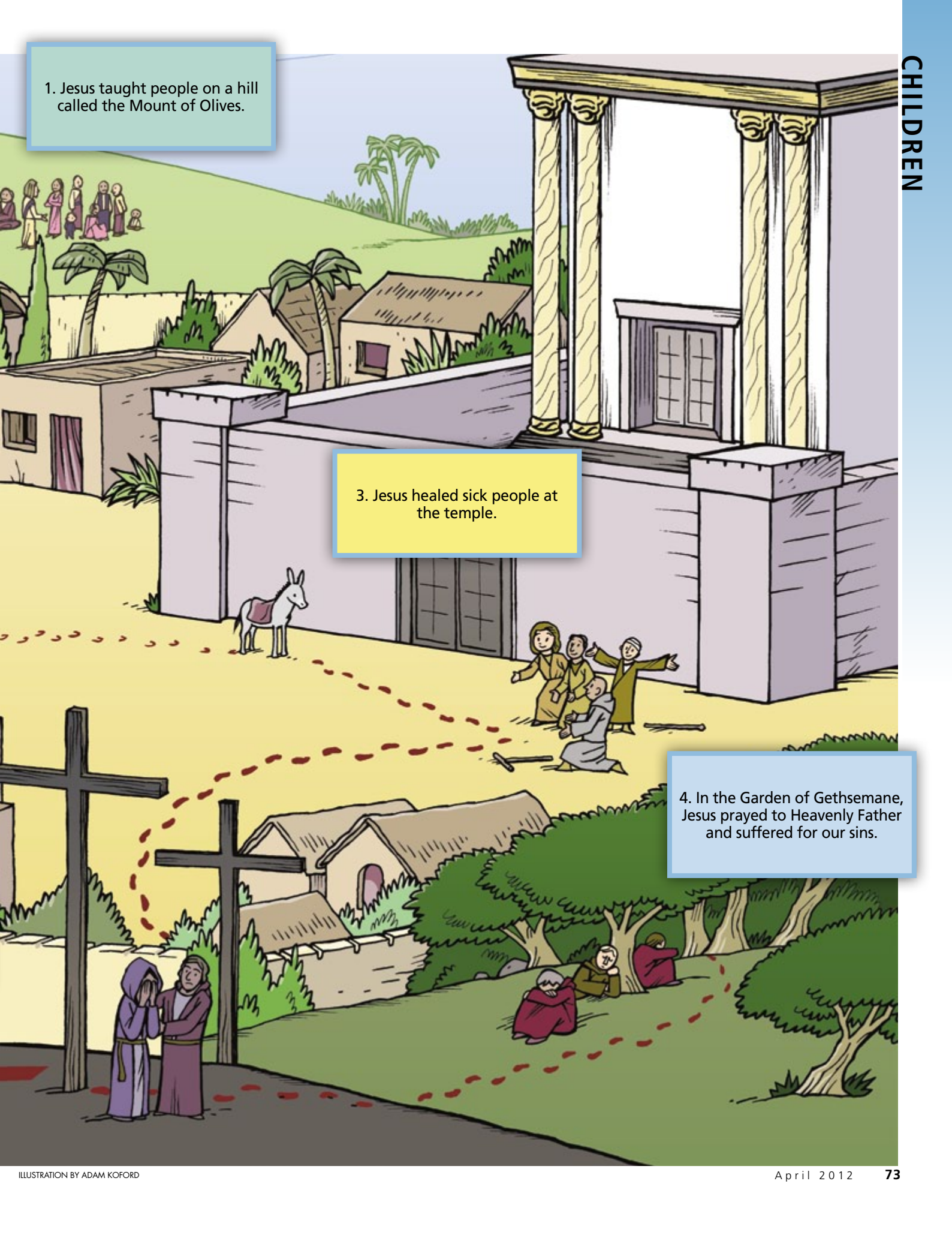
6. Jesus was resurrected.

5. Jesus was crucified.

1. Jesus taught people on a hill called the Mount of Olives.

3. Jesus healed sick people at the temple.

4. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to Heavenly Father and suffered for our sins.



Worldwide Leadership Training Highlights Path to Real Growth

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

Church leaders explained the significance of “real growth” and how to achieve it during the February 11, 2012, Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Presidency of the Seventy, and Church auxiliary presidencies participated in the instruction to Church leaders around the world.

“In Church terms, *growth* could be defined as ‘new members.’ . . . *Real growth*, however, is defined as ‘growth in the number of active members,” President Uchtdorf explained.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added, “Growth occurs when personal, lifelong conversion to the gospel results in increased faithfulness in each individual and family.”

That increased faithfulness includes things that can’t be easily measured, such as daily prayer, scripture study, family home evening, love at home, and personal experiences with the Atonement, President Uchtdorf said.

“Too often, we complicate the beauty and simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ with endless lists of meticulous expectations,” he said. “However, when we focus on the ‘why’ of the gospel, much of the confusion fades away.”

Much of the broadcast focused on key doctrines and principles, which provide answers to “why” questions.

“The proper ‘why’ questions will lead us to the proper ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘when,’ ‘where,’ ‘why,’ and ‘how,’ decisions,” President Uchtdorf said.

Marriage and Family in the Plan

“The Church is made up of families,” President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said. “Wards and stakes are incidental. When we talk of families, then we see the real growth in the Church.”

He stated that every husband and father should be an officer in the priesthood in his home, presiding over his family in righteousness. Similarly, he said, priesthood leaders should lead worthily—though the offices within the priesthood vary, every worthy priesthood holder has just as much priesthood as the next (see D&C 1:20).

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stressed that husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, must build a relationship of love, repentance, and prayer to successfully strengthen and protect the family, which “is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

“Three times in sacred scripture the warning is made that the whole earth would be utterly wasted at the Lord’s return if certain conditions were not in place,” he said. “In each instance that warning relates to the condition of the human family without the sealing ordinances of the temple. Without these ordinances of exaltation, the glory of God would not be realized.”

Achieving that end goal—eternal life and exaltation for all of God’s children—requires that real growth occur in our homes, in wards and branches, and throughout the Church.



Application of the Gospel

Real growth and conversion come from applying the gospel to daily life. In a question-and-answer discussion, Elder L. Tom Perry and Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the ultimate application of the gospel is making and keeping temple covenants. Obedience to covenants, Elder Christofferson said, can change the natural man to a Saint over time.

Reaching out to others is another important aspect of gospel application. Members are responsible individually and as a Church to reach out to rescue those in temporal and spiritual need, leaders said.

We should not hesitate to join hands with other faiths and service-oriented organizations to care for the poor and the needy, Elder Christofferson said. Priesthood leaders should lead out in these efforts, but members and missionaries should support that role as well.

A panel discussion emphasized focusing on ministering to families, strengthening Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and helping to build the faith and testimonies of the youth. Elder Ballard and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles participated, along with Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy; Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles speaks during a panel discussion held as part of the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting in February 2012.

During February's Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "The first thing we must do is understand. The second is to put our understanding into action. . . . There is little good in hearing the word of God if we do not translate what we hear into our lives."

He invited Church leaders to do three things following the leadership broadcast and throughout their service in their callings to get the most out of instruction by Church leaders:

1. Individually and as councils, prayerfully consider the instruction you have received and find the "why" of your service and ministry.
2. Following pondering and discussion, determine a few specific actions you will commit to implement. Actions should be tailored to the circumstances and needs of each organization, ward, stake, family, or individual.
3. Once you have made these commitments, follow up on them within the scope of your responsibilities and callings at each of your council meetings.

president; and Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president.

Elder Rasband said that every leader needs to be involved in bringing members back to full activity, and Elder Andersen emphasized that the youth need to be more involved in reactivating and strengthening other youth.

Achieving Real Growth

Real growth comes as we apply gospel principles in our daily lives, President Uchtdorf emphasized.

“As you consider these topics, ask yourself about the ‘why’ of your service and ministry and the resulting ‘therefore, what’ in your responsibilities as individuals and as councils,” he said.

Learn More

Individuals can watch, listen to, print, and download material from the broadcast in dozens of languages by going to lds.org/study/ other-addresses and clicking on **Worldwide Leadership Training**. ■

Call for Articles

The *Liahona* is interested in reading about your Christmas traditions:

- How does your family celebrate the season?
- What traditions are common in your culture?
- What traditions have you created to draw yourself and your family closer to the Savior?
- What memorable Christmas experiences—particularly those relating to traditions—can you share with us?

Please send your memories and ideas to the *Liahona* by June 1, 2012, at liahona@ldschurch.org. ■

BibleVideos.LDS.org is Gift to the World

During the 2011 First Presidency Christmas Devotional, Church leaders presented The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos website, a “gift” to the world.

BibleVideos.lds.org is a repository for original short videos that depict scenes from Christ’s life, ranging from the angel foretelling Christ’s birth to the Savior’s Resurrection.

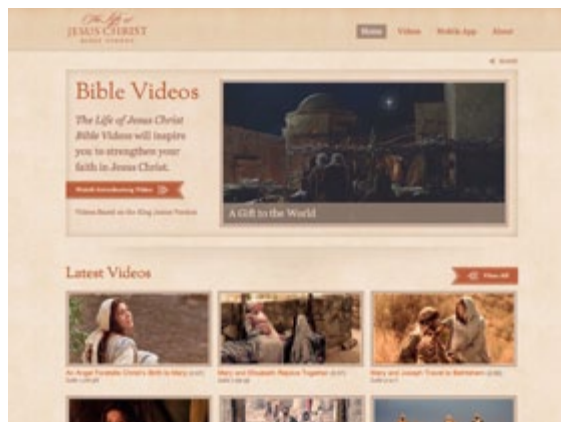
President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, announced the site during the devotional.

“Like the scriptures which these short films follow faithfully they may seem to you quiet,” he said. “Your faith and the Holy Ghost will create the emotion these world-changing events deserve.”

Material for the videos is being provided from footage shot at the Church’s new LDS Motion Picture Studio South Campus in Goshen, Utah, where filming for the New Testament Scripture Library Project began in August 2011.

The project will yield more than 100 vignettes portraying the life of Christ, taken directly from the text of the King James Version of the Bible.

The website has a mobile-friendly design and is available in English (BibleVideos.lds.org), Spanish (videodelabiblia.org), and Portuguese (videosdabiblia.org). A free iPad app is also available, offering a new way to experience Bible stories through sight, sound, and touch. ■



Eventually, nearly 100 videos depicting New Testament scenes of Christ’s life will be available on The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos website.

Elder Christofferson, Elder Jensen Teach Members in Argentina

On Saturday, November 12, 2011, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy addressed youth, young adults, priesthood leaders, missionaries, and members in Salta, Argentina.

Also present were Elder Mervyn B. Arnold, President of the South America South Area; his wife, Devonna; and Elder Ruben Spitale, Area Seventy. Elder Christofferson's wife, Kathy, and Elder Jensen's wife, Lona, also attended.

Nearly 1,300 youth and parents attended the fireside where both Elder Christofferson and Elder Jensen spoke. Another 10,000 members in 70 stake centers throughout Argentina watched by broadcast.

Elder Jensen, who previously served as the South America South Area President, said, "If you do not remember anything I said, I would like you to remember a phrase from a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, whom I testify is a true prophet of God. This is the phrase: 'Decisions determine destiny.' "

We have agency—the ability and privilege to make decisions—Elder Jensen said, and with those

decisions we choose our destinies.

He told the story of a friend who chose one night to drink and drive and caused an accident that killed two people. He contrasted it with the story of his and his wife's choice to postpone marriage so he could serve a mission as a young man.

"Upon [my return] we married in the temple. We made covenants, which we have renewed every week during all our lives. We made a decision that has determined our destiny," he said.

Sister Christofferson followed, sharing her testimony about the blessings of keeping covenants, and Elder Christofferson concluded the meeting.

"The only thing you really need is love and faith," Elder Christofferson said. "It is the faith that helps us in our marriage, family, profession, [and] employment."

He emphasized that the commandments give direction to our lives and help us obtain what is really important.

He then counseled both the youth and their parents to make a commitment to follow the counsel found in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet.

IMAGE BY JAMES DALRYMPLE



"This will greatly strengthen your children, even when they find themselves alone—knowing that their parents abide by these same principles," he said.

Elder Christofferson concluded with an expression of love to the members in Argentina, where he served a mission nearly five decades ago.

While in Salta, Elder Christofferson and Elder Jensen also met with local missionaries and young single adults, to whom they extended the love of the Brethren.

To read more about the ministry of modern Apostles, visit *Prophets and Apostles Speak Today* on LDS.org. ■

Both Elder Christofferson and Elder Jensen addressed missionaries from the Argentina Resistencia Mission early in November 2011.



The Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple, dedicated on December 11, 2011, by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, is the Church's 136th temple.

Dedication Held for Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple

The Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple was dedicated on Sunday, December 11, 2011, in three sessions by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The dedicatory sessions were broadcast to congregations of the Church within the temple district.

"What a beautiful temple this is," President Uchtdorf said at Saturday's cultural celebration, where youth performers from area congregations danced, sang, and presented a visual display of local history and culture. "It has a glowing shine like a jewel, and it is a jewel for this area of this country."

The Quetzaltenango Guatemala Temple is the Church's 136th temple worldwide and fifth in Central America. This temple will serve approximately 60,000 Latter-day Saints.

Church Breaks Ground for Seventh Temple in Brazil

On November 15, 2011, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles presided over the groundbreaking ceremony for the Fortaleza Brazil Temple, the Church's seventh temple in Brazil.

"This temple will be a source of hope, light, and faith in God for all who come and walk here and in this field," Elder Bednar said. "This city will always be better and different because of the temple to be built here."

The temple will be built at Avenida Santos Dumont in Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. President Thomas S. Monson announced construction of the Fortaleza Brazil Temple during the October 2009 general conference. ■

Concert in Puerto Rico Draws Thousands

On December 18, 2011, members of the five stakes of Puerto Rico participated in a Christmas concert held in the Paseo de las Artes in the city of Caguas. Approximately 85 members of the Church performed, and some 2,500 members of the community attended.

New Young Adult Center is Africa's Third

On November 4, 2011, young adults of the Soweto South Africa Stake held their first activity in a new building to be used exclusively as a young adult center.

More than 140 centers exist throughout Europe, and a few are scattered throughout the United States. The center in Soweto is Africa's third; the others are located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe.

Unique Approach Prompts Questions

A roll of paper was the genesis of the "Questions for God" missionary activity in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on October 9, 2011.

Over the course of several hours, more than 150 people stopped by two tables on a busy street, picked up felt pens, and wrote their questions. In all, 84 questions were written on the roll of paper. Many people voiced a desire for an answer from the missionaries present.

To read more of these and other stories, please visit news.lds.org. ■

A Necessary Compass

The *Liahona* is my beacon in this life. With it, I will never be lost. I believe that everyone who reads the Church magazines can find exactly what he or she needs. I am the Primary president, and I see that the children love to hear the stories about children like themselves in the magazine. The *Liahona* is a very necessary compass in our lives; it helps us avoid Satan’s pitfalls.

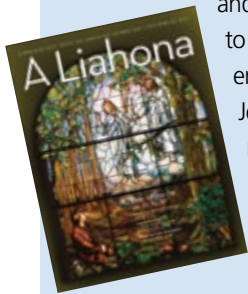
Yanina Ivanivna Davydenko, Ukraine

Experiences Lend Comfort

The *Liahona* has helped me so much through its messages and articles. With the agitated life we have, I often stop during the day and read an article from the magazine that shares the life experiences of other members. These articles always help me to find some spiritual comfort

and renew my desire to return to the presence of God and Jesus Christ with my family.

João Carlos, 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 two examples.



“The Blessings of Seminary,” page 20: Review the article ahead of time and decide how best to apply the message to your family.

If you have teenagers in seminary, start by asking them why seminary is important to them. Then read the section called “Receiving Promised Blessings.” Encourage younger children to prepare to attend seminary when they are old enough. If you do not have seminary-aged youth, you may want to read the article and then discuss the importance of seminary for today’s youth.

“Everybody Knows Bleck,” page 42: Consider singing “Do What Is Right” (*Hymns*, no. 237) as an opening song. Read or summarize the story about Bleck. Ask family members to share an experience when they had to make a tough decision between different paths and what consequences came from the decision they made. Conclude by reading the quote from President Thomas S. Monson. ■

Simple, Calm, and Unforgettable

It was an unforgettable family home evening with our two little girls, Angélique, age 6, and Béthanie, age 4. My husband and I had both collapsed into our chairs, tired and not knowing where to begin. So our daughters took initiative and turned the family home evening assignment wheel, giving us each a task. My husband’s job was to conduct, Béthanie had music, I had activities, and Angélique was to give the lesson.

Béthanie chose “I Love to See the Temple” (*Children’s Songbook*, 95), and we sang it together. Papa gave the opening prayer. Then Angélique took the most recent issue of the *Liahona* and chose an article in the children’s section. She is learning how to read in school, so she read the article to us. The feeling in our home was one of calm. The Spirit testified that what she was reading was true.

We played some games together, and I gave the closing prayer. While I was praying, I couldn’t keep from thanking our Heavenly Father for His Spirit and love and also for having blessed our home with these little spirits. My husband and I know that our responsibility is to care for them and to teach them the gospel. Holding family home evening is part of that sacred responsibility. ■

Sylvie Poussin, Réunion

By Bishop
Richard C. Edgley
First Counselor in the
Presiding Bishopric



HOPE IN THE ATONEMENT

I have met people who have lost all hope. Repentance, they feel, is beyond their reach and forgiveness outside their grasp. Such do not understand the cleansing power of the Atonement. Or, if they do understand, they have not internalized the meaning of Jesus Christ's suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross. For any of us to give up hope for the purifying of our lives is to disavow the depth, power, and extent of His suffering in our behalf.

A few years ago I had the assignment while at a stake conference to interview a 21-year-old man to determine his worthiness to serve a mission. Now, General Authorities do not usually interview potential missionaries. So this was unusual. As I read some background regarding the reasons for my interview, my heart ached. This boy had committed serious transgressions. I wondered why I would be asked to visit one with such a background, concluding it would be most unusual for me to recommend him for approval as a missionary.

After the Saturday evening session of conference, I retired to the stake president's office for the interview. As I was waiting, a handsome young man with a wonderful countenance approached. I wondered how I could excuse myself because it was apparent he wanted to talk and I had an appointment with a very troubled young man. Then he introduced himself. He was the young man I was there for.

Hope must be based not only upon knowledge and testimony but also upon a personalization of the Atonement.

In the privacy of the office, I asked just one question: "Why am I interviewing you?"

He recounted his past. When he was through, he began to explain the steps and the personal suffering he had gone through. He talked about the Atonement—the infinite power of the Atonement. He bore his testimony and expressed his love for the Savior. And then he said, "I believe the Savior's personal suffering in Gethsemane and His sacrifice upon the cross were powerful enough to rescue even a man like me."

Moved by his humility and by the Spirit, I said, "I am going to recommend you to serve as a representative of Jesus Christ." And then I said, "I am going to ask only one thing of you. I want you to be the best missionary in the entire Church. That is all."

Three or four months later, Sister Edgley and I were speaking at a missionary training center. At the conclusion of the devotional, I was visiting with missionaries when I saw a young man with a familiar face.

He asked, "Do you remember me?"

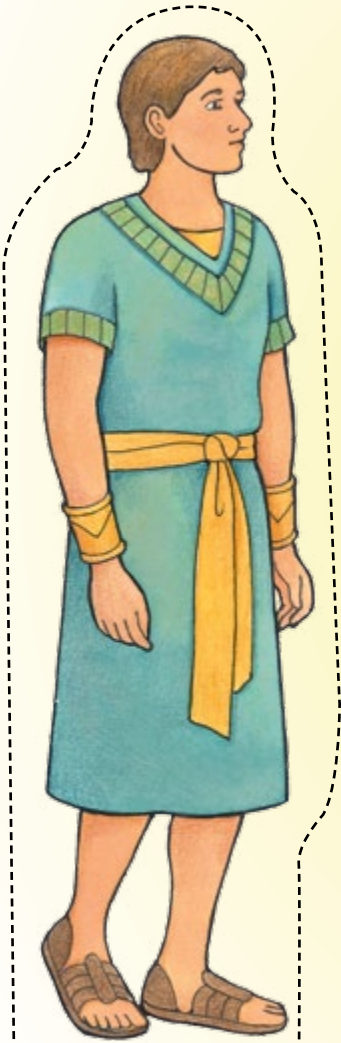
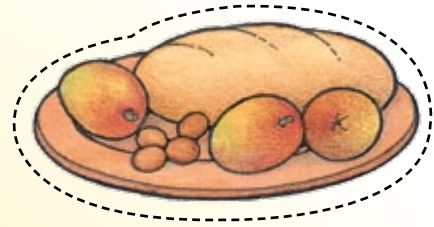
Somewhat embarrassed, I said, "I'm sorry. I know I should, but I just don't remember."

Then he said, "Let me tell you who I am. I am the best missionary in the missionary training center." And I believed him.

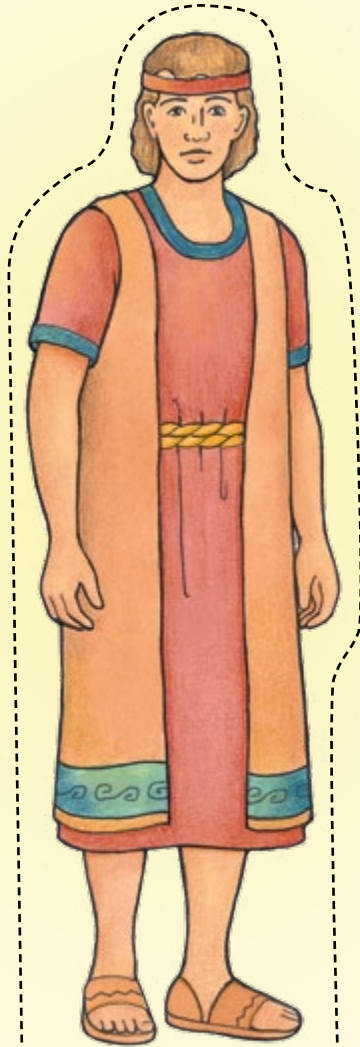
This young man's hope was based not only upon a knowledge and testimony of the Atonement but also upon a personalization of this gift. He understood that it was for him personally! He knew the power of the Atonement and the hope it gives when all might seem lost or hopeless. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on November 4, 2008. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

This year many issues of the *Liahona* will contain a set of Book of Mormon scripture figures. To make them sturdy and easy to use, cut them out and glue or tape them to heavy paper, small paper sacks, or craft sticks. Store each set in an envelope or bag, along with the square that tells where to find the scripture story that goes with the figures.



Alma



Amulek



Zeezrom

Alma and Amulek's
Mission to Ammonihah

Alma 8–14



“You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, ‘No one understands. No one knows,’” writes Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us.” See “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” page 12.