

Liahona

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Miracle of the Quail, by Sandra B. Rast

In 1846 the last of the Latter-day Saints were driven out of Nauwoo, Illinois. Most of them were poor, sick, or aged. With few resources, they ferried across the Mississippi River and set up a temporary camp. Amid that suffering, hundreds of quail flew into and fell into the camp. They were so tame that the Saints could catch them with their hands, providing much-needed food for the starving Saints.



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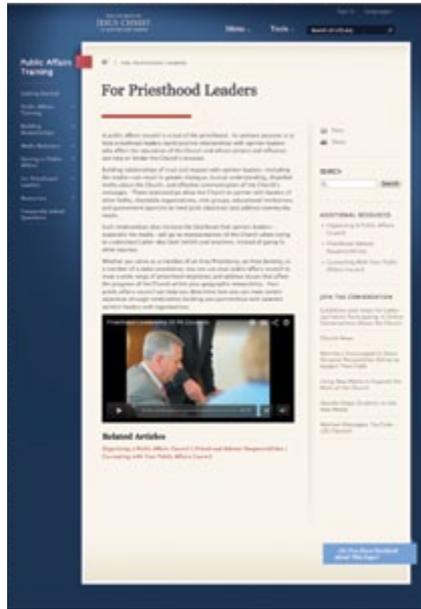
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FOR ADULTS

Priesthood leaders reach out to local communities through Church public affairs councils (see page 24). You can learn more about those efforts at publicaffairs.lds.org (in English).

FOR YOUTH

Visit youth.lds.org for free music downloads, inspiring videos, and articles about standards in *For the Strength of Youth*.

FOR CHILDREN

Meet Soma, Eszter, and Kata from Budapest, Hungary, on page 62. See more photos of them at liahona.lds.org.

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IN YOUR LANGUAGE

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



**By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf**
Second Counselor in the
First Presidency

ALWAYS IN THE Middle

By many world calendars, July marks the middle of the year. While the beginnings and endings of things are celebrated and remembered, the middle of things often goes unnoticed.

Beginnings are times for making resolutions, for creating plans, for bursts of energy. Endings are times for winding down and may involve feelings of completion or loss. But with the proper outlook, considering ourselves as *in the middle* of things can help us not only to understand life a little better but also to live it a little more meaningfully.

The Middle of Missionary Work

When I speak to our young missionaries, I often tell them they are in the middle of their missions. Whether they just arrived the day before or are to depart for home the day after, I ask them to think of themselves as always being in the middle.

New missionaries may feel they are too inexperienced to be effective, and so they delay speaking or acting with confidence and boldness. Seasoned missionaries who are close to completing their missions may feel sad their missions are coming to a close, or they may slow down as they contemplate what they will do after their missions.

Whatever the circumstances and wherever they serve, the truth is that the Lord's missionaries are daily sowing countless seeds of good tidings. Thinking of themselves as

always being in the middle of their missions will embolden and energize these faithful representatives of the Lord. As it is with full-time missionaries, so it is with all of us.

We Are Always in the Middle

This change in perspective is more than a simple trick of the mind. There is a sublime truth behind the idea that we are always in the middle. If we look at our location on a map, we are tempted to say we are at a beginning. But if we look more closely, wherever we are is simply in the middle of a larger place.

As it is with space, so it is with time. We may feel we are at the beginning or end of our lives, but when we look at where we are against the backdrop of eternity—when we realize that our spirit has existed for time beyond our capacity to measure and, because of the perfect sacrifice and Atonement of Jesus Christ, that our soul will exist for an eternity to come—we can recognize that we are truly in the middle.

Recently I felt impressed to redo the headstone on my parents' grave. Time had not been kind to the grave site, and I felt that a new headstone would be more fitting for their exemplary lives. When I looked at the birth dates and death dates on the headstone connected by the usual insignificant little dash, this small symbol of a lifespan suddenly filled my mind and heart with an



abundance of rich memories. Each of these treasured memories reflects a moment in the middle of my parents' lives and in the middle of my life.

Whatever our age, whatever our location, when things occur in our lives, we are always in the middle. What's more, we will forever be in the middle.

The Hope of Being in the Middle

Yes, there will be moments of beginnings and moments of endings throughout our lives, but these are only markers along the way of the great middle of our eternal lives. Whether we are at the beginning or the end, whether we are young or old, the Lord can use us for His purposes if we simply set aside whatever thoughts limit our ability to serve and allow His will to shape our lives.

The Psalmist says, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we [should] rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). Amulek reminds us that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold *the day of this life* is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:32; emphasis added). And a poet muses, "Forever—is composed of Nows."¹

Being always in the middle means that the game is never over, hope is never lost, defeat is never final. For no matter where we are or what our circumstances, an eternity of beginnings and an eternity of endings stretch out before us.

We are always in the middle. ■

NOTE

1. Emily Dickinson, "Forever—is composed of Nows," in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (1960), 624.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider discussing with the family how they are "always in the middle," even if they are beginning or ending something. Encourage them to do their best on their current activities, not dwelling on the past or waiting for the next activity or project. You may want to suggest they choose one thing they can do to implement this counsel and set a date to achieve their goal.

YOUTH

In the Middle of Your Preparation for a Mission

President Uchtdorf tells missionaries to think of themselves as being in the middle of their missions. You can also apply this idea to your mission preparation: whether you are 12 or 18, you can prepare to serve a mission.

What are some things you can do “in the middle” of your mission preparation?

- Always be worthy to attend the temple.
- Learn to recognize promptings from the Holy Ghost by writing down your promptings and acting on them.
- Pray for the missionaries.
- Ask the missionaries in your area what they recommend you do to prepare to serve a mission.
- Learn to manage your time effectively, including important activities such as service, scripture study, and journal writing.
- When talking with a family member, share a scripture that inspired you recently. Explain what you think about the scripture.
- Ask your friends about their religions and what they believe. Be willing to share your beliefs. Invite them to church or activities.

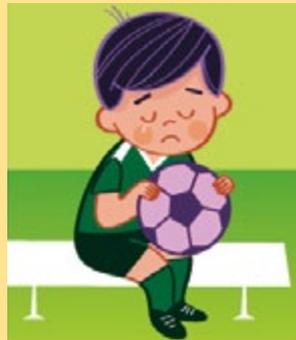
As you recognize that you are in the middle of your mission preparation, you can live your life to be more worthy of the Lord’s trust and the Spirit’s companionship.



CHILDREN

Everyone Can Do Something Now

1. President Uchtdorf teaches that no matter your age, you can do something to help others. In your journal or on a piece of paper, list your gifts or abilities. Ask your parents what they think your gifts are.
2. Decide how you could use your gifts to help others in the situations below.



3. At the end of your list of gifts, write one way you can use those gifts to help others this week.



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.



Faith, Family, Relief

Demonstrating Our Discipleship through Love and Service

Throughout His mortal life, Jesus Christ showed His love for others by ministering to them. He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). He set the example and wants us to “succor those that stand in need of [our] succor” (Mosiah 4:16). He calls His disciples to work with Him in His ministry, giving them the opportunity to serve others and become more like Him.¹

Our service as visiting teachers will closely resemble the ministry of our Savior when we show our love for those we visit teach by doing the following:²

- Remember their names and the names of their family members and become acquainted with them.
- Love them without judging them.
- Watch over them and strengthen their faith “one by one,” as the Savior did (3 Nephi 11:15).
- Establish sincere friendships with them and visit them in their homes and elsewhere.
- Care about each sister. Remember birthdays, graduations, weddings, baptisms, or other times that are meaningful to her.



- Reach out to new and less-active members.
- Reach out to the lonely or those in need of comfort.

From the Scriptures

3 Nephi 11; Moroni 6:4; Doctrine and Covenants 20:47

NOTES

1. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 105.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 3.2.3.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 3.
4. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 6.

What Can I Do?

1. How am I increasing my ability to nurture others?
2. What am I doing to ensure that the sisters I watch over know that I love them?

From Our History

“The New Testament includes accounts of women, named and unnamed, who exercised faith in Jesus Christ. . . . These women became exemplary disciples. . . . [They] journeyed with Jesus and His Twelve Apostles. They gave of their substance to assist in His ministry. After His death and Resurrection, [they] continued to be faithful disciples.”³

Paul wrote of a woman named Phebe, who was “a servant of the church” (Romans 16:1). He asked the people to “assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many” (Romans 16:2). “The kind of service rendered by Phebe and other great women of the New Testament continues today with members of the Relief Society—leaders, visiting teachers, mothers, and others—who act as succorers, or helpers, of many.”⁴

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).

As you review the April 2012 general conference, you can use these pages (and Conference Notebooks in future issues) to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.

STORIES FROM CONFERENCE

The Power of the Priesthood

During World War II, in the early part of 1944, an experience involving the priesthood took place [and] was related by a correspondent—not a member of the Church—who worked for a newspaper in Hawaii. . . . He and other correspondents were in the second wave behind the marines at Kwajalein Atoll. As they advanced, they noticed a young marine floating facedown in the water, obviously badly wounded. The shallow water around him was red with his blood. And then they noticed another marine moving toward his wounded comrade. The second marine was also wounded, with his left arm hanging helplessly by his side. He lifted up the head of the one who was floating in the water in order to keep him from drowning. In a panicky voice he called for help. The correspondents looked again at the boy he was supporting and called back, “Son, there is nothing anyone can do for this boy.”

“Then,” wrote the correspondent, “I saw something that I had never seen before.” This boy, badly wounded himself, made his way to the shore with the seemingly lifeless body of his fellow marine. He “put the head of his companion on his knee. . . . What a picture that was—these two mortally wounded boys—both . . . clean, wonderful-looking young men, even in their distressing situation. And the one boy bowed his head over the other and said, ‘I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the priesthood, to remain alive until I can get medical help.’” The correspondent concluded his article: “The three of us [the two marines and I] are here in the hospital. The doctors don’t know [how they made it alive], but I know.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Willing and Worthy to Serve,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2012, 67, 68.



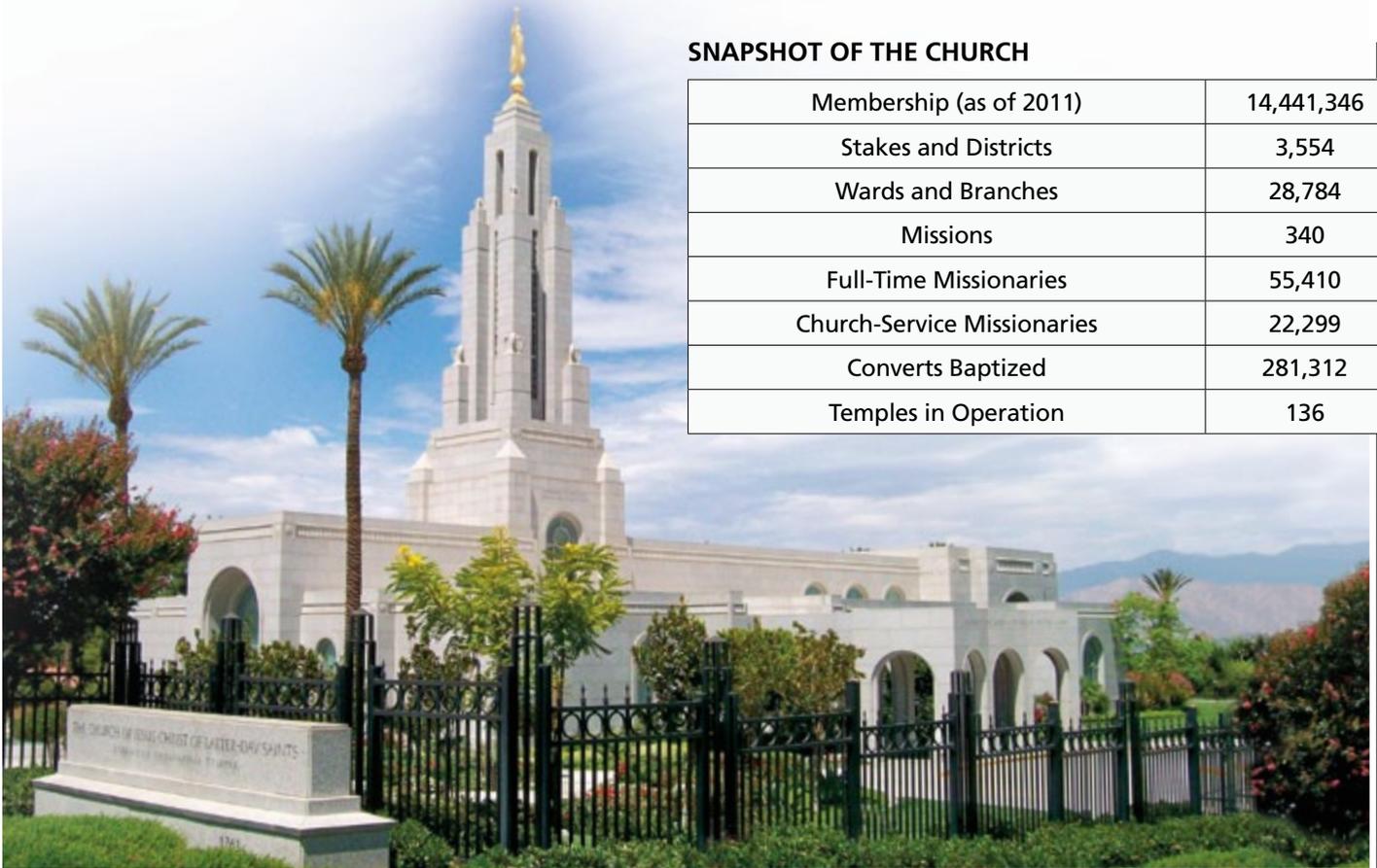
Questions to Ponder

- What blessings come to Latter-day Saints through the power of the priesthood?
- How are faith and the priesthood connected—for the priesthood holders and for the recipients of blessings?

Consider writing your thoughts in your journal or discussing them with others.

Additional resources on this topic: “Priesthood” in Study by Topic on LDS.org; Julie B. Beck, “An Outpouring of Blessings,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 11–13; *Gospel Principles* (2009), “The Priesthood,” 67–71.

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



SNAPSHOT OF THE CHURCH

Membership (as of 2011)	14,441,346
Stakes and Districts	3,554
Wards and Branches	28,784
Missions	340
Full-Time Missionaries	55,410
Church-Service Missionaries	22,299
Converts Baptized	281,312
Temples in Operation	136

STUDY CORNER

Drawing Parallels: Family

Some of the most important topics are addressed by more than one general conference speaker. Here is what four speakers said about families. Try looking for other parallels as you study conference talks.

- “Husbands and wives should understand that their first calling—from which they will never be released—is to one another and then to their children.”¹
—President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- “We need to do things in the *right order!* Marriage first and then family. Too many in the world have forgotten this natural order of things and think they can change it or even reverse it.”²—Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- “We know that family scripture study and family home evenings are not always perfect. Regardless of the challenges you face, do not become discouraged.”³
—Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- “Teaching our children to understand is more than just imparting information. It’s helping our children get the doctrine into their hearts.”⁴—Cheryl A. Esplin, second counselor in the Primary general presidency

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “And a Little Child Shall Lead Them,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 8.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “That the Lost May Be Found,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 100.
3. Quentin L. Cook, “In Tune with the Music of Faith,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 44.
4. Cheryl A. Esplin, “Teaching Our Children to Understand,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 10.

Prophetic Promise

As we leave this conference, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. . . . May you ponder the truths you have heard, and may they help you become even better than you were when conference began.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “As We Close This Conference,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 116.

**BUT IF NOT**

"The faithful will not be totally immune from the events on this planet. Thus the courageous attitudes of imperiled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are worthy of emulation. They knew that God could rescue them. 'But if not,' they vowed, they would still serve God anyway (see Daniel 3:16–18)."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Encircled in the Arms of His Love," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 17.

A RIVER OF Peace

Despite my grief, I move forward with my head held up in faith and hope in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

By Lanise Heaton

The day our oldest son died in an accident, the loss opened a piercing wound in my soul. Yet I knew I could count on the Savior's atoning power to help carry my heavy burden of sorrow and pain. My husband and I asked our home teachers to give each of us a blessing. We knew strength would come to us beyond our own. Our Savior has promised He will not leave us comfortless (see John 14:18). I have clung with an iron grip to that promise and testify that so has He.

Isaiah teaches that the Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). If anyone could succor us, I knew He could, on a very personal level. Yet I also knew that if He instantly snatched our grief from us, there would be no growth, no dawn of understanding.

Despite the heartache, I have experienced a constant underlying river of peace that flows from the Savior (see 1 Nephi 20:18). At particularly hard moments, days, or even weeks, His peace has carried away my sadness. I have but to ask for it. Heavenly Father doesn't want us to go through mortality alone.

As I reflect on the accident that took my son's life, an Old Testament account comes to mind:

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17–18; emphasis added).

The important part is "But if not." We must keep the faith no matter what



happens. Heavenly Father could have sent angels to carry my son out of harm's way, but He didn't. He knows what it will take to sanctify us so we can be prepared to come home to Him. Everything will turn out OK. But that doesn't mean we will never mourn or cry again. Our mourning is a result of our love, but our hearts don't have to be troubled.

The greatest gift we can give those on both sides of the veil is to move forward with our heads held up in faith and hope in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, even if each step is taken with tears streaming down our faces. For we are promised that "the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ" (Mosiah 16:8). One day "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). ■

HOW DO WE COPE WITH GRIEF?

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed this question in his October 2006 general conference address:

"I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world's history, that Friday [when the Savior was crucified] was the darkest.

"But the doom of that day did not endure.

"The despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind.

"And in an instant the eyes that had been filled with ever-flowing tears dried. The lips that had whispered prayers of distress and grief now filled the air with wondrous praise, for Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, stood before them as the firstfruits of the Resurrection, the proof that death is merely the beginning of a new and wondrous existence. . . .

"Because of the life and eternal sacrifice of the Savior of the world, we will be reunited with those we have cherished."

"Sunday Will Come," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 30.

In an upcoming family home evening, consider discussing death, the Resurrection, and the plan of salvation. See, for example, 2 Nephi 9 and Alma 11–12.

THE LESSON IS INSIDE THE LEARNER

When we acknowledge the magnificent potential of each learner, we begin to see as God sees.

By Russell T. Osguthorpe

Sunday School
General President



While on a Church assignment in Cusco, Peru, my wife and I attended a combined Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood class. The teacher that day was the adult Gospel Doctrine teacher. Because of scheduling issues during the first two meetings, only about 20 minutes remained for him to teach what he had prepared.

He began by asking all members to stand who had joined the Church during the past two years. Five members stood. He wrote the number 5 on the board and then said, “Brothers and sisters, it is wonderful that we have these 5 members with us who have recently joined the Church. The only problem is that during the past two years, we baptized 16 new converts in this ward.”

He then wrote the number 16 next to the number 5 and with great earnestness asked, “So, brothers and sisters, what are we going to do?”

A sister raised her hand and said, “We need to go find them and bring them back.”

The teacher agreed and then wrote the word *rescue* on the board. “We’ve got 11 new members to bring back,” he responded.

He then read a quote from President Thomas S. Monson about the importance of rescuing. He also read from the New Testament about how the Savior went after lost sheep (see Luke 15:6). Then he asked, “So how will we bring them back?”

Hands went up, and he called on one member after another. Class members had suggestions about how they as a ward family or as individuals could work together to help recent converts return to church. Then the teacher asked, “So if you were walking down the street and saw a man you recognized as one of these recent converts on the other side of the street, what would you

do?” One member said, “I would cross over and greet him. I would tell him how much we need him to come back and how eager we are to have him join with us again.”

Others in the class agreed and offered additional specific suggestions about how to help these members. There was an enthusiasm in the room, a determination to do what needed to be done to help these recently baptized members find their way back to full activity.

My wife and I left this lesson with a renewed desire to do something ourselves to help someone return to activity in the Church. I believe that everyone in the class left with such a feeling. Following this experience, I asked myself: What made this short lesson so effective? Why did everyone leave the class feeling so motivated to live the gospel more fully?

While reflecting on these two questions, I identified four principles that



made this class an effective learning and teaching experience:

1. Conversion is the aim.
2. Love is the motive.
3. Doctrine is the key.
4. The Spirit is the teacher.

Conversion Is the Aim

Rather than trying to “‘pour information’ into the minds of class members,” as President Monson has cautioned us *not* to do, this teacher was trying “*to inspire the individual to think about, feel about, and then do something about living gospel principles.*”¹

In short, this teacher’s aim was to help class members *do* something they might not have done had they not attended the class. And that *doing*

was intended to help each individual *become* a true disciple of the Savior.

The aim of this type of teaching is *conversion*. The word *conversion* means simply to turn in a new direction, to embrace new conduct. Conversion—becoming a true disciple—is not a single event but a lifelong process.² In this class the *doing* by class members was intended to help not only the class members but also the recent converts they would be trying to activate. Anytime we live a principle of the gospel more fully, someone else is blessed either directly or indirectly. For this reason, gospel learning and teaching are unique. Rather than leading only to the acquisition of knowledge, gospel learning leads to personal conversion.



Love helps us
as teachers
to teach as the
Savior would teach
if He were in our
classroom.

Love Is the Motive

While participating in the class in Peru, I could feel the love the teacher had for those present as well as for the recent converts he was inviting class members to activate. Love seemed to permeate the room—from teacher to learner, from learner to teacher, from one learner to another, and from learners to the recent converts.

Love helps us as teachers to teach as the Savior would teach if He were in our classroom. Indeed, “love prompts us to prepare and teach differently.”³

When a teacher’s motive is to cover the lesson material, the teacher focuses on content rather than on the needs of each individual learner. The Peruvian teacher seemed to feel no need to *cover* anything. He simply wanted to inspire class members to reach out to their brothers and sisters in love. Love for the Lord and love for each other constituted the driving force. Love was the motive. When love is our motive, the Lord will strengthen us to accomplish His purposes to help His children. He will inspire us with *what* we as teachers need to say and *how* we should say it.

Doctrine Is the Key

The teacher in Peru did not read from the lesson manual as he taught. I am convinced he used the manual or conference talks to prepare for the class, but when he taught, he taught from the scriptures. He recounted the story of the lost sheep and recited

Gospel learning and teaching are not about mastering facts; they’re about mastering discipleship.

the following verse: “And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). He shared President Monson’s invitation to all Church members to rescue those who have lost their way. The doctrines at the center of his lesson were faith and charity. Class members needed enough faith to act, and they needed to act out of love.

When the doctrines of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are taught with clarity and conviction, the Lord strengthens both learner and teacher. The more class members offered their suggestions for reaching out to their brothers and sisters who were less active, the closer everyone felt to the Savior, who constantly reached out to others during His earthly ministry.

Doctrine is the key to effective gospel learning and teaching. It unlocks hearts. It unlocks minds. It opens the way for the Spirit of God to inspire and edify everyone present.

The Spirit Is the Teacher

Great gospel teachers recognize that they are not actually the teachers at all. The gospel is taught and learned through the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the teaching of gospel truths cannot lead to learning (see D&C 42:14). The more the teacher gives inspired invitations to act, the more the Spirit will be present during the lesson. The Peruvian teacher gave an inspired invitation. Then, as class members responded with suggestions, the feeling of the Spirit grew and strengthened everyone.

The teacher was not trying to *cover* the lesson. Rather, he was trying to *uncover* the lesson that was already inside the learner. By inviting class members through the power of the Spirit, the teacher helped members discover their own desire to act—to reach out to their brothers and sisters in love. As class members shared their ideas, they inspired each other because they were jointly drawing upon the Spirit.

When we are trying to live the gospel by helping those around us, the Lord will inspire us in what we should do. So if as teachers we want the Spirit to be more evident in our classroom, we simply need to invite class members to live a principle



of the gospel more fully. When we commit to live a gospel principle more fully, we draw nearer to God and God draws nearer to us (see D&C 88:63).

The Potential of Each Learner

We do not learn and teach the gospel for the sole purpose of gaining knowledge. We learn and teach the gospel to gain exaltation. Gospel learning and teaching are not about mastering facts; they're about mastering discipleship. Whether we are teaching our own children in the home or teaching ward or branch members in the classroom, we need to remember that the lesson we are teaching is already inside the learner. Our role as parents or teachers is

to help learners discover the lesson inside their own hearts and minds.

When we acknowledge the magnificent potential of each learner, we begin to see as God sees. Then we can say what He would have us say and do what He would have us do. As we pursue this path of learning and teaching, conversion is our aim, love is our motive, doctrine is the key, and the Spirit is the teacher. As we learn and teach in this way, the Lord will bless both learner and teacher “that all may be edified of all” (D&C 88:122). ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 107.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40–43; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34.
3. *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 32.

If we want the Spirit to be more evident in our classroom, we simply need to invite class members to live a principle of the gospel more fully.





HANDCART PIONEERS, BY MINERVA TEICHERT © IRI, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM



By Elder
L. Tom Perry
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

THE STRENGTH OF **Our** HERITAGE

Pioneer faith is needed as much in the world today as in any period of time.

I've always been excited about pioneer stories. My grandmother lived next door to us when I was a child. At the age of eight she had walked most of the way across the plains. She could remember enough pioneer experiences to keep me fascinated by the hour as I would sit and listen to her.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) has always been one of my special heroes. His answers to problems were basic and fundamental and benefited the people. I marvel at his spirit and enthusiasm as he led the Saints west.

When it became apparent that the cost of moving new converts from Europe to Utah would be prohibitive, the idea was presented to President Young that they use handcarts

to cross the prairies. President Young could immediately see the advantage, not only in the cost savings but also in the physical benefit it would be to the people to walk that far and arrive in the Salt Lake Valley full of vigor and vitality after such an experience. He said:

“We are sanguine [confident] that such a train will out-travel any ox train that can be started. They should have a few good cows to furnish milk, and a few beef cattle to drive and butcher as they may need. In this way the expense, risk, loss and perplexity of teams will be obviated [avoided], and the saints will more effectually escape the scenes of distress, anguish and death which have often laid so many of our brethren and sisters in the dust.

“We propose sending men of faith and experience, with suitable instructions, to some proper outfitting point to carry into effect the above suggestions; let the saints, therefore, who intend to immigrate the ensuing year, understand that they are expected to walk and draw their luggage across the plains, and that they will be assisted by the [Perpetual Emigrating] fund in no other way.”¹



Pioneer faith is needed as much in the world today as in any period of time. We need to know that heritage. We need to teach it, we need to be proud of it, and we need to preserve it.

Between 1856 and 1860 a few thousand Saints successfully made the 1,300-mile (2,090 km) journey by handcart. The success of their travel was marred only by two fateful trips, the Willie and Martin handcart companies, which left too late in the year to avoid the early winter snows. Again, notice the genius of President Young. At the October 1856 general conference, he devoted the entire conference to organizing the relief effort to assist those distressed Saints. And he instructed the brethren not to wait a week or a month before they went. He wanted several four-horse teams

ready the following Monday to go and relieve the suffering of the Saints caught in the snows. And that's exactly what happened.

The first relief parties were on their way the following Monday. The description of the Willie company's joy upon receiving that first relief party brings emotions close to the surface. Captain Willie had left his small band and gone out with a single companion in search of the relief train.

History records: “On the evening of the third day after Captain Willie's departure, just as the sun was sinking beautifully behind the distant hills, on an eminence, immediately west of our camp, several covered wagons, each drawn by four horses, were seen coming towards us. The news ran through the camp like wildfire, and all who were able to leave their beds turned out *en masse* to see them. A few minutes brought them sufficiently near to reveal our faithful captain slightly in advance of the train. Shouts of joy rent the air; strong men wept until tears ran freely down their furrowed and sunburnt cheeks, and little children partook of

the joy which some of them hardly understood, and fairly danced around with gladness. Restraint was set aside in the general rejoicing, and as the brethren entered [the] camp the sisters fell upon them and deluged them with kisses. The brethren were so overcome that they could not for some time utter a word, but in choking silence repressed all demonstration of . . . emotions. . . . Soon, however, feeling was somewhat abated, and such a shaking of hands, such words of welcome, and such invocation of God's blessing have seldom been witnessed!”²

Building Strong Families

Out of that hardy pioneer stock have developed traditions and a heritage that have built strong families that have contributed much to the western United States and to the rest of the world.

I was invited to a luncheon years ago sponsored by a retail firm that was announcing the opening of four stores in the Salt Lake City area. Having had retail experience, I asked the president as I sat at the table with him how he was brave enough to open four stores at the same time in a brand-new market area. His reply was just about what I expected. He said his firm had made a demographic study of all the major metropolitan areas in the United States. The firm was interested in finding out which of these areas offered the greatest potential for a department store appealing to young families. The Salt Lake area, destination of those early pioneers, ranked first in the nation.

The firm also found as a result of its study that the workforce in the Salt Lake area is noted to be honest and industrious. You see, a pioneer heritage is still evident down to the third and fourth generations in the area.

However, I was shocked by a statistic that crossed my desk recently. It stated that only 7 percent of the children being reared in the United States today come from traditional homes consisting of a working father, a stay-at-home mother, and one or more children.³ Each day we see the effects of the breakup of the traditional home. There is an alarming increase in the number of battered wives, physically and sexually abused children, vandalism in schools, teenage crime rates, pregnancies among unmarried teenagers, and elderly people growing old without the solace of an extended family.

The prophets have warned us that the

home is the place to save society.⁴ A proper home, of course, is not created automatically when a boy and girl fall in love and marry. It takes those same virtues that were taught in pioneer homes—faith, courage, discipline, and dedication—to make a marriage successful. Just as the pioneers made the desert blossom as a rose, so too our lives and families will blossom if we follow their example and embrace their traditions. Yes, pioneer faith is needed as much in the world today as in any period of time. Once again, we need to know that heritage. We need to teach it, we need to be proud of it, and we need to preserve it.

How blessed we are. What responsibilities our knowledge and our understanding carry. Arnold Palmer, a great American golfer, is reported to have said, “Winning isn’t everything, but wanting to is.” What a great statement: “Wanting to is.”

God grant us the desire to want to win the greatest of all the gifts He has given His children—the gift of life eternal. May God bless us that we will understand our potential, that we will learn and grow and develop an understanding of our heritage and determine to preserve those great gifts that have been given to us as His children. I bear my solemn witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that His way will lead us to life eternal. ■

From a fireside address delivered on August 3, 1980, at Brigham Young University. For the full text in English, visit speeches.byu.edu.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:85.
2. John Chislett, in *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 4:93–94.
3. See Population Reference Bureau, www.prb.org/Articles/2003/TraditionalFamiliesAccountforOnly7PercentofUSHouseholds.aspx. In 1980, when this address was delivered, the figure was 13 percent.
4. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, “Heavenly Homes, Forever Families,” *Liahona*, June 2006, 66–71; *Ensign*, June 2006, 98–103; Spencer W. Kimball, “Home: The Place to Save Society,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1975, 3–10.

It takes the same virtues that were taught in pioneer homes—faith, courage, discipline, and dedication—to make a marriage successful.



Just as the pioneers made the desert blossom as a rose, so too our lives and families will blossom if we follow their example.

UNDERSTANDING OUR Covenants WITH God

AN OVERVIEW
OF OUR MOST
IMPORTANT
PROMISES



As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” explains President Thomas S. Monson, “sacred covenants are to be revered by us, and faithfulness to them is a requirement for happiness. Yes, I speak of the covenant of baptism, the covenant of the priesthood, and the covenant of marriage as examples.”¹

In the Church, an ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Some ordinances are essential to our salvation. As part of these “saving ordinances,” we enter into solemn covenants with God.²

A covenant is a two-way promise, the conditions of which are set by God.³ When we enter into a covenant with God, we promise to keep those conditions. He promises us certain blessings in return.

When we receive these saving ordinances and keep the associated covenants, the Atonement of Jesus Christ

becomes effective in our lives, and we can receive the greatest blessing God can give us—eternal life (see D&C 14:7).

Because keeping our covenants is essential to our happiness now and to eventually receiving eternal life, it is important to understand what we have promised our Heavenly Father. The following is an overview of the covenants we make in association with saving ordinances and suggestions for where you can learn more.

Baptism and Confirmation

Baptism by immersion in water, performed by one having authority, is the first saving ordinance of the gospel and is necessary for an individual to become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Inseparable from baptism is its companion ordinance of confirmation—the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.



A covenant is a two-way promise. God promises us certain blessings in return for our keeping the terms we accepted when making the covenant.

When we are baptized, we covenant to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments. We also promise “to serve him to the end” (D&C 20:37; see also Mosiah 18:8–10).

In return, Heavenly Father promises that if we repent of our sins, we can be forgiven (see Alma 7:14) and “always have His Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77), a promise made possible, in part, through receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The ordinances of baptism and confirmation are the gate through which all who seek eternal life must enter (see John 3:3–5). Honoring our baptismal covenants leads to and is an important part of making the covenants associated with all of the other saving ordinances on the path to eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:17–21).

LEARN MORE ABOUT BAPTISM

See Robert D. Hales, “The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 6; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 6.

The Sacrament

Those who have received the saving ordinances of baptism and confirmation partake of the sacrament each week to renew those covenants. While partaking of the bread and water, we remember the sacrifice the Savior made for us. In addition, we ponder the covenants we have made to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. In turn, God

extends the promise that His Spirit may be with us always (see D&C 20:77, 79).

The ordinance of the sacrament is an opportunity each week to renew sacred covenants that allow us to be partakers of the Savior’s atoning grace with the same spiritually cleansing effect of baptism and confirmation.

Church leaders have also taught that when we take the sacrament, we renew not only our baptismal covenants but “all covenants entered into with the Lord.”⁴

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SACRAMENT

See Dallin H. Oaks, “Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 17.

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

Heavenly Father gives His oath (guarantee) to bestow certain blessings upon those who keep the covenants associated with receiving the priesthood.

When men live worthy to obtain the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods and “[magnify] their calling,” God promises they will be “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.” They become heirs of the promises made to Moses, Aaron, and Abraham. (See D&C 84:33–34.)

Holding the Melchizedek Priesthood is necessary for men to qualify to enter the temple. There, men and women may receive a fulness of priesthood blessings together in marriage.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

You or someone you have contact with may wonder, “Why aren’t temples open to the public?” Latter-day Saint temples are not used for our weekly Sunday worship, where all are welcome to attend. Sacred ordinances are performed in temples, so temples are open only to baptized members who qualify themselves to receive those ordinances.

After a new temple is built, the public may tour it during an open house. After the temple is dedicated to the Lord, the public may visit the grounds, but the temple is open only to those with a valid temple recommend.

For more information, see “Temples” under Frequently Asked Questions at Mormon.org.

By receiving all of the saving ordinances of the priesthood, all people can receive the promise of “all that [the] Father hath” (see D&C 84:35–38).

“Incredible blessings flow from this oath and covenant to worthy men, women, and children in all the world,” taught Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁵

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

See Henry B. Eyring, “Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2008, 61.

The Endowment

The temple endowment is a gift that provides perspective and power.

During the temple endowment we receive instructions and make covenants related to our eternal exaltation. Associated with the endowment are the ordinances of washing and anointing and being clothed in temple garments as a reminder of sacred covenants.⁶ Temple ordinances and covenants are so sacred that they are not discussed in detail outside of the temple. Because of that, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, advised, “It is important that you listen carefully as these ordinances are administered and that you try to remember the blessings promised and the conditions upon which they will be realized.”⁷

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that the key to receiving divine power to overcome opposition and move the Church forward “is the covenant we make in the temple—our promise to obey and sacrifice, to consecrate unto the Father, and His promise to empower us with ‘a great endowment.’”⁸

You can learn more about the principles behind the covenants we make in the endowment by studying the following:

- “Obedience,” *Gospel Principles* (2009), 200–206.
- M. Russell Ballard, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Liahona*, Mar. 2002, 10; *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 6.
- On “the law of [the] gospel” (D&C 104:18), see Doctrine and Covenants 42.
- “The Law of Chastity,” *Gospel Principles* (2009), 224–32.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 16.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ENDOWMENT

See *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (2002), 28–35; David A. Bednar, “Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2009, 97.

The Sealing

The temple ordinance referred to as “temple marriage” or “being sealed” creates an eternal relationship between husband and wife that can last beyond death if the spouses are faithful. Parent and child relationships can also be perpetuated beyond mortality, linking generations together in eternal family relationships.

When an individual enters into the covenant of marriage in the temple, he or she makes covenants with both God *and* with his or her spouse. Spouses promise faithfulness to each other and to God. They are promised exaltation and that their family relationships can continue throughout eternity (see D&C 132:19–20). Children born to a couple who were sealed in the temple or children who are later sealed to their parents have the right to be part of an eternal family.

As in other ordinances, individual faithfulness to our covenants is required for the



earthly ordinance to be sealed, or made valid, in heaven by the Holy Spirit of Promise.⁹ Individuals who keep their covenants—even when their spouse does not—do not forfeit the blessings promised in the sealing.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SEALING

See Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 91.

Making and Keeping Sacred Covenants

As we enter into these important covenants, we become partakers of the new and everlasting covenant, “even the fulness of [the gospel of Jesus Christ]” (D&C 66:2). The new and everlasting covenant is “the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations” we’ve made,¹⁰ and the resulting blessings include all that the Father has, including eternal life.

As we strive to understand and keep our covenants, we should remember that keeping our covenants is not merely a list of things to do but a commitment to *become* like the Savior.

“The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*,” taught Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “It is an



Keeping our covenants is a commitment to become like the Savior.

acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”¹¹ ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Happiness—the Universal Quest,” *Liahona*, Mar. 1996, 5; *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 4.
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.1.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 86.
4. Delbert L. Stapley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14; see also *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 561; *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 220.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 88.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Oct. 2010, 46.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “Come to the Temple,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2007, 16; *Ensign*, Oct. 2007, 20.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2012, 50; *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 4.
9. See “Holy Ghost,” *True to the Faith* (2004), 82; see also D&C 132:7, 18–19, 26.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:156.
11. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Linking Church and

As priesthood leaders work with stake and district public affairs councils, they can all help strengthen their communities—and build up the kingdom of God on earth.



Community



By Philip M. Volmar

Church Magazines

When Carol Witt Christensen was called to serve as public affairs director for the Topeka Kansas Stake, she felt “fearful and inadequate” about having to interact with news reporters and editors on behalf of stake leaders.

“The thought of making cold contacts with news people was a little terrifying,” she recalls. And though she majored in English in college, she says that she “didn’t know anything about writing news releases.”

Despite her self-doubt, Sister Christensen decided to rely on her testimony, her familiarity with her community, and the belief that her calling came from inspired priesthood leaders. She says she started with training from the Public Affairs Department and began to “learn [her] duty, and to act in the office in which [she was] appointed, in all diligence” (D&C 107:99).

She began poring over the weekly religion section of her local newspaper to determine what was considered newsworthy. She called the religion writer to find out about deadlines before submitting her first news release.

“I noticed the types of small news items that were printed and began paying special attention at church to activities, interesting people, and accomplishments that seemed appropriate to announce in our newspaper,” she remembers.

Over time, Sister Christensen learned that media relations is much more than merely pitching story ideas. It’s also about knowing the media and helping reporters do their job while at the same time helping them come to understand the Church.

After a series of successes, including an article about her stake’s seminary program appearing in the local paper, she says she gained confidence and “felt on fire with a desire to bring forth the Church ‘out of obscurity’” (see D&C 1:30). Now, years later, Sister Christensen still serves

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER

as her stake public affairs director and says “that fire has continued to blaze.”

“Much of what we seek to do in public affairs,” she explains, “shows that we love, believe in, and worship Jesus Christ; befriend, work with, and serve our brothers and sisters in the community; and warm people to the restored gospel and the Church.”

Priesthood leaders throughout the world are guiding and encouraging public affairs specialists and councils as they work alongside those in their areas to benefit their communities, correct misconceptions, and demonstrate that Church members follow Jesus Christ.

Though Sister Christensen’s initial efforts focused on media relations, there are many ways Church public affairs councils are following inspired priesthood direction while also helping build their communities and the kingdom of God.

Community and Government Relations

Just 65 miles (105 km) from Topeka, in the Lenexa Kansas Stake, President Bruce F. Friday, stake president, and Sister Carol Deshler, stake public affairs director, are working together to build positive relationships with influential members of their community. They want to help them recognize Latter-day Saints as “good neighbors, a positive influence in the community, and followers of Jesus Christ,” says President Friday.

Sister Deshler, who works with the stake presidency and other members of the stake’s public affairs council, seeks opportunities to partner with other faith-based groups and community organizations to better serve the citizens of their area.

“Nearly all of our successes working with

community groups have been a result of one-on-one relationships,” Sister Deshler says. For instance, a member of another church and a member of her stake ate lunch together and discussed ways the two groups could come together to do something positive for the community. The conversation led to six people—three from each church—forming a “Better Together” committee to brainstorm ideas for the partnership.

That partnership led to a benefit concert in 2010 in which choirs from several churches participated. Admission was a bag of groceries, which benefited a local food pantry. Some 700 people from the community attended the event, which was held in the newly completed stake center. A reception was organized so community and religious leaders could mingle prior to the concert.

Following the concert, four additional churches, two members of the city council, and the chief of police asked to be represented on the Better Together committee, which now meets monthly. The concert was repeated again in 2011, that time with another church hosting, a total of seven churches participating, and approximately 1,000 community members attending.

“The feeling of goodwill and unity as followers of Jesus Christ came through in a significant way among the churches,” Sister Deshler says. Those feelings were evident later when President Friday was in an airport more than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from home. A woman he had never met approached him and said she recognized him from the Better Together benefit concerts, which she had participated in and found remarkable.

She told him, “I have never felt such a feeling of love for others in our community as



For two years the Lenexa Kansas Stake in the United States has partnered with other area churches to hold a benefit concert. The admission cost—a bag of groceries—was donated to a local food pantry. In 2011, approximately 1,000 community members attended, including several church and government officials.



I have through these events. Thank you for cosponsoring these concerts. I belong to another congregation, but we have the deepest respect and admiration for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

“That,” says President Priday, “is what public affairs is all about. As we’ve broadened our circle and expanded our vision, we’ve developed many special friends throughout the community. We have mutual respect for each others’ beliefs and a genuine love for one another.”

Garnering such cooperation and respect from community leaders has proven effective in Eastern Europe as well. Katia Serdyuk, director of media relations for the Ukraine public affairs council, works with public affairs missionaries and local priesthood leaders to improve relationships between the Church and the community. “Many people have misconceptions and misinformation about the Church,” says Sister Serdyuk. “As public affairs specialists working with priesthood leaders, we strive to change those perceptions by working with opinion leaders, the media, and the general public. Successful public affairs efforts generate an atmosphere in which people of influence can help the Church achieve its purposes while we help them reach their goals too.”

In Zhytomyr, Ukraine, members of the Church participated in a reception hosted by the city mayor, Olexander Mikolayovich Bochkovskiy, to recognize the Church’s humanitarian project that provided much-needed equipment to seven schools throughout the city. Also noted was the community service efforts of Church members in the city’s Gagarin Park, conducted in April and October 2011. Zhytomyr Branch president Alexander Davydov represented the Church and acknowledged the city’s appreciation.

Event Planning

In addition to media and community relations, another public affairs opportunity comes from planning and hosting events, say Daniel and Rebecca Mehr, who recently completed a public affairs mission in the Caribbean Area.

“Enlisting members to educate their friends through



A MESSAGE TO PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

“We encourage stake and district presidents and Area Seventies everywhere to ensure that stake and multistake public affairs councils are called and trained.

In some districts and developing areas of the Church, public affairs efforts may be small at first and implemented without a fully organized council. Your area director of public affairs can arrange training and point you to important resources.

“You will discover how public affairs work can be a wonderful tool for achieving priesthood objectives as you build relationships and partner with community leaders, the news media, and other opinion leaders. Your attention to this work will also enhance the reputation of the Church by helping people understand that we follow Jesus Christ.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee

common-ground activities, like a cultural event, a dinner, a service project, or other activities, could be especially effective for building relationships,” says Sister Mehr.

However, Brother Mehr cautions that one of the biggest mistakes public affairs specialists can make is to “start planning activities without considering community needs and without counseling with priesthood leaders.”

Elder and Sister Mehr believe that an annual plan that reflects stake and ward priesthood leaders’ direction is one way to help guide event planning from the outset. To build such an annual plan, Sister Mehr recommends coordinating events using a four-step planning process that focuses on a strategic outcome and is tied to community needs and local priesthood objectives:

- What are the greatest needs in our community?
- What issues in our area affect the progress of the Church, positively or negatively?
- Who are leaders in the community with whom we can partner to address needs and resolve issues?
- How can we initiate or continue a relationship with these leaders?

With these questions answered, priesthood leaders and public affairs councils can avoid creating “activities for activities’ sake,” Sister Mehr says. Instead the councils can plan and carry out events that can build trust between community and priesthood leaders. These events also give Church members and community members a chance to interact and build friendships.

In the Dominican Republic in 2010, for example, priesthood leaders, public affairs councils, and community members worked together at an event highlighting Mormon Helping Hands efforts. Brother and Sister Mehr invited several of the nation’s dignitaries with whom they had been working.

“Many prominent individuals representing many institutions and organizations attended,” Brother Mehr recalls, adding that the Church’s Area Presidency also came.

“The event was very successful,” he reports. “More and more, we experienced mayors and city organizations requesting our help in some kind of cleanup. In addition, there was good exposure for the Church to many organizations.”

While involving priesthood direction is crucial to successful event planning, it’s not the only consideration to make. Kathy Marler serves on a multistake public affairs council in San Diego, California, USA. One of her friends of another faith said that Latter-day Saints are good at inviting others to Church-sponsored activities but often fail to collaborate with others in other churches’ events.

Sister Marler recalls her friend saying, “You just ask others to come along. It would be wonderful if you would ask us if we need help. The answer would be a resounding yes.”

By identifying others’ needs, says Sister

Marler, public affairs councils can sometimes help a community more than they might in hosting the events themselves.

Crisis Communication and Management

Even though most public affairs work takes place in the everyday situations of community life, it can also poise a stake, country, or Church area to deal with emergencies, as happened last year in Japan.

When Bishop Gary E. Stevenson, Presiding Bishop, was President of the Asia North Area, he saw firsthand how the 2011 earthquake changed the media climate overnight. “The earthquake and tsunami focused the eyes of the world and all of Japan on the devastated northeastern coastline,” he recalls.

Bishop Stevenson says that the catastrophe created an “intense level of interest” in the humanitarian aid and volunteer activities offered to Japan, including those given by the Church.

Within days of the tsunami, the Church began providing necessities to disaster-stricken members and nonmembers alike. “Domestic and international media began following every storyline,” says Bishop Stevenson.

With the Church providing more than 250 tons of humanitarian aid supplies and enlisting the help of over 24,000 volunteers who gave over 180,000 hours of service, the relief efforts often caught the attention of local municipal leaders, Bishop Stevenson recounts. In a country where less than two percent of the population identifies itself as Christian, some of those leaders wanted to know more about the Church’s role in the efforts. That curiosity, he says, provided an opportunity for public affairs specialists not only to help those in desperate need but also to bridge



Following the 2011 earthquake in Japan, priesthood leaders worked with public affairs specialists to mobilize relief efforts via the Mormon Helping Hands program. Of these humanitarian efforts, one reporter wrote: “The only thing that rivals the Mormon church’s ability to spread the word is its ability to cope with emergencies.”



understanding at the same time. For example, the week after the tsunami hit Japan, one reporter wrote: “The only thing that rivals the Mormon church’s ability to spread the word is its ability to cope with emergencies. . . . The church is not just focused on its own flock.”¹

This positive coverage was possible because of years of building relationships. Conan and Cindy Grames, who began serving as public affairs representatives for the Asia North Area in August 2010, say that “the public affairs council in Japan had worked for years with key government leaders around the country. These friendships opened the doors to the local agencies, which were then willing to accept our help.” Elder Yasuo Niiyama, serving with his wife as director of the Japan public affairs council of the Church, points out that “even Japan’s national government leaders came to understand how effective the Church is and how quickly we could move forward to provide relief.”

An instance when Japanese leaders appreciated the Church’s timely assistance was when local priesthood leaders identified an overwhelmed refugee shelter set up at a school in an isolated area. Together with the public affairs council and the local Church welfare manager, the priesthood leaders arranged for food and other relief supplies to be delivered to the shelter, which was housing approximately 270 displaced tsunami victims.

Although those at the shelter were initially surprised to receive assistance from a Christian church, the second time Mormon Helping Hands volunteers came, wearing their yellow vests, one child yelled, “Here they come! I wonder what they brought this time!”

After receiving the donations, the shelter coordinator told Elder and Sister Grames,

“Your church brought us the first meat and fresh vegetables we had after the earthquake.”

“It felt good,” says Sister Grames, “to really be a helping hand not only to the shelter but also to the priesthood leaders who were trying so hard to reach those in need.”

Elder Niiyama explains another positive result of the council’s efforts: “We found that sharing information about the Church’s relief work with members as well as outside opinion leaders was very vital to our public affairs objectives. I feel people outside of the Church now have a better image of the Church and members are more confident in the strength of the Church in Japan.”

Public Affairs as a Tool for Local Priesthood Leadership

As a crucial part of a worldwide organization, priesthood leaders can benefit from public affairs councils that know the local environment and are able to help serve community needs. Sister Serdyuk, in Ukraine, states, “It is rewarding to see how well priesthood leaders have embraced public affairs as a tool in achieving their priesthood objectives. One such example is performing community service through our Mormon Helping Hands efforts, which has developed unity among members of branches and wards and has also helped build a closer relationship between the Church and local communities.” ■

The Church’s public affairs website—available in English at publicaffairs.lds.org—offers additional helpful information.

NOTE

1. Kari Huus, “In Japan, the Mormon Network Gathers the Flock,” World Blog from NBC News, Mar. 18, 2011, http://worldblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/03/18/6292170-in-japan-the-mormon-network-gathers-the-flock.

PROPHETIC DIRECTION RELATING TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The following talks can help priesthood leaders, public affairs councils, and other members better understand how public affairs helps strengthen communities and fulfill priesthood objectives.

- L. Tom Perry, “Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 41–44.
- M. Russell Ballard, “The Importance of a Name,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 79–82.
- M. Russell Ballard, “Faith, Family, Facts, and Fruits,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 25–27.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 70–72.
- Ezra Taft Benson, “May the Kingdom of God Go Forth,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 32–35.

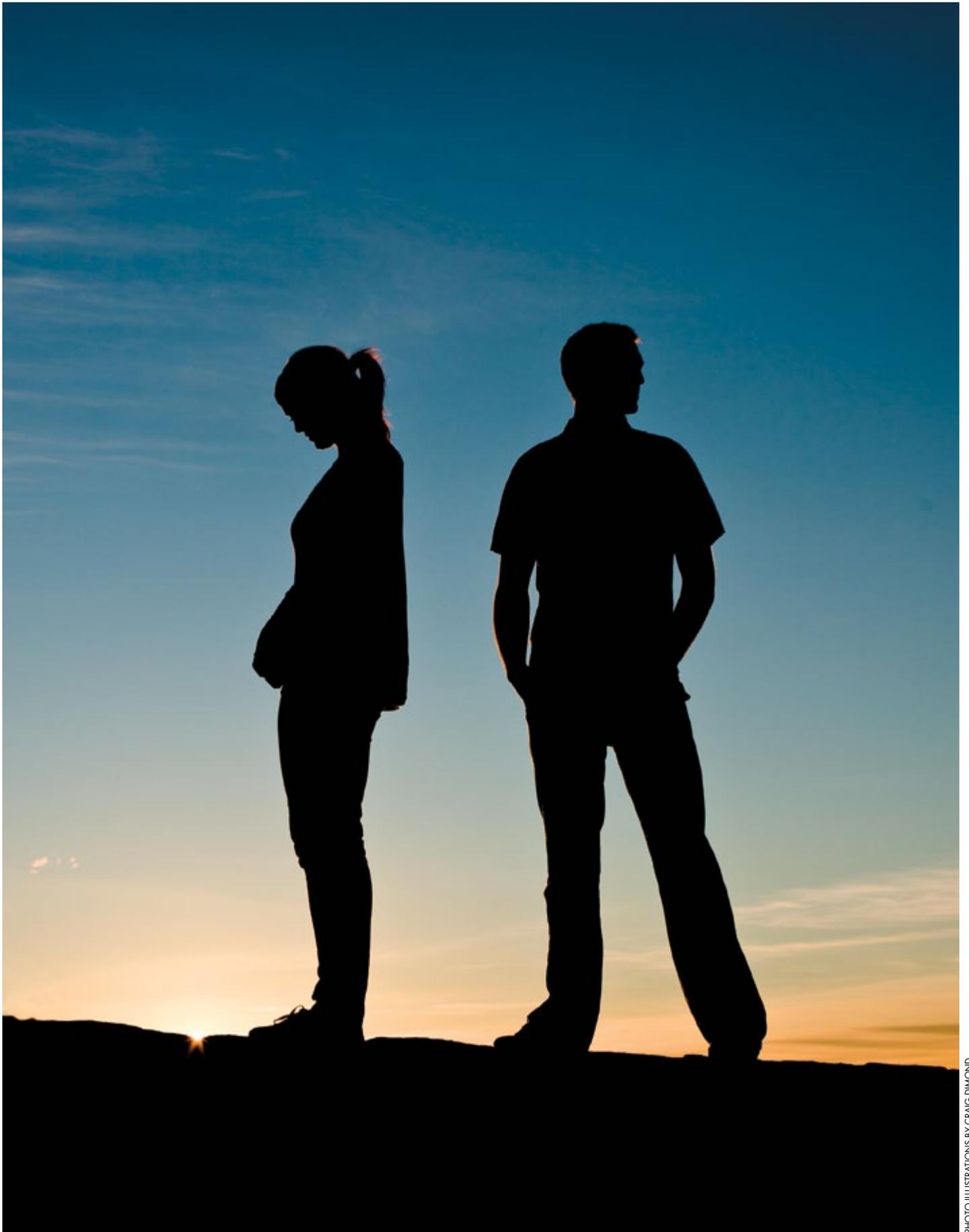


PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRAIG DIMOND

Never Give Up

A husband and wife tell of their conversions to the gospel of Jesus Christ—35 years apart.

By Al and Eva Fry

Her Story

For 35 years I hoped and waited for my husband to become a member of the Church. Those long years were full of heartfelt prayers, but three prayers in particular were memorable turning points in my experience.

Al and I were married in 1959. A decade later we had three children and were living in a small town in Canada. Al ran a construction business, and I was a stay-at-home mom who sometimes helped with the business. On the weekends, Al and I partied with our friends, always with alcohol. My dad had been an alcoholic, so I hated that drinking was such a big part of our lives, but it had become our way of socializing.

That year, 1969, I realized my life was going nowhere and that our children deserved better than what we were offering them. One night after another drinking party, I got down on my knees and prayed, “Dear God, if You are there, please help me change my life.” I promised Him I would never drink alcohol again, a commitment I’ve honored ever since.

That was the first memorable prayer, and it was answered quickly. My sister-in-law’s daughter, my niece, had been invited to attend Primary with a Latter-day Saint friend. As my sister-in-law learned more about the Church, she felt inspired to send me a subscription to the Church

magazines, which arrived within a month after I had said that first prayer. I didn’t know what a Mormon was, but I loved the messages the magazines contained and read them cover to cover. I decided to investigate the Church and therein found my answer. I *did* change my life, and I was baptized on June 19, 1970.

Al did not share my desires. He liked our former lifestyle and continued to live it. He continued to be a good husband, father, and provider, but for the next 35 years, as far as the gospel was concerned, I was on my own.

I was raising our children in the Church, but within a few years, our children decided they would rather spend Sundays boating with their dad than attending church with me. I was devastated. One day in 1975 I talked to my stake president and told him that I had decided I needed to leave the Church because it was breaking up our family. He patiently listened and said, “Do what you must, but be sure that your Father in Heaven approves.” So I went home and fasted and prayed. That was the second memorable prayer. The answer that came was the impression that I was the link in the gospel chain for my family; if I broke that link, everyone would be lost. I knew the answer came from God, so I committed to never leave the Church. And I never did.



LIVE FOR IT, PRAY FOR IT

“Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. . . . If for the present, that does not include sealing in the temple to a righteous companion, live for it. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it. If your dream requires patience, give it. As brothers, we prayed and worked for 30 years before our mother and our nonmember father were sealed in the temple. Don’t become overanxious. Do the best you can. We cannot say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond it, but the Lord will keep His promises.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “First Things First,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 7; *Ensign*, May 2001, 7.

Staying faithful didn’t come easily, but several things helped me maintain my faith and patiently hope for the day when Al would reconsider the gospel:

- I always loved Al and did my best to look after him and be a supportive, faithful wife.
- I prayed constantly. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ became my gospel companions. When being with Al was difficult because he wasn’t living gospel standards, I talked with Heavenly Father and came to know my Savior.
- I regularly read my scriptures and every other Church publication I could get my hands on, including the *Ensign*. Two verses of scripture in particular, 3 Nephi 13:33 and Doctrine and Covenants 75:11, became especially meaningful and poignant to me. They gave me strength and patience to hold on while waiting for a change of heart in my husband and children.

- I faithfully went to church by myself until each of our children came back. All are active today. When they grew up and left home, I continued to attend church by myself.
- We held family home evening without Al knowing that was what we were doing. I would bring up a subject at the dinner table, and we would talk about it as a family.
- I always tried to be obedient and do the right thing.
- I accessed additional power by requesting priesthood blessings.
- I sought counsel from priesthood leaders.
- I treated my Church friends as family.
- I went to the temple and received my endowment. It took me many years to make that decision; I was afraid it would make my relationship with Al more difficult. In the end, I found it was the best decision for me. Al supported it, it made me happy, and after receiving it, I no longer resented Al as the reason I wasn’t going to the temple. When I participated in temple worship, I often put Al’s name on the prayer roll.

In essence, I continued to live as a faithful member of the Church. I looked for small ways to share the gospel with him, even though he usually didn’t want to hear it. But I found that the Holy Ghost would inspire me with the right things to say and the right way and time to share them. I later learned that because of my faithfulness and commitment to him, Al was touched by the Spirit from time to time.

He even agreed to listen to the missionary lessons on several occasions. But each time, my heart broke because he always returned to his old way of life. Even in these discouraging moments, however, Heavenly Father watched over me and made up for what I didn’t have with other blessings. All along I knew that there was something inside Al worth waiting for.

Slowly Al began to make changes. He stopped swearing. He stopped drinking. He treated me better than he ever had before. He began coming to church.

And I kept praying.

The incredible answer to my third memorable prayer came in April 2005. I was wondering if Al would ever accept the gospel of Jesus Christ—I was feeling a little bit desperate. I pleaded with Heavenly Father for His help. It must have finally been the right time because on July 9, Al was baptized.

Although getting to this point was not easy, I am grateful to have witnessed the amazing power of God in changing an unbelieving heart to a believing one. I know that He heard and answered the many prayers I prayed over the course of 35 years. Because of His answers, I now live with a changed man, one who loves our Heavenly Father as much as I do. And we love each other more deeply than we ever did before.

I know that there are others in the Church who are waiting, hoping, and praying for a loved one to come into the Church. I wish to encourage these brothers and sisters to accept the Savior's invitation to "come unto me" (Alma 5:34) for themselves and not just for their loved ones. I know from experience that doing so will give strength as nothing else can. Staying close to Heavenly Father, obeying His commandments, and enjoying current blessings yield happiness and allow Him to work through us.

I testify that God does hear our prayers. Waiting on the Lord and accepting His timetable with faith is rarely easy, but I know that His timing is always right.

His Story

For 35 years many people discussed the gospel with me. My wife never missed an opportunity to talk about it, and she would cleverly leave the Book of Mormon and *Ensign* magazine in plain sight. Of course, I never picked them up. She invited the missionaries over on many occasions; two or three sets of them even taught me the missionary lessons.

So what was keeping me from entering the waters of baptism?

I always had an excuse. I worked long hours. I didn't see that I'd ever have time for the gospel. I was much too busy making money. So I told Eva, "Sometime when things slow

down and I have more time, I'll read the Book of Mormon."

But I never did. Besides, I had never been much of a reader, and when I tried to read the Bible, it didn't make any sense to me. So that was the end of that.

There was another thing that was keeping me from joining the Church, something more serious: the sinful life I was leading. King Benjamin teaches us that "the natural man is an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19). I did not yield—I was sitting on the fence. The Savior said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Mathew 12:30). I realize now that because of the way I was living my life, I was against Him. I needed to change.

I was living around the gospel but never actually living it, but as time went on, I started to feel the Spirit. I

As I read my daughter's letter, I realized I had no more excuses.



stopped partying and drinking. When I made that change, the Spirit started to manifest itself more frequently. I still wasn't where I needed to be—my language wasn't very good and I had some other bad habits to work on—but I was changing.

Then one day I received a package. It was from one of my daughters, Linda. It contained a Book of Mormon and a Bible with lots of marked scriptures. She also wrote me a letter in which she told me how much she loved me and wanted me to know what she knew.

She wrote, "The only way to know if the gospel of Jesus Christ is true is to ask with a sincere heart and with real intent."

Linda then shared a series of scriptures that led me on a journey of prayer and scripture study.

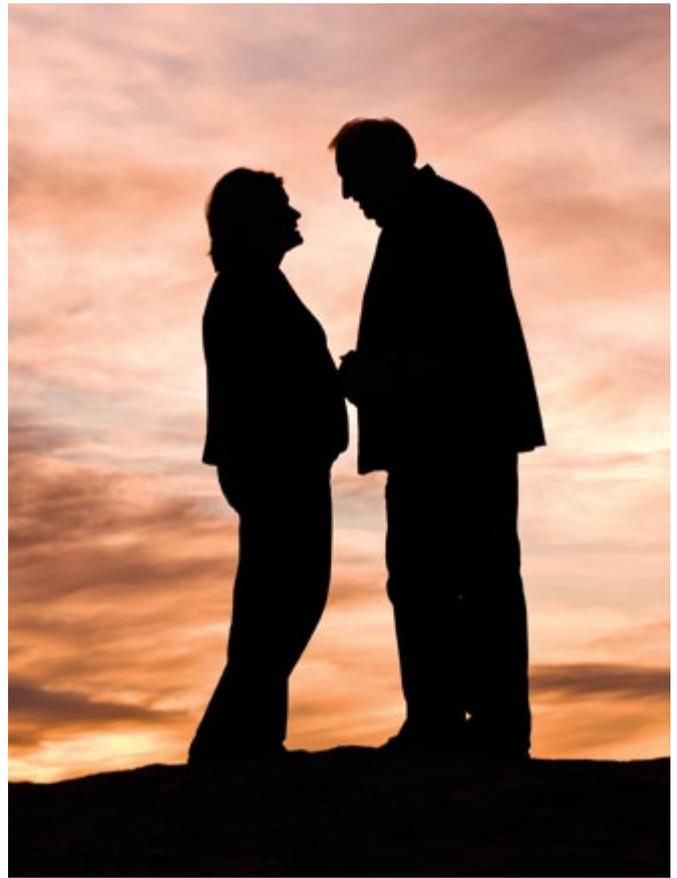
"The only way I get to know my Savior and Heavenly Father," she wrote, "is by praying and reading about Them in scriptures."

She then described how important humility is and how, without God in her life, she couldn't have peace. Finally, she wrote, "Don't procrastinate anymore. You have been given so much. Now it's time to give back to Heavenly Father. This is the only way to true happiness."

I no longer had any excuses. Work slowed down, and I had some extra time. So I started reading and studying the scriptures she had outlined for me, which gave me the desire to read the entire Book of Mormon. But there were still so many things I did not understand.

By this time I was attending sacrament meeting because my wife said it would be nice if I came and sat beside her. She also suggested I read the Doctrine and Covenants. I did, and I understood it better. Then, with my wife's help, I read the Book of Mormon and experienced the scriptures coming to life. Through lots of prayer, the Spirit was ignited in me.

What made the difference in me? The Holy Spirit and a knowledge of the scriptures. Both gave me the courage to change my life and to ask God for forgiveness of my sins, which were what had really kept me from joining the Church all those years.



Great happiness has come into our lives because we are united in the gospel.

Confessing my sins was very difficult. It brought me such pain that I lay in bed for three days in sorrow. But through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I was forgiven. Then Heavenly Father gave me the strength to get up and get on with my new life.

My son Kevin baptized me on July 9, 2005. One of the missionaries who had taught my wife decades earlier attended. Two years later I took my family to the San Diego California Temple to be sealed for time and eternity.

The last seven years have been the happiest years of my life. I can finally take my place as the patriarch and spiritual leader of our family and share in the gospel with my wife, our children, and our nine grandchildren. This family unity has spiritually strengthened everyone. A son-in-law has joined the Church, and four of our grandchildren have served or are serving missions. My new life in the Church is a miracle. I had no idea what great happiness and growth it would bring me.

I am so thankful for this second chance. I am grateful to be making up for those lost years by doing God's work. ■

FACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

By Elder
José A. Teixeira
Of the Seventy



Putting the Lord, His kingdom, and our families first will give us the hope we need to face present and future challenges.

Brother Arnaldo Teles Grilo became one of my best friends when I was in my mid-20s. At the age of 62, Brother Grilo, then a retired engineer, was called as one of my counselors in the presidency of what was then the Oeiras Portugal District, where we served together for several years.

His wisdom and experience provided me, a young priesthood leader, much valuable counsel and insight. He was an optimist by nature; he always saw the bright side of every situation and had a good sense of humor. His attitude was a source of great inspiration to many around him and in particular to me because I knew about the arduous challenges he had faced.

After his graduation as an engineer, Brother Grilo joined the National Agronomic Agency as a researcher in Portugal and later traveled to one of the Portuguese colonies in Africa to lead a cotton research project. The project led him to a successful career as a senior executive in a large international bank in that



Brother Arnaldo Teles Grilo—pictured at right in 1956 and above in 1960 with the car he gave to a friend to help him escape war—had to leave behind everything he had worked for, but he remained anchored in solid principles, love for his family, and faith in Jesus Christ.



country. During almost 30 years in Africa, he raised a beautiful family and enjoyed a good life until his family was abruptly forced to return to Portugal because of the tragedy of conflict and war.

Brother Grilo and his family left behind everything they had worked for—all their property and personal belongings—after witnessing firsthand the devastating effects of war on a country they loved.

Despite the confusion and turmoil generated by a war that gradually consumed all peace and stability during his last months in Africa, Brother Grilo rescued one of his friends by giving him an expensive car he had purchased in Germany. The car allowed his friend and his friend's mother to escape the war.

The abundant material possessions that a life of hard work had provided Brother Grilo did not blur his priorities. He remained anchored in solid principles and love for his family.

Back in Portugal at age 52, he faced the reality of beginning everything from zero. With all of this adversity and tragedy, what

made the difference in his life? Why was he so positive about the present and the future? Why was he so confident?

Brother Grilo was converted in the early days of the Church in Portugal and became a solid pillar and pioneer in that country. Several times he led his family to the temple in Switzerland, traveling 2,800 miles (4,500 km) round-trip in an expression of faith and devotion. Over his years of service, Brother Grilo and his wife brought joy to their children and many others.

Brother Grilo's faith was centered in Jesus Christ and in the knowledge that in the end, Jesus Christ would reign. This gave him hope in the present and in the future.

The New Testament ends with a message of great hope.¹ Prophets such as John the Revelator saw things that are to come and told us of the blessings we would receive if we remain righteous and endure to the end.

John saw a book with seven seals, or time periods, and he described how Satan has always fought against the righteous (see Revelation 5:1–5; 6). But John also saw that Satan would be bound and that Christ would reign in triumph (see Revelation 19:1–9; 20:1–11). Finally he saw that the righteous would dwell with God after the Last Judgment (see Revelation 20:12–15).

One of today's great challenges is learning to conquer fear and despair in order to overcome trials and temptations. It takes only a few moments for us to open a newspaper, scroll the web, or hear a news broadcast on radio or television to be confronted with distressing accounts of crime and natural calamities that happen every day.

Understanding the promises in scripture concerning how the Lord will conquer evil

and how truth will conquer error can help us face the future with hope and optimism. In today's world we see war, natural calamities, and economic crises. At times these events are not just things we observe from a distance but are things that affect us personally.

There is no need for us to mourn lost worldly possessions or to fixate on the temporal, for those things can rob us of the joy of the simple, sublime things of life.

I am grateful for the example of Brother Arnaldo Teles Grilo. He kept spiritual matters first, matters "of great worth unto [us] in the last days" (2 Nephi 25:8), including family relationships and service to others.

We should all face the future with hope because we know that the forces of evil will be overcome. We

should all maintain a positive outlook as we face challenges because today we have the scriptures, the teachings of living prophets, priesthood authority, temples, and the support of each other as members of the Church. We should all "come off conqueror" because of prayer (D&C 10:5). And most important, we should have hope in eternal life because of the Lord's perfect atoning sacrifice (see Moroni 7:41).

When our priorities are right, we will live a richer and more abundant life. Putting the Lord, His kingdom, and our families first will give us the hope we need to face present and future challenges. ■

NOTE

1. See Revelation 19–22; see also lesson 46, *New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual* (1997).



We should all maintain a positive outlook as we face challenges because today we have the scriptures, the teachings of living prophets, priesthood authority, temples, and the support of each other as members of the Church.

THIS TEXT IS HEBREW

After reading the Old Testament several years ago, I gained an interest in its teachings, especially the writings of Isaiah, and continued to study it. In 2010, I found myself seated on a flight next to a Jewish rabbi. I started a conversation by asking him about some passages in Isaiah. As our conversation progressed, we discussed the importance of priesthood authority as understood in the Old Testament.

The rabbi asked me where members of my church get their priesthood authority. I seized the opportunity

to tell him about Joseph Smith's First Vision and the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. We discussed the translation of the Book of Mormon and its purpose as "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

The rabbi was intrigued. He asked how old Joseph was when he had the First Vision. When I told him Joseph was 14, about the same age as Samuel of the Old Testament, he replied that many prophets were called in their youth. He said it was consistent that God would call Joseph Smith in his teen years.

The rabbi asked me where members of my church get their priesthood authority. I told him about Joseph Smith's First Vision and the restoration of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods.

I opened my scriptures, and together we read the testimonies of the Three and Eight Witnesses. I told him that several of the witnesses had left the Church but that none ever denied having seen the golden plates.

"How could they leave the Church after seeing an angel and the plates?" he asked.

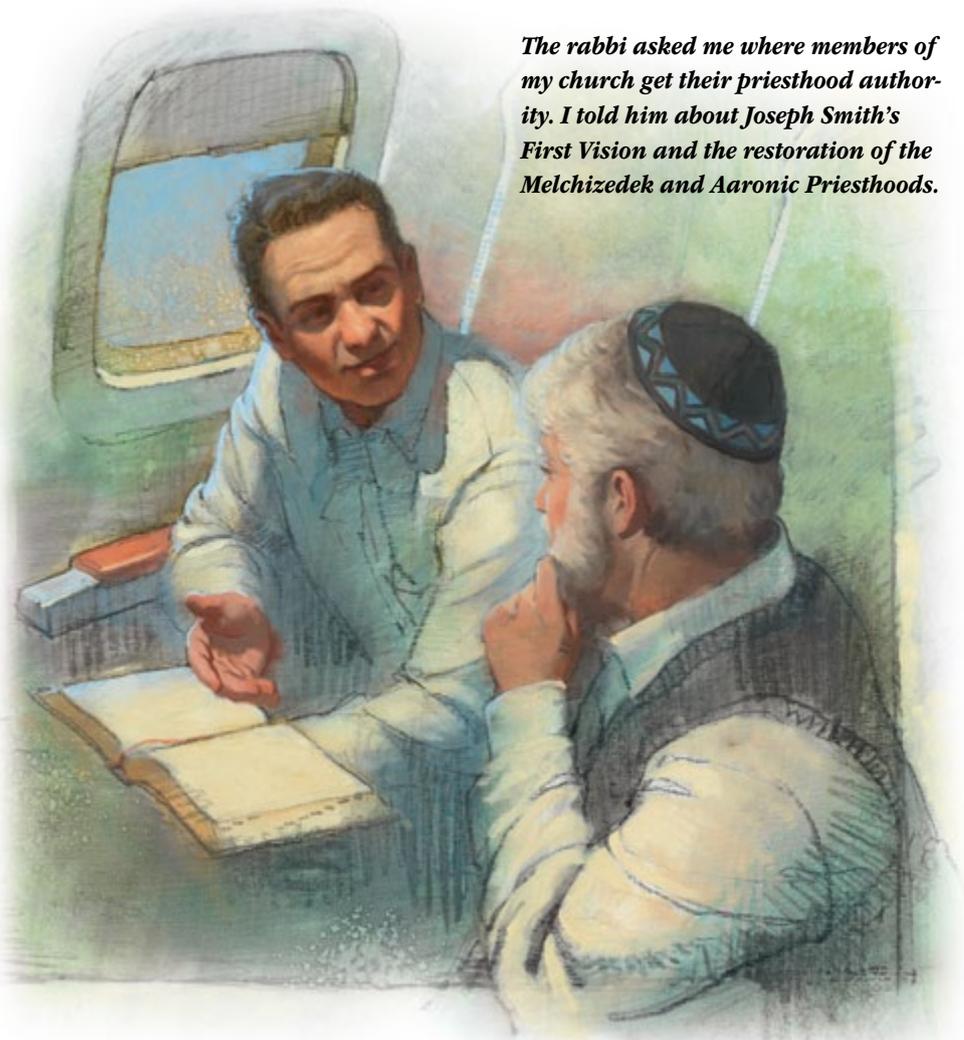
"I remember that the children of Israel built a golden calf shortly after witnessing the parting of the Red Sea," I replied.

He turned to 1 Nephi and began to read. He stopped and said, "This text is Hebrew."

He then explained why the text appeared to be an English translation of Hebrew. I told him the book was written by a tribe of Israel. I cited Ezekiel 37:15–20, which speaks of the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph. We agreed that the stick of Judah represents the Bible, and I explained that the stick of Joseph is the Book of Mormon.

After our three-hour conversation the rabbi expressed an interest in obtaining a copy of the Book of Mormon. When I returned home, I sent him a copy personalized with my written testimony. I am thankful that my efforts to study the Old Testament had prepared me to discuss the scriptures and share my testimony with my new friend, a rabbi. ■

Derk Palfreyman, Utah, USA



YOU'D BETTER PRAY FIRST

I almost left the Church over a disagreement with my stake president. I felt he had done something that was not right. His actions did not reflect the way I thought things should happen, so I stopped going to church.

My wife told me, "You can't make a decision like that without some serious prayer and fasting."

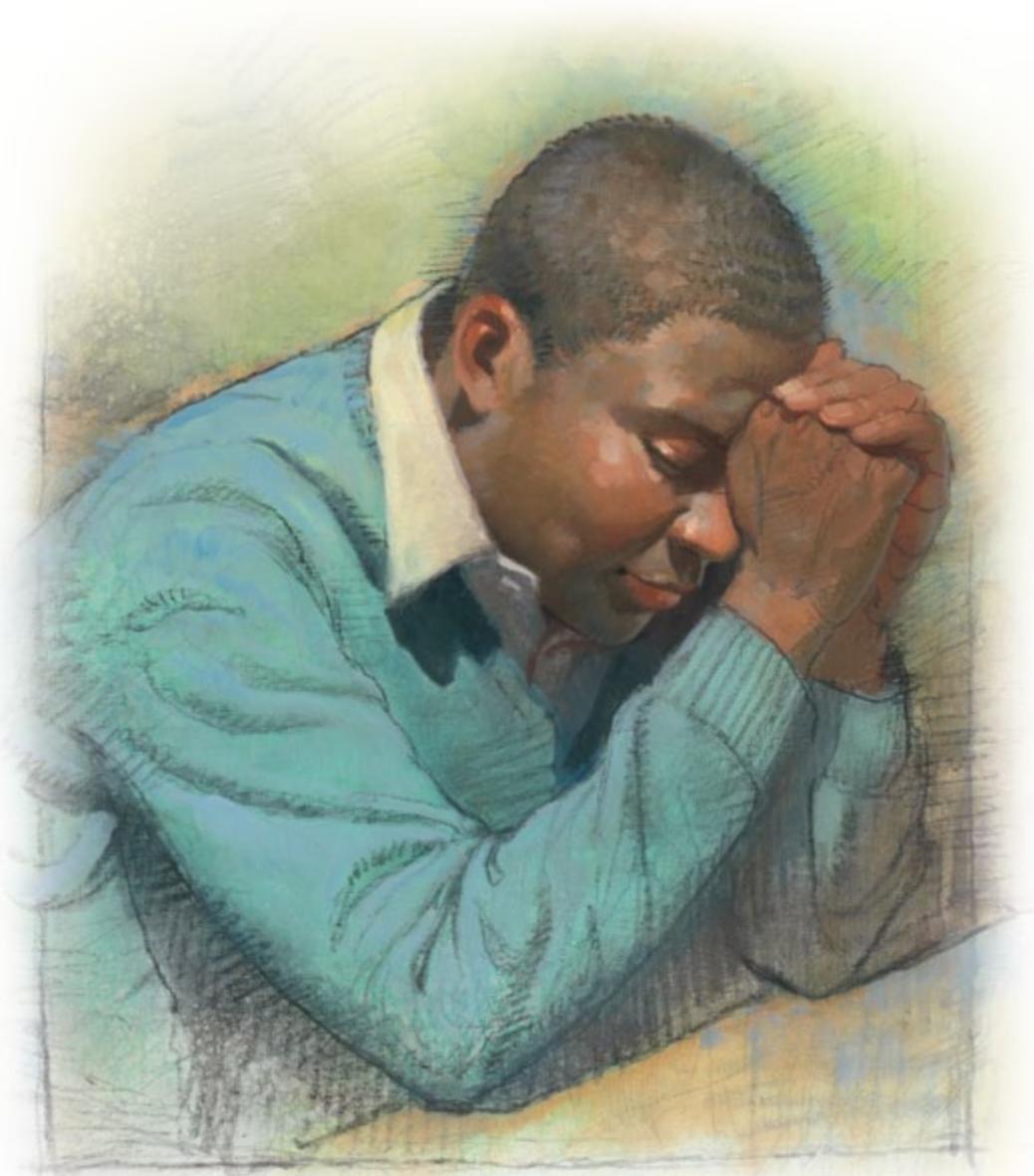
She was right. After I had prayed for some time, the following words came to me clearly and directly: "The servant of God is called of God."

That night I had a dream. In my dream my grandfather rebuked me for fighting against my leader. I then woke up from my dream and could not sleep for the rest of the night. After a long night of deep pondering, I knew what I needed to do. I went to my stake president and apologized. He happily accepted my apology, and we prayed together.

Immediately I returned to church. Two weeks later my company transferred me to Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Baffled, I wondered why I was being pulled out of the stake after my efforts to reconcile myself.

I soon learned that the Lord was preparing me. During my second month in Abuja, I was called as a branch president.

I'm sure that Heavenly Father wanted to teach me the importance of sustaining Church leaders before He called me to be a leader. This



After I had prayed for some time, the following words came to me clearly and directly: "The servant of God is called of God."

experience strengthened my testimony. Now I try my hardest to listen to the counsel of my leaders because I know they are called of God. And anyone He calls, He qualifies.¹

Our leaders are human beings. Though they are inspired, they are not perfect. I learned that if we disagree

with them, we need to support, encourage, and pray for them and for ourselves so that we may trust God and the servants He has chosen. ■

Martins Enyiche, Nigeria

NOTE

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.



I asked if he was planning to bear his testimony when the time came. He said yes and then asked, “Are you?”

ARE YOU GOING TO BEAR YOUR TESTIMONY?

I recently had the opportunity to attend sacrament meeting in another state with Church members I did not know. To make conversation with the brother next to me, I asked if he was planning to bear his testimony when the time came. He said yes and then asked, “Are you?”

“No, probably not,” I answered. Then I added, “But the Church is true, and the gospel is true.”

I soon forgot about our short conversation. When the opportunity for testimony bearing began, we were

encouraged to keep our time short so that many could have the opportunity to share their testimonies. When the brother I had talked to got up and shared his testimony, he acknowledged that there was not enough time to share all he wanted to about the gospel and the happiness it brings. Instead, he shared the words of his conversation with me, someone he had just met, and how my simple statement summed up everything: the Church is true, and the gospel is true. That’s what is important.

Reflecting on that experience, I understand that we can bear our testimonies in many ways, and we can have a positive influence on others in just a short time. No matter how briefly we interact with someone, we can leave a positive impression of the gospel and ourselves.

I did not bear my testimony on the stand that day, but my short testimony was shared and my influence felt both by the brother I talked with and by those who heard his testimony. ■

LaReina Hingson, Indiana, USA

I WANT TO SIT ON JESUS'S LAP

Our grandson was only four when a policeman picked him up on the side of the highway. He said he was headed to Grandma's house, about five miles (8 km) away.

It was the second time he had run away from the unhappiness at home, trying to get to me. Over the next few months, I came to realize that the responsibility of raising my grandson and his two younger sisters was probably going to fall on my shoulders—an idea I did not readily embrace.

My husband and I had done our best to raise our children with gospel principles, but they eventually rejected those principles. I was in my 50s and felt that I had finally earned the right to pursue my own interests. I cherished the goal my husband and I shared of serving a mission together when he retired. The notion of going grocery shopping with preschoolers, organizing mealtimes, doing thousands of loads of laundry, and someday again mothering teenagers reduced me to tears.

One afternoon, however, something changed my heart. A small thing had upset my grandson, so I took him onto my lap and wiped away his tears. As I held him, we talked about how much Jesus loved him. Nearby I had a wall calendar featuring paintings of the Savior, so we looked at those beautiful images one by one.

My grandson was especially interested in a depiction of the Savior

sitting in a stone doorway with a small, brown-haired girl on His lap. In the painting, both the Savior and the child radiate peace. My grandson looked closely, pointed to the girl, and called her by his sister's name.

"How can Katie sit on Jesus's lap, Grandma?" he asked. "I want to sit on His lap too!"

"You can't sit on Jesus's lap now, sweetheart, but you can sit on my lap," I said. "Jesus gives little children grandmas to love them and hold them and

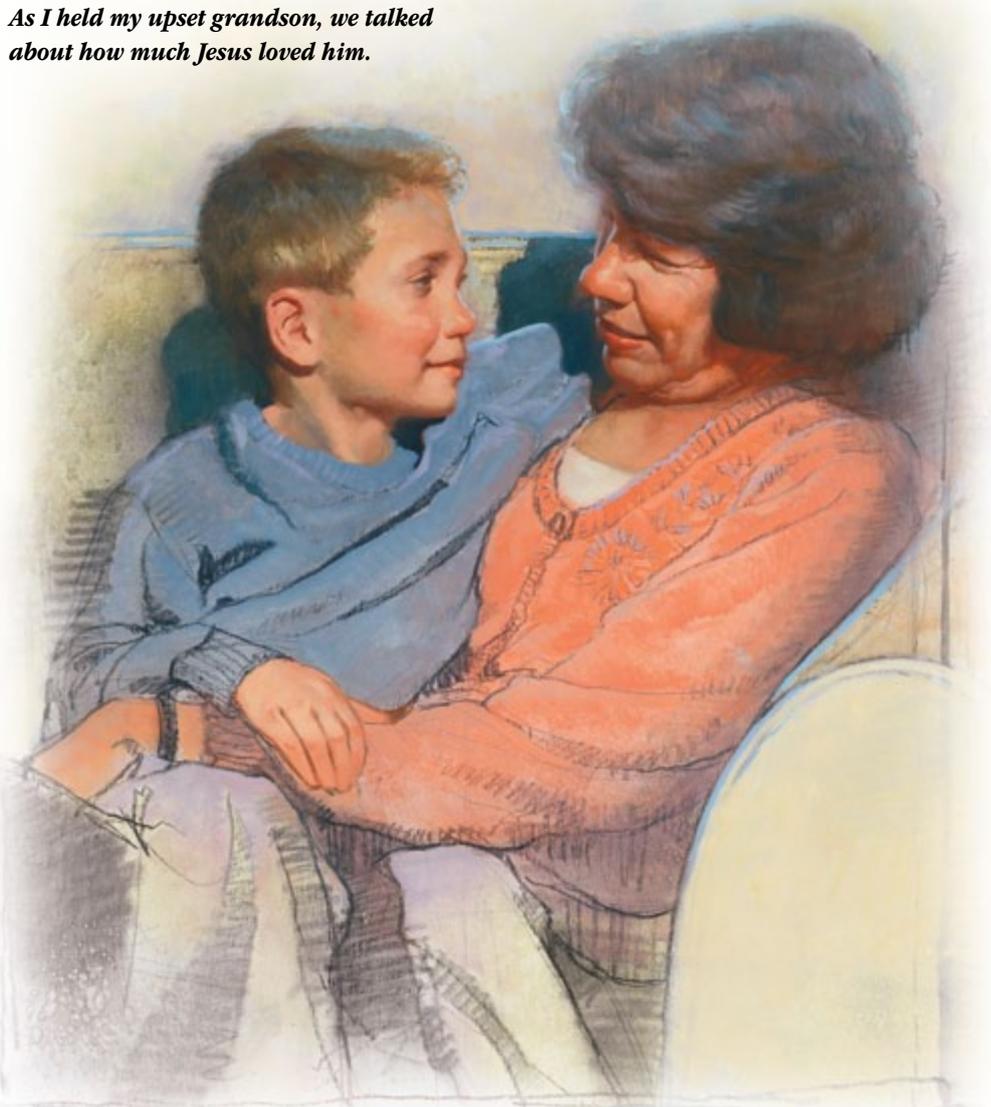
take care of them when they need it."

Suddenly my heart embraced a future of loving—as the Savior would love—three beloved children who needed me. They were no longer a burden but a wonderful blessing and opportunity to serve our Lord.

I will be forever grateful for the tender mercy of the Lord given to me that afternoon. It changed my life and continues to strengthen and bless our home. ■

Name withheld

As I held my upset grandson, we talked about how much Jesus loved him.



WHEN GOOD PLANS Don't WORK OUT

By Stephanie J. Burns

Planning for the future is important, especially for young adults. But what happens when the best-laid plans don't work out?

Jung Sung Eun of Korea didn't pass the qualification exam to become a teacher. Tina Roper of Utah, USA, lost a job that she had expected to turn into a career. Todd Schlensker of Ohio, USA, received a spiritual confirmation to marry but saw his engagement come to an end. Alessia Mazzolari (name has been changed) of Italy ended what appeared to be the perfect relationship.

No one likes having to resort to "plan B." But even when our plans fall through, Heavenly Father does not abandon His children. There are multiple good ways for life to work out. In time, we may even find that the roadblocks that changed our plans gave us needed insight and experience (see D&C 122:7) and led to something better.

Building Character, Not Résumés

Sung Eun had worked hard to achieve her lifelong dream of becoming

a teacher. She explains, "Because I have always tried to do my best in all I do, I have almost always been able to obtain what I hoped and prayed for." But that didn't happen when she took the teacher qualification exam. "When I failed it," she says, "I felt I had lost all my dreams in one day."

Tina wasn't initially worried when another company acquired the one she worked for. The new organization promised her a long-term position, so she moved closer to her work with high hopes of an exciting new job. When the company laid her off a few months later, she felt "lost, confused, sad, and quite scared."

Rather than focus completely on building their résumés, Sung Eun and Tina realized they could also focus on building their character. Both women found comfort through gospel study and prayer.

"The Apostle Paul was a wonderful friend who helped me be patient and

continually confront challenges," says Sung Eun. "He always had a positive attitude and willingly waited for what God had for him, rather than hoping for his own timing.

"I learned something from his example: the period of waiting is not merely the process that we must go through to get what we want. Rather, it is a process by which we become who our Heavenly Father wants us to be through changes we make."

Tina found that the change she needed most was a shift in perspective. "I was surprised to discover that I had measured my self-worth in worldly ideas of value," she remembers. "I felt valuable because of my employment and position, which were taken away. I now find my self-worth in the eternal truths that I am a daughter of my Heavenly Father and I have divine potential. These truths can never be taken away."

Both Tina and Sung Eun admit that



while building character isn't always pleasant, the fruits of personal growth are sweet. Sung Eun says, "The year after I failed the teacher qualification exam was not only the most painful and depressing time period, but it was also the most precious. I became more able to truly understand other people's difficulties and had a desire to help them with real intent and care."

The examples of Ammon and his brothers in the Book of Mormon showed Tina how the Lord was stretching her faith to help her reach her full potential. "The Lord's plan was for the Nephites to save their Lamanite brothers instead of using a sword to solve the problem," she explains. "The sons of Mosiah were given a task that required greater faith, but they were also given a promise that if they bore their afflictions with patience, they would receive success (see Alma 26:27). Being patient is one of my hardest trials because I want to understand my entire plan—but I realized that Heavenly Father's plan and timing for us will always be the best."

Keeping the Commandments No Matter What

Todd faced a bright future upon returning from his mission. While attending school, he met a wonderful young woman. After several months of courtship and a spiritual confirmation, Todd proposed and she accepted. They planned their wedding for the end of the summer, and both returned

home from school to prepare.

“Three weeks after we said our good-byes at school, she ended our engagement,” Todd recalls. “*Heartbroken* could not express my feelings strongly enough. There were so many unanswered questions in my mind; it didn’t make sense. I had received a confirmation in the house of the Lord, and now our relationship was over. My testimony had never been tested this hard.

“Unfortunately, for years following my breakup, I couldn’t get past it. I didn’t know how I could ever trust a feeling of confirmation again. I had always trusted in the Lord and tried my best to keep the commandments,” he continues. “It all seemed for naught.”

Alessia thought that her relationship with a certain young man was meant to be. “Our story was so beautiful that, even though we had the normal difficulties that every couple encounters, we thought the relationship would never end,” she remembers.

When Alessia’s boyfriend left on his mission, the separation was difficult but for a different reason than Alessia had expected. “While he was gone, I began to know myself better. I realized that many things in my life were not yet right and that many times I had hidden behind some silly ideas rather than humble myself and face reality,” she recounts. “I had been living in a kind of fairy tale, as if being in love were enough to make



everything turn out right, and often this caused me to overlook the most important things.”

Still, Alessia expected a happy reunion and continued relationship after her boyfriend’s mission. However, upon his return, the couple dated only a short time before breaking up. “It was one of the most painful moments I can remember,” says Alessia.

In their respective experiences, Todd and Alessia both eventually recognized that even though a key relationship in their lives was altered, they couldn’t abandon their obedience and allegiance to the Lord. He became their anchor when everything else was changing and uncertain.

“I didn’t have all the answers to why I got a confirmation to marry someone, and it didn’t happen,” Todd recalls. “But I realized that didn’t matter. What *did* matter is that I still had faith in Christ, and I was going to use that faith to trust in whatever the Lord had in store for me.”

Alessia knew that completely pledging herself to the Lord would bring her the strength that she needed. “I understood that the moment had arrived for me to decide what kind of person I wanted to be,” she says. “Would I continue to live life half-way, or would I start on the path to becoming a true disciple of Christ? I wanted to know Him deeply, love Him truly, and try to be a better person



THE BEST IS YET TO COME

“We look back to claim the embers from glowing experiences but not the ashes. And when we have learned what we need to learn and have brought with us the best that we have experienced, then we look ahead and remember that *faith is always pointed toward the future.*”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Best Is Yet to Be,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2010, 18; *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 24.

by obeying all His commandments—not just externally but in my heart with true honesty.”

Developing Hope in the Future and Faith in Christ

After being confronted with unanticipated setbacks, all four of these young adults struggled to find the courage to live in the present and again plan for the future. But they found that their faith in the Lord grew.

Sung Eun remembers that after failing her examination, trying new things became difficult. But then came a crucial discovery: “I realized that the real failure is to dwell on the past and make little effort to try to work things out. I decided that rather than continuing to be sad, I should turn this difficult time into an opportunity to learn. My ability to understand life in general broadened and deepened, and I learned that the end of one thing always brings about the beginning of something else.” She has since retaken and passed the exam and is now “a happy teacher who enjoys spending time with students each day.”

Tina chose to trust that something was waiting for her, even though it was difficult to face an uncertain future. “I decided to reenter school, and there I studied the art and technology field, an area I had desired to become involved in but I did not possess the needed skills,” she explains. “I am ready to start another adventure, a much better one, thanks to the wisdom of my Heavenly Father.”

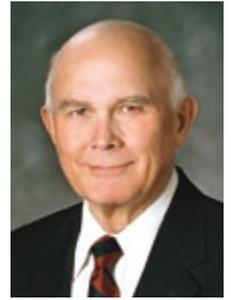
Todd continued trying to date for six years and worked to develop trust in the Lord. Even when he met women he admired very much, he had to fight to keep his doubts from the past from destroying his hopes for the future. “Finding the determination not to succumb to my doubts of six years was not easy,” he says. “But I was firm in attempting to prove to myself that I really did trust in the Lord and His promptings, even though I had been angry with Him before.” A new relationship eventually led to a temple marriage.

“I often wonder why the Lord blessed me with someone as great as my wife when I struggled so long to fully trust the feelings of the Spirit,” reflects Todd. “It is a testimony to me that the Lord is waiting to bless us, but it’s always on His timetable.”

Alessia, by rededicating herself to the Lord, developed a deep and personal testimony. “The plan of salvation became real for me, and my covenants became more binding and deep. Christ’s Atonement was not theory anymore or something that I had read about, perhaps too superficially. A change of heart was happening inside, and I had a sure witness.” Today, she says, she feels like a new person.

Regardless of the turns life’s journey may take, the final destination of eternal life is what Heavenly Father plans for His children (see Moses 1:39). Some may even find that “plan B” was simply a way of making His “plan A” a reality. ■

For more on this topic, see Boyd K. Packer, “The Least of These,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 86–88; Robert D. Hales, “Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 71–74; Ann M. Dibb, “Be of a Good Courage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 114–16.



By Elder
Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

The Importance of **PRIESTHOOD** *A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things.* **BLESSINGS**

In a priesthood blessing a servant of the Lord exercises the priesthood, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, to call upon the powers of heaven for the benefit of the person being blessed. Such blessings are conferred by holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which has the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church (see D&C 107:18, 67).

Examples of Priesthood Blessings

There are many kinds of priesthood blessings. As I give various examples, please remember that priesthood blessings are available for all who need them, but they are given only on request.

Blessings for the healing of the sick are preceded by anointing with oil, as the scriptures direct (see James 5:14–15; Mark 6:13; D&C 24:13–14; 42:43–48; 66:9). Patriarchal blessings are conferred by an ordained patriarch.

Persons desiring guidance in an important decision can receive a

priesthood blessing. Persons who need extra spiritual power to overcome a personal challenge can receive a blessing. Priesthood blessings are often requested from fathers before children leave home for various purposes, such as school, service in the military, or a long trip.

Blessings given in circumstances such as I have just described are sometimes called blessings of comfort or counsel. They are usually given by fathers or husbands or other elders in the family. They can be recorded and kept in family records for the personal spiritual guidance of the persons blessed.

Priesthood blessings are also given in connection with a priesthood ordination or with the setting apart of a man or woman for a calling in the Church. These are probably the most frequent occasions for priesthood blessings.

Many of us have requested a priesthood blessing when we were

about to embark upon a new responsibility in our employment. I received such a blessing many years ago and felt its immediate comfort and long-term guidance.

Significance of Priesthood Blessings

What is the significance of a priesthood blessing? Think of a young man preparing to leave home to seek his fortune in the world. If his father gave him a compass, he might use this worldly tool to help him find his way. If his father gave him money, he could use this to give him power over worldly things. A priesthood blessing is a conferral of power over spiritual things. Though it cannot be touched or weighed, it is of great significance in helping us overcome obstacles on the path to eternal life.

It is a very sacred responsibility for a Melchizedek Priesthood holder to speak for the Lord in giving a priesthood blessing. As the Lord



has told us in modern revelation, “My word . . . shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). If a servant of the Lord speaks as he is moved upon by the Holy Ghost, his words are “the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the word of the Lord, . . . [and] the voice of the Lord” (D&C 68:4).

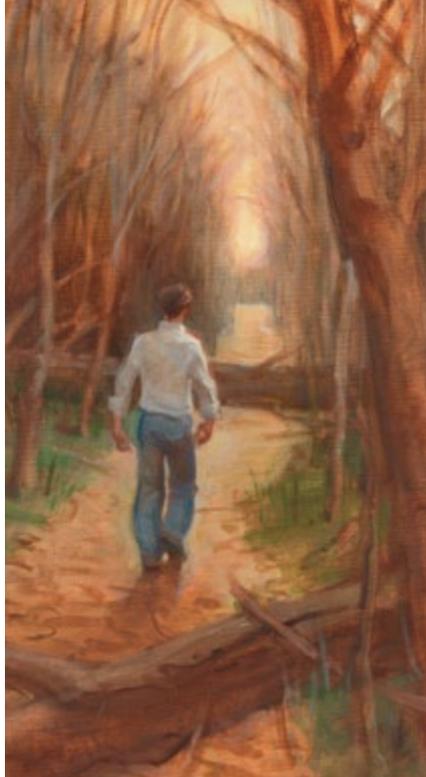
But if the words of a blessing represent only the priesthood holder’s own desires and opinions, uninspired by the Holy Ghost, then the blessing is conditioned on whether it represents the will of the Lord.

Worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders can give blessings to their posterity. The scriptures record many such blessings, including Adam’s (see D&C 107:53–57), Isaac’s (see Genesis 27:28–29, 39–40; 28:3–4; Hebrews 11:20), Jacob’s (see Genesis 48:9–22; 49; Hebrews 11:21), and Lehi’s (see 2 Nephi 1:28–32; 4).

In modern revelation, parents who are members of the Church are commanded to bring their children “before the church,” where the elders “are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name” (D&C 20:70). This is why parents bring babies to a sacrament meeting, where an elder—usually the father—gives them a name and a blessing.

Priesthood blessings are not limited to those blessings spoken as hands are laid on the head of one person. Blessings are sometimes pronounced on groups of people. The prophet Moses blessed all the children of Israel before his death (see Deuteronomy 33:1). The Prophet Joseph Smith “pronounced a blessing upon the sisters” working on the Kirtland Temple. He also blessed “the congregation.”¹

Priesthood blessings are also pronounced on places. Nations are blessed and dedicated for the preaching of the gospel. Temples and houses of worship are dedicated to the Lord by a priesthood blessing. Other buildings may be dedicated when they are used in the service of the Lord. “Church members may dedicate their homes as sacred edifices where the Holy Spirit can reside.”² Missionaries and other priesthood holders can leave a priesthood blessing upon homes where they have been received (see Alma 10:7–11; D&C 75:19). Young men, within a short time you may be asked to give such a blessing. I hope you are preparing yourselves spiritually.



A priesthood blessing is of great significance in helping us overcome obstacles on the path to eternal life.

Experiences with Priesthood Blessings

I will mention some other examples of priesthood blessings.

About a hundred years ago, Sarah Young Vance qualified as a midwife. Before she began serving the women of Arizona, a priesthood leader blessed her that she would “always do only what was right and what was best for the welfare of her patients.” Over a period of 45 years, Sarah delivered approximately 1,500 babies without the loss of a single mother or child. “Whenever I came up against a difficult problem,” she recalled, “something always seemed to inspire me and somehow I would know what was the right thing to do.”³

In 1864, Joseph A. Young was called on a special mission to transact Church business in the East. His father, President Brigham Young,

blessed him to go and return in safety. As he was returning, he was involved in a severe train wreck. “The whole train was smashed,” he reported, “including the car I was in to within one seat of where I sat, [but] I escaped without a scratch.”⁴

As I speak of priesthood blessings, I have a flood of memories: I remember my sons and daughters asking for blessings to help them through the most stressful experiences of their lives. I rejoice as I recall inspired promises and the strengthened faith that came when they were fulfilled. I feel pride in the faith of a new generation when I think of a son, apprehensive about a professional examination and unable to reach his faraway father, seeking a priesthood blessing from the most accessible priesthood holder in his family, the husband of his sister. I remember a confused young convert to the Church seeking a blessing to help him change the self-destructive pattern of his life. He received a blessing so unusual I was astonished when I heard the words I spoke.

Do not hesitate to ask for a priesthood blessing when you are in need of spiritual power. ■

From an April 1987 general conference address.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 2:399.
2. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.11.
3. See Leonard J. Arrington and Susan A. Madsen, *Sunbonnet Sisters: True Stories of Mormon Women and Frontier Life* (1984), 105.
4. Joseph A. Young, in *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1974), 4.

TESTIMONY

SHARE IT

“Therefore, hold up your light that it
may shine unto the world”

(3 Nephi 18:24).



POWER IN PRAYER

By Paul VanDenBerghe
Church Magazines

*Teens from the island of Cebu
in the Philippines tell about
receiving answers to their prayers.*

**From left: Joselito,
Joahanna, Rosa, and
Ken gather in front
of the Cebu City
Philippines Temple.**



Of the tens of thousands of islands on the earth, a cluster of 7,107 of them makes up the island nation of the Philippines in Southeast Asia. A running witticism common in the Philippines notes that while there are 7,107 islands, that's only during low tide. The number of islands actually drops to 7,100 at high tide, when some are submerged below the ocean's surface. So how do the young women and young men of the Philippines keep their heads above water when they're feeling overwhelmed? They turn to Heavenly Father in prayer.

There are times in our lives when we may feel alone, but if we remember that our Heavenly Father is always there for us—always ready to hear and answer our prayers—we can lean on that fact and feel the hope and confidence that knowledge brings.

Prayer Brings Confidence

Joselito B. tells about being assigned to take part in a storytelling contest when he was 12 years old. His teacher asked him to memorize a 10-page script that he would have to perform in front of hundreds of other students and faculty. This can be a daunting task for anyone, let alone for Joselito, who usually gets stage fright.

“So the first thing I did was say a prayer and ask for guidance,” says Joselito. “During my prayer I asked that if I forgot part of the script, I could keep going and make up new lines that would work for my story. After I was done praying, I remembered my favorite scripture from the Bible in the Old Testament. It is in Proverbs 3:6, which says, ‘In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.’”

Joselito was nervous. But he worked hard for an entire week memorizing the script. And he prayed a lot every day. Finally the day of the contest arrived.

During the greetings that opened the contest, Joselito



was still very nervous. “But during the story I was fine,” he says. “I just did my best, and I knew that God would help me. I was frustrated and intimidated because there were so many students, but God answered my prayers.”

Not only was Joselito able to remember the script to his story, but he also performed it so well that he earned first place in the contest. Joselito says, “Prayer is the answer when you have no one around to comfort you. God is always there to help you.”

Prayer Brings Strength

As a young boy growing up in an active Latter-day Saint family, Ken G. had never had much trouble keeping his standards high. But when he started high school, things became harder and Ken sometimes felt isolated from the good influence of his family—especially at school.

“My high school friends were all really close to me even though they were not members of the Church,” Ken says. “We still had a strong connection. The problem was they started doing things that did not follow the standards of our Church.”

At home Ken never had a problem choosing the right, but he says that when he got to school and his family was no longer around to help guide him, he started making wrong choices. “I admit I did things that were not in line with the standards of the Church, so in seminary I always felt like I was the one being talked about in the lesson.”

That's when Ken realized he wanted to make a change, but he didn't feel strong enough to do it on his own. “So I made a resolution to pray for God to give me the strength and the courage to say no to my friends when they did bad things,” he explains. “And I feel that God answered my prayers. It became easier for me to say no whenever my friends asked me to do something wrong or tempted me. I already had the knowledge and knew what was right and wrong. But then, through prayer, I felt like I had



A RELATIONSHIP I CHERISH

“Not a day has gone by that I have not communicated with my Father in Heaven through prayer. It is a relationship I cherish—one I would literally be lost without. If you do not now have such a relationship with your Father in Heaven, I urge you to work toward that goal. As you do so, you will be entitled to His inspiration and guidance in your life.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Holy Places,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 84.



Watch a Video

To see a video of Tania’s story (in English, Portuguese, and Spanish), visit youth.lds.org and look for the video “Pure and Simple Faith” in Youth Theme, 2012.

“I was hesitant to buy it,” Tania says, “but I could feel the Holy Ghost whispering to me to buy it anyway, so I did. Now I had only 20 pesos left, but I still had many things to buy, including diapers for my brother and clean water to drink. So I went to the next store to buy food for our meal, and it was too expensive. I reached into my pocket where I put the 20 pesos, and there were five 20-peso bills in the roll. I started crying right in front of the store owner.

“In the end I was able to buy all of the things we needed,” Tania says, “and we had enough for fare to go to church the next day. When I got home, I went to my room and offered a prayer to God to thank Him for the blessing He had given to us. I know that God really lives and answers our prayers, especially those times when we need Him most and we offer a sincere prayer. He really will answer that prayer.”

Prayer Keeps Us near Our Heavenly Father

While we can be certain that our Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers, we need to remember that our prayers are not always answered immediately and not always in the way we want them to be answered. Our prayers are answered according to God’s will and timing.

Each of these teens from the Philippine island of Cebu has learned that in good times and bad, when we’re in a crowd or all alone, whether it’s high tide or low, our Heavenly Father is always there for us. And if we turn to Him in sincere prayer, He is always ready to bless us. ■

the power and the gift to say no and to do what was right.”

Ken says the most important thing he learned from this experience is that “prayer is a sign of your humility, because you admit to yourself that you are weak and that only God can help you become strong” (see D&C 112:10).

Prayer Brings Blessings

Sometimes we need more than comfort or strength alone; sometimes the blessings we need are more tangible. Tania D. remembers such a time. Her family was facing an especially trying time financially. “It was a Saturday evening, and we had only 40 pesos [about US\$1] left for the week, and we didn’t have dinner or even charcoal for our stove at home,” says Tania. “My mother gave me a list of all these things we needed, and we needed 250 pesos to buy all of it. The first thing we needed to buy was charcoal so we could cook dinner.” Tania could see there was not enough money for everything. Then she realized they would not have money for bus fare to go to church the next day. “I told my mother that we didn’t have enough for the fare to go to church. But my mother is really faithful, and she simply told me that ‘God will provide.’

“On my way to the store I was crying because we didn’t have enough money for everything, and I didn’t know what to do,” Tania says. As she rolled up one of the 20-peso bills and put it into her pocket, she did the only thing she could think to do that would help—she said a prayer. “I prayed to Heavenly Father that we could somehow find a way to accommodate our needs.”

But when she got to the first store, she found that the price of charcoal had gone up from 5 pesos to 20 pesos.

A PROMISE AND A PRAYER

By Pablo Mireles Betts

What amazes me about the Book of Mormon is the great and eternal change it causes in people even before they are members of the Church. As a missionary in the Mexico Cuernavaca Mission, I saw this great change firsthand.

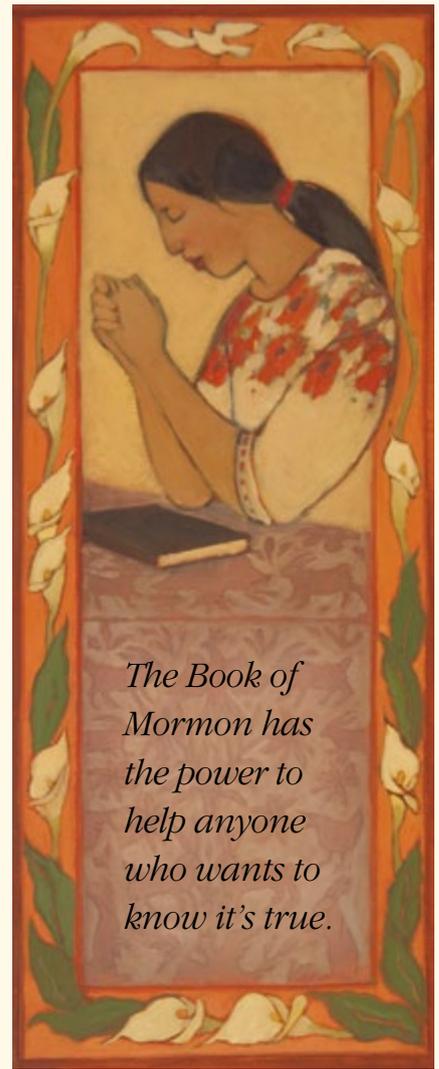
When I had been on my mission for six months, a member of the branch referred my companion and me to teach a 20-year-old woman and her family. The young woman didn't understand what Latter-day Saints believed and asked us many questions. Knowing that the Book of Mormon answers questions of the soul, we gave her the book and shared the promise it contains about praying sincerely to know if it is true.

For three weeks she attended church, and we continued meeting with her. We didn't know that she had already taken an important step: she had prayed about the Book of Mormon. During one particular lesson, she told us of her experience. She had been thinking a lot about the lessons we were sharing, and she

desired to pray on her own. She knelt down and asked God if the Book of Mormon was true. The peace she felt after praying encouraged her to read more of the book. While reading, she felt the Spirit sweep over her.

Recounting her experience, she told us, "I felt more special than I had ever felt before. Something began to fill all the empty space I had in my life that nothing else could fill. I felt so happy that I began to cry. I couldn't believe what I was feeling, but I knew that my Heavenly Father had answered me, that He knew me, and that He loved me enough to listen to me and answer my prayer."

I felt so much joy in my heart when she recounted her experience. I knew I was on sacred ground on that occasion. The Holy Ghost confirmed to me that her words were true. From her testimony I was reminded of the great love our Heavenly Father has for us; He loves us so much He has given us the Book of Mormon as an instrument to know Him and His truth. When we obey



The Book of Mormon has the power to help anyone who wants to know it's true.

the principles found in the Book of Mormon, our lives will change.

I still remember how that lesson ended. The sister asked us, "What happens now that I know the Book of Mormon is true?"

"Be baptized," we responded.

Her reply was simple but reflected the firmness and simplicity of her testimony: "Then I will be baptized."

The Book of Mormon has the power to help us find happiness and peace. When we read it, we will develop a firm determination to live the gospel of Jesus Christ, just as this sister determined to follow the example of the Savior into the waters of baptism. ■

What Is PURE TESTIMONY?

By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

Your testimony is probably stronger than you realize.

You're sitting in testimony meeting. As you watch members of the congregation stand up and bear their testimonies, you feel as though you should too. But what do you say? And what if you start crying while you're up there? Or what if you *don't* start crying? You may begin to question if you even have a testimony. Or maybe you're unsure of what your testimony is. Here are some guidelines to help you know what a testimony is and is not.

A Testimony Is a Conviction, Knowledge, or Belief in a Truth

"Pure testimony" (Alma 4:19) begins with pure belief. Your testimony is a spiritual witness of what you believe or know to be true (see D&C 80:4). When you share your testimony, the purest and most powerful parts will come from words like *know*, *believe*, and *testify*. If you can say with sincerity, "I know the Book of Mormon is true," you can have power to change lives and invite the Spirit to touch others.



President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Waiting on the Road to Damascus," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 70.

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

"Those who diligently seek to learn of Christ eventually will come to know Him. They will personally receive a divine portrait of the Master, although it most often comes in the form of a puzzle—one piece at a time. Each individual piece may not be easily recognizable by itself; it may not be clear how it relates to the whole. Each piece helps us to see the big picture a little more clearly. Eventually, after enough pieces have been put together, we recognize the grand beauty of it all. Then, looking back on our experience, we see that the Savior had indeed come to be with us—not all at once but quietly, gently, almost unnoticed."

Imagine you have a large box filled with puzzle pieces created just for you. Using the picture on the front of the box, you try to put the puzzle together.

When two pieces of your puzzle fit together, you know they belong. Testimonies work in a similar way. As you have spiritual experiences, different pieces of your testimony will start to fit together, and you will come to believe or know certain truths about the gospel.

Even if you don't know right now if everything about the Church is true, Heavenly Father will bless you and help you learn as long as you have a righteous desire to know and you sincerely try to learn.

A Testimony Is Personal

As you work on your puzzle, your family and friends may periodically help you put it together. But in the end, it is your unique puzzle to build and protect. You may rely on the faith of



your parents or friends sometimes, but as you have more spiritual experiences, you can maintain your own testimony.

As you grow in the gospel, it is important to develop a testimony of your own. Just as two people would have different approaches to assembling a puzzle—maybe one person puts the edge pieces together while another begins matching colors—we each build a testimony through beliefs and experiences in an order unique to us.

HERE'S WHAT YOUTH HAVE TO SAY ABOUT PURE TESTIMONY

"Sometimes the greatest testimonies are the most childlike testimonies. The greatest testimonies are really when you testify that Jesus Christ lives, that our Heavenly Father lives, and that He loves us."—Matias C., Argentina

"I believe it is important to have a pure testimony because you're able to use that testimony to bring others into the gospel."—Quaid H., Australia

"A testimony is the biggest anchor you have. No matter what happens around you, if you have a strong testimony, you'll be able to face problems with a better attitude."—Zane V., California, USA

"I think a pure testimony needs to be something that you found out yourself and that you truly believe in, and when you share your testimony, you can touch others and that can strengthen their testimonies as well."—Zamagomane M., South Africa



TESTIMONY



If you're unsure about anything, sincerely pray for guidance and truth. Often prayers are not answered in the way we might expect, so keep your eyes and heart open for answers.

A Testimony Is Continually Growing

Just as you can't take a completed puzzle out of the box without doing any work, you can't expect your testimony to come all at once. You learn, piece by piece, the truthfulness of the gospel.

Maintaining a strong testimony requires constant effort. As you continue to work on increasing your knowledge of the gospel, the Holy Ghost will bless you in your efforts and your testimony will continue to grow. ■

Do I ... ?

Do I have to share a story or experience when I bear my testimony?

People often share stories or personal experiences when they bear their testimonies, and these can be a great way of describing how a testimony grew. But a story is not a testimony. A short, relevant story can help you illustrate a point, but make sure to include *how* that story enlarged your testimony and *what* gospel truths you learned from that experience. A

testimony is what you *know* about the gospel, not about where you've been or what you've done.

Elder David A. Bednar
of the Quorum of the



Twelve Apostles taught: "A testimony is what we know to be true in our minds and in our hearts by the witness of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2). As we profess truth rather than admonish, exhort, or simply share interesting experiences, we invite the Holy Ghost to confirm the verity of our words."¹

Also, be careful about the experiences you share. Some are deeply personal to yourself or others, including stories about sin, repentance, and sacred spiritual experiences. Stories like these should not be shared in a public setting unless you feel prompted to. When you do feel prompted, keep them general, focusing on what you learned from the experience rather than the specific details of what happened.

Do I have to express thanks or love in my testimony?

While it is not inappropriate to express love or appreciation when you bear your testimony, these expressions are not considered a testimony. Testimonies focus on what you have learned spiritually about the gospel. Expressions of love or gratitude should not replace a testimony.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "[I] worry that too many of our members' testimonies linger on 'I am thankful' and 'I love,' and too few are able to say with humble but sincere clarity, 'I know.'"²

Do I have to cry or show emotion to have a *real* testimony?

Many people cry or show emotion when they bear testimony or feel the Spirit strongly, but not everyone has the same emotional reaction when he or she feels the Spirit. You do not have to express emotion the same way as others when you bear testimony.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) said: "I

get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself."³

If I'm not sure I have a testimony, do I still try to share it?

It's easy to feel like your testimony isn't strong enough or worth sharing, but as you share your testimony, you will find how much of a testimony you really have! Do not be afraid to share your testimony. You will find that the more you share your testimony, the more it grows.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

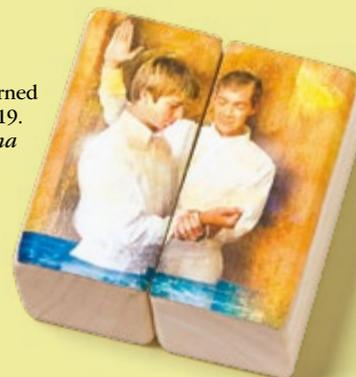
"It is not unusual to have a missionary say, 'How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony, would that not be dishonest?'

"Oh, if I could teach you this one principle: *a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it!* Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith,' as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two."⁴

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, "More Diligent and Concerned at Home," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 19.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "Pure Testimony," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 41.
3. Howard W. Hunter, in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 99.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge," *Liahona*, Jan. 2007, 18; *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 6.

If you've ever asked yourself these questions, here are some answers.



PLAYING to the Crowd

My life was all an act until I decided to change roles.

By Brittany Thompson

For me as a young teenager, school was about putting on an act. You know, the way the bad guy in the movies delivers the smooth, clever lines and comes off super cool in the process? I yearned to be able to do that. I tried to rule the screen just like the best of the bad guys. I pretended my morals were low because I wanted to impress my friends at school. I loved the sound of laughter when I used inappropriate language or joked about people.

I wanted to be the one audiences rooted for. So I figured out how to be a people pleaser. I became a regular comedy act in my biology class, managed to convince my volleyball team I was a party animal, and demolished my reputation as an innocent, naive young woman. I thought, "I don't want my friends to think I'm a goody-goody!"

Since I wasn't actually committing the serious sins people thought I was, I desperately tried to convince

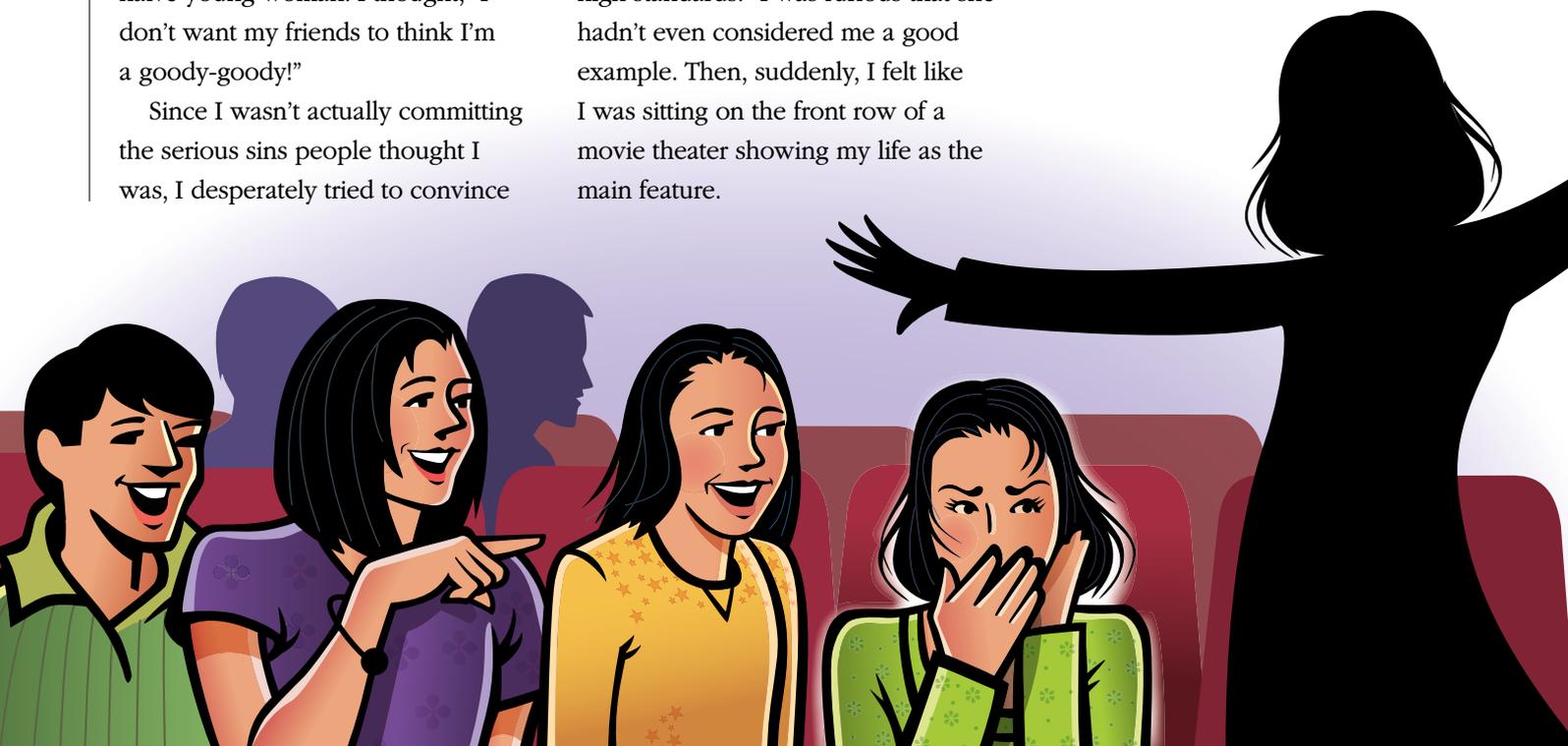
myself that it was OK to have a rough attitude. I was so wrong! My real-life movie-screen hit reached the point that I couldn't stand to watch it myself. The more popular I became, the less I liked the character I played.

One day, two of my friends were talking about a sweet, friendly athlete named Jennifer who wasn't embarrassed to stand up for her beliefs. One of my friends, the most gorgeous, popular, and smartest girl in the seventh grade, said, "Jennifer is so different. I wish I was brave enough to believe in my church like she does. She's the only person I know who lives her life like that." I was stunned.

"How could she say something like that without even mentioning me?" I wondered. "After all, my church has high standards!" I was furious that she hadn't even considered me a good example. Then, suddenly, I felt like I was sitting on the front row of a movie theater showing my life as the main feature.

I reflected on the poor example I had been to my friends. What kind of kid was going to watch me and think, "I wish I was brave and unique like her"? I really disliked who I had become.

Changing my character and reputation was a long process, and I'm still trying to keep my mouth shut instead of blurting out crowd-pleasing insults. But I realized I could make my friends laugh without hurting someone else's feelings, and I could leave the room during a crude joke without being ridiculed. No one has to be a "bad guy" to have lots of friends. I changed my attitudes and behaviors because being at peace with what I believe is so much cooler than trying to hide who I am. ■



A Whisper of **Kindness**

“Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (Luke 6:27).

By Deborah Moore

Based on a true story

Carson is here today,” James’s mom said, pointing to a boy in the hallway by the Primary room.

James groaned. Carson was wearing jeans and an old shirt. James knew his mom and dad would never let *him* wear anything like that to church, but they would never let him get away with a lot of the other things Carson did either.

Last week at school, Carson had been kicked out of class for talking back to the teacher. He always made fun of the way James dressed and gave him a hard time for being the shortest boy at school.

“What if he yells at Sister Win or starts a fight?” James asked.

“I’m sure everything will be fine,” Mom said. “Carson has never been to church, and he’s probably nervous.”

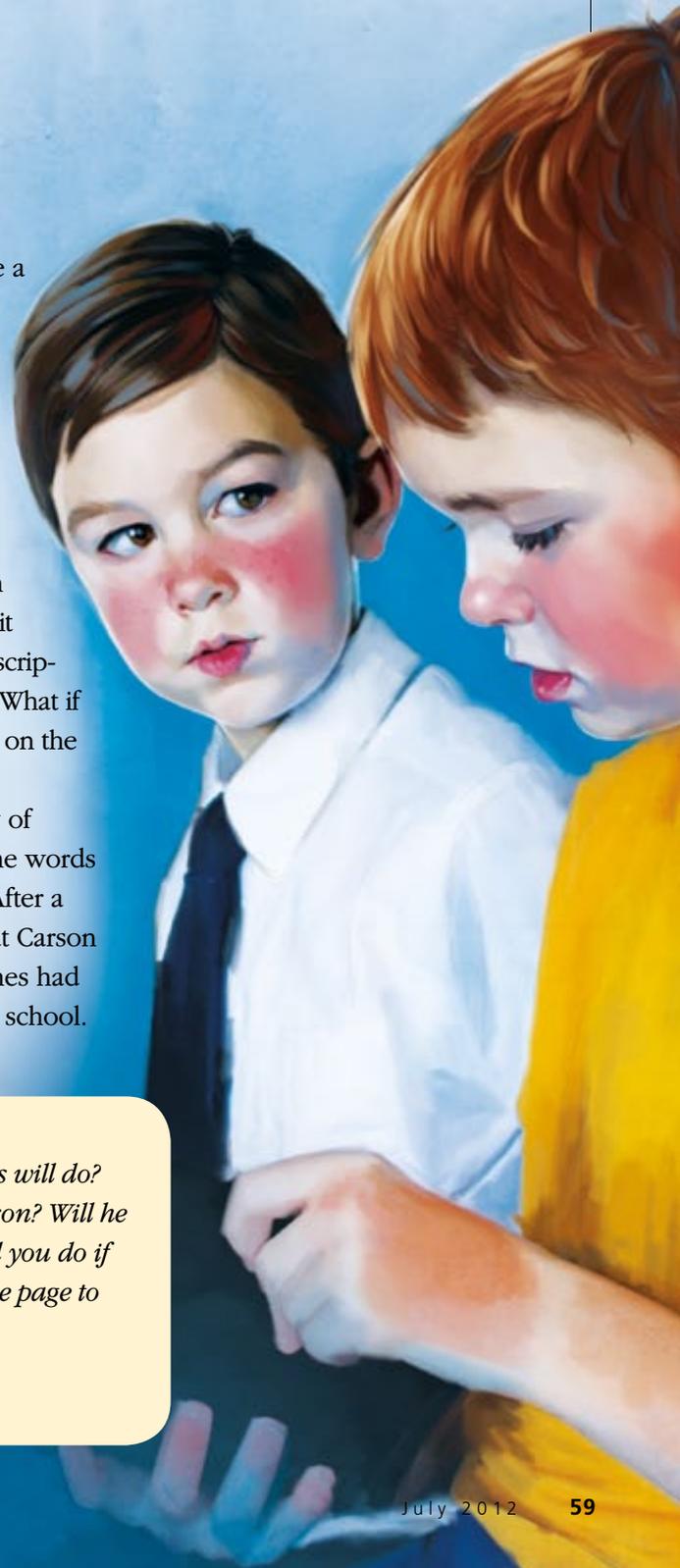
When class started, Sister Win asked who had brought their scriptures. James raised his hand along with the rest of the class, but Carson shook his head. He looked embarrassed, which surprised

James. Carson usually made a joke when he didn’t do his homework. But the more James thought about it, the more he wondered what it would be like to go to a new church for the first time.

Sister Win handed Carson her scriptures to use. When it was Carson’s turn to read a scripture, James began to worry. What if Carson tossed the scriptures on the floor or refused to read?

But Carson didn’t do any of those things. He stared at the words on the page and scowled. After a moment, James realized that Carson couldn’t read very well. James had never noticed this before at school.

What do you think James will do? Will James laugh at Carson? Will he ignore him? What would you do if you were James? Turn the page to find out what happened.



James leaned over to Carson and whispered, "Verily."

Carson looked surprised, but he said the word and continued reading the verse. When he struggled with a word, James helped him with it. At the end of his turn, Carson looked over at James and gave a small nod.

James wasn't sure if things were going to be different at

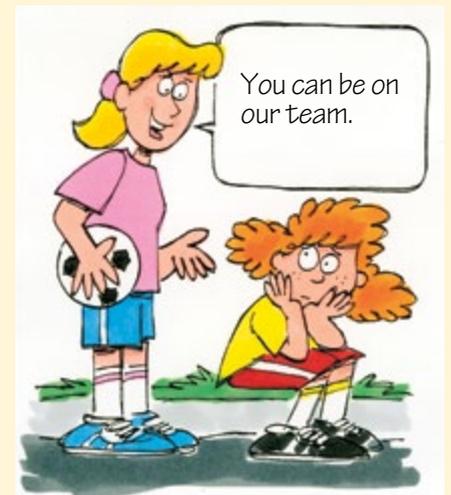
school after this. The funny thing was that he didn't care. He felt good knowing he had helped a boy who always gave him a hard time, and nobody could take that feeling away. ■



One day my friends and I were playing a game on the playground when another girl joined us. She was known for bullying other kids and not being very nice. She started changing the rules of the game, and I said, "You can play your way, but we're going to play the way we like." She looked disappointed and walked away. Afterward I thought about what I had said to the girl. I knew I had hurt her feelings. Later I found her and said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean that you couldn't play with us." She said it was OK. That girl and I might not be friends, but I think I did what Jesus wanted me to do by being kind to her.

Raegen K., age 9, Utah, USA

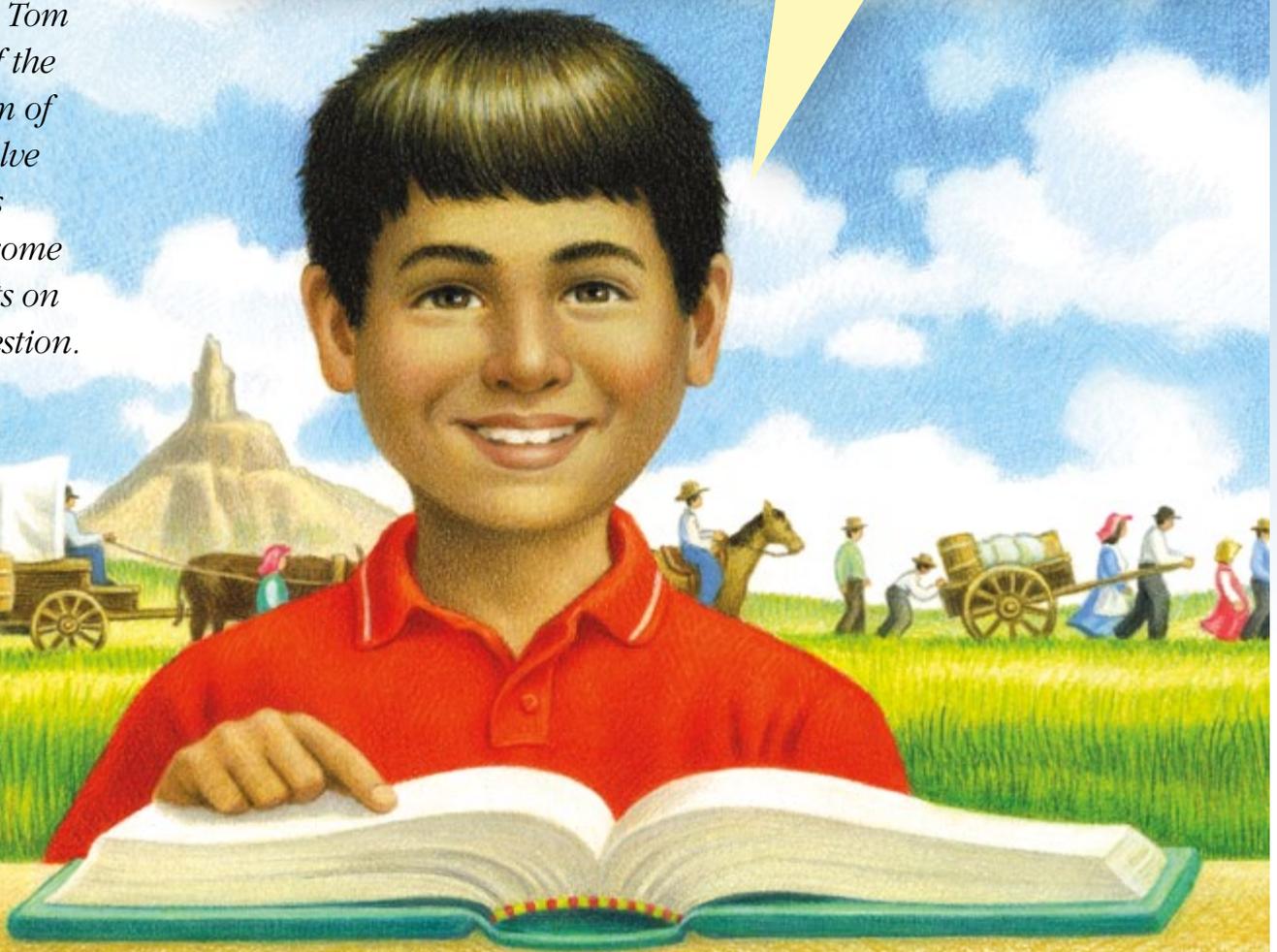
WAY TO BE





Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shares some thoughts on this question.

The early pioneers lived long ago. What can I learn from them?



On the 24th of July, we celebrate the arrival of the pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley.

They left everything behind—their homes, their businesses, their farms, and even their beloved family members—to

journey into a wilderness.

The pioneers danced and sang as they crossed the plains. It was a way they kept their spirits high in the face of tremendous hardships.

With firm faith in God and their leaders, the early pioneers went to work to create beautiful

communities in the shadows of the mountains.

What a glorious legacy of faith, courage, and ingenuity those noble pioneers have left for us to build upon. ■

From "The Past Way of Facing the Future," Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2009, 74; "A Meaningful Celebration," Ensign, Nov. 1987, 70, 72.

Making History

By Chad E. Phares

Church Magazines

Soma, Eszter, and Kata B. live in Budapest, Hungary, a city with a history of palaces, royalty, and beautiful art and buildings. Though the children learn about the

history of their city in school, they are also interested in learning about another type of history—Church history.

“I like to learn about when

Joseph Smith prayed and Heavenly Father and Jesus appeared to him,” Eszter, age 7, says.

Soma, age 10, likes to read about Alma the Younger. “He was bad at first, but I like how he then chose to be good.”

Not a lot of people in Budapest know about Joseph Smith or Alma the Younger, but Soma, Eszter, and Kata, age 5, hope that as they show good examples and choose the right, more Hungarians will learn about the Church. ■





Eszter's favorite subject in school is art.

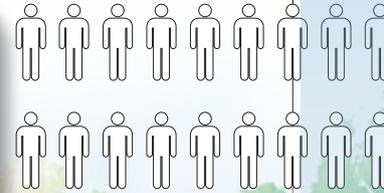


The Book of Mormon was published in Hungarian in 1991.

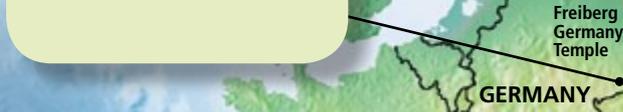


Soma likes to ride his bike near his home.

About one in every 2,200 people in Hungary is a member of the Church.



The Freiberg Germany Temple is the closest temple to Budapest. It is about 350 miles (560 km) away.



Freiberg Germany Temple

GERMANY

HUNGARY

Black Sea

Mediterranean Sea

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

I Choose the Right by Living Gospel Principles



Can you imagine going on a mission and not knowing when you would return to your family? How would you feel? What would you do to prepare?

The four sons of King Mosiah—Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni—and their friend Alma went on a mission that lasted 14 years. Each of the sons of Mosiah could have been the king of their own country, but instead they followed their hearts. They and Alma had become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they wanted to

share the gospel with the Lamanites, their enemies.

The young men knew they could not accomplish their mission without power from God. Alma 17:2–3 explains how they got this power: “They had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. . . . They had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”

Fasting and praying helped these

young men receive blessings from God. Just like Alma and the sons of Mosiah, you can fast and pray to prepare to receive the blessings Heavenly Father has for you. ■



Song and Scripture

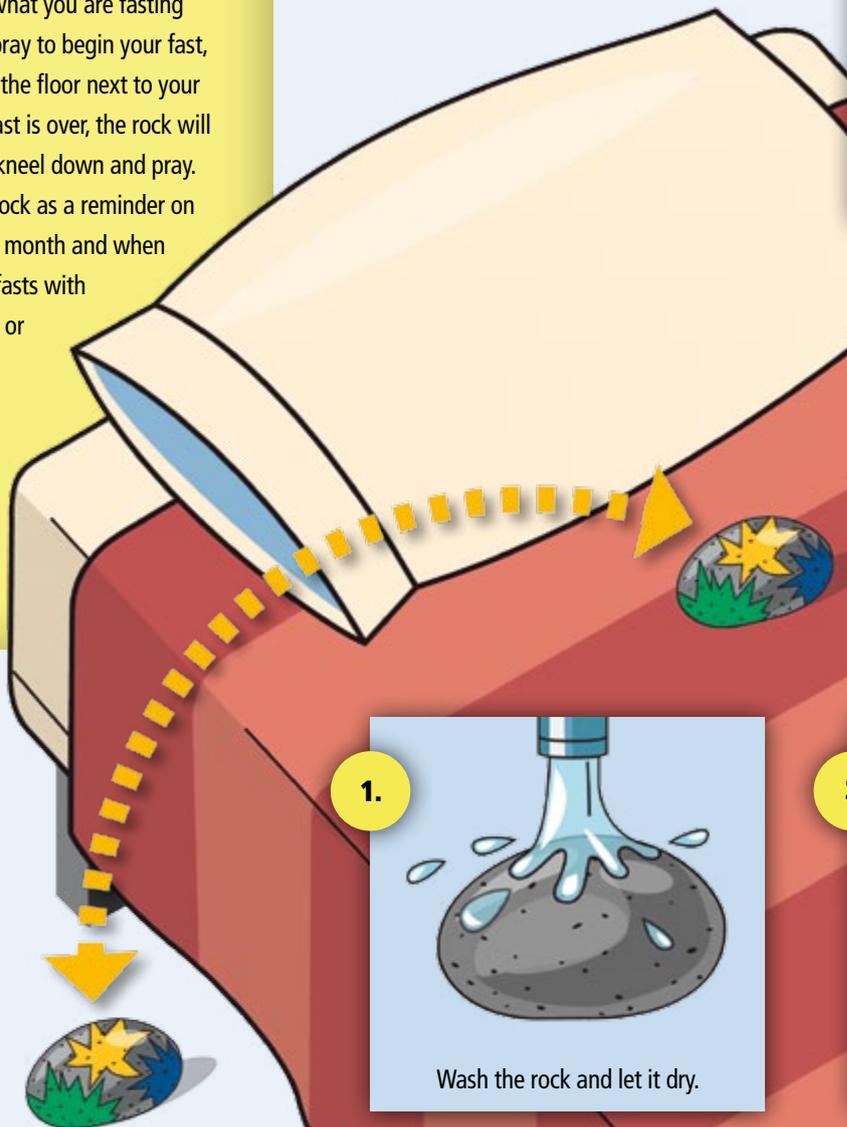
- “The Wise Man and the Foolish Man,” *Children’s Songbook*, 281
- 1 Nephi 3:16

Just You

Place a colorful rock on your bed as a reminder to pray and share with Heavenly Father what you are fasting about. After you pray to begin your fast, place the rock on the floor next to your bed. When your fast is over, the rock will be a reminder to kneel down and pray. You can use this rock as a reminder on fast Sunday every month and when you have special fasts with your family, ward, or branch.

You will need:

one smooth rock or pebble
acrylic paint or colored markers
paintbrush



1.



Wash the rock and let it dry.

2.



Squeeze a small amount of paint onto a paper plate or scrap paper.

3.



Use the brush or markers to decorate the rock. Write your name on it or draw other designs or shapes.

4.



Let the paint dry completely and place the rock on your bed.

CTR Time: Praying and Fasting

As a family, discuss the importance of praying before and after a fast. The next time your family fasts, talk about a purpose for it. Begin your fast by praying and talking with Heavenly Father about why you are fasting.

Thomas's TESTIMONY

"I, the Lord, give unto you a testimony of the truth" (D&C 67:4).



By Joshua J. Perkey

Church Magazines

Based on a true story

It was family home evening, and everybody had a part to do. Mom was conducting. Dad was giving the lesson. The kids were in charge of prayer, music, and activity—except for Thomas. This

week it was Thomas's turn to bear his testimony, and he was feeling kind of embarrassed.

Thomas had shared his testimony before, but it had been a long time, and he couldn't quite remember what he was supposed to say. So when the opening song was over and the prayer

had been said, Thomas frowned.

"It's your turn," Mom reminded him.

Thomas looked out the window at their evergreen tree, wishing somehow it could tell him what to do.

Dad sat down next to Thomas and asked him what was wrong.

“I don’t know what a testimony is,” Thomas said quietly.

“Well, I can help you,” Dad said. “It’s telling us some of the things you know are true or things you believe. You could talk about how you like reading scriptures. That always helps you feel the Spirit.”

But Thomas wasn’t feeling ready. Everyone was looking at him, waiting for him to do something. He shook his head. “I can’t. I don’t know what it is.”

Dad patted Thomas’s arm. “It’s OK. You can do it another time.”

Later that evening Thomas sat in bed holding his Book of Mormon. Dad was right—reading the scriptures always *did* make him feel better. He tried to read a chapter a

day, but the chapters were starting to get really long. He opened his scriptures to 1 Nephi 17.

“That’s a long one!” Thomas whispered. He said a little prayer to Heavenly Father asking for help. Then he was amazed at how quickly the time passed.

Just before Thomas turned out his light, Dad came in to say good night.

“Guess what, Dad?”

“What’s that, buddy?”

“I haven’t read my scriptures for a whole week because the chapters were getting too long. But tonight I wanted to, so I said a prayer, and Heavenly Father helped me. I read the whole thing, and it felt like only five minutes. Prayer is a good thing.”

“Thomas, do you know what you just said?” Dad asked with a smile. “You shared your testimony!”

“Really?” Thomas asked. “What do you mean?”

“When you talked about prayer and how it helped you—that’s a testimony of prayer.”

Thomas’s mouth dropped open in surprise. He thought about all the times people had taught him about testimony. He realized he *had* shared a testimony!

Thomas felt so good he felt like laughing. He gave Dad a hug.

“Wow, I did it!” Thomas said. “Dad, can I bear my testimony next week in family home evening? I know it’s not my turn, but I want to talk about prayer.”

“I think that’s a great idea,” Dad said.

As Dad left the room, Thomas thought about all that had happened that day. He was grateful for family, scriptures, prayer, and many other things. Right then, he was most grateful for a testimony. He knew how to share one and what it meant. ■



“You will find when you share your testimony it becomes stronger.”



Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Importance of Receiving a Personal Testimony,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 22.

A Growing Testimony

Testimonies are like beautiful plants. They grow a little at a time, and they need care and protection. Follow the directions below to make this plant healthy and bright.

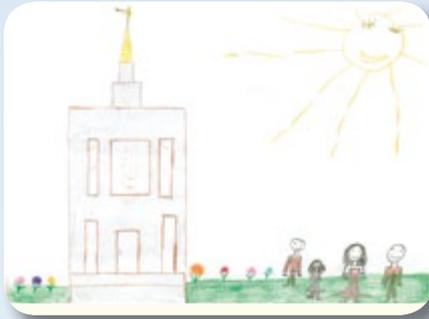
When you know something is true, you have a testimony of that truth. The Holy Ghost helps you understand the truth in your mind and gives you feelings of peace, happiness, light, or warmth in your heart. Color a flower on this page each time you read something below that you know is true.

- God is my loving Heavenly Father.
- Heavenly Father hears and answers my prayers.
- Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I can live with Heavenly Father again someday.
- Joseph Smith restored the gospel to the earth.
- We have a prophet on earth today.
- The scriptures teach me what Heavenly Father wants me to know.

Just as a plant grows when it receives water and sunlight, your testimony grows stronger as you make good choices. Below are some ways you can strengthen your testimony. Color a leaf on this page each time you do something this month to help your testimony grow.

- Pray to Heavenly Father.
- Share my testimony in family home evening or during a talk in Primary.
- Read the scriptures.
- Listen and learn during Primary and sacrament meeting.
- Write about my testimony in my journal.
- Be kind to others.
- Read what prophets have taught about testimony. (You can start with “The True Church” by President Henry B. Eyring in the March 2009 *Liahona*.) ■

ILLUSTRATION BY BRAD CLARK



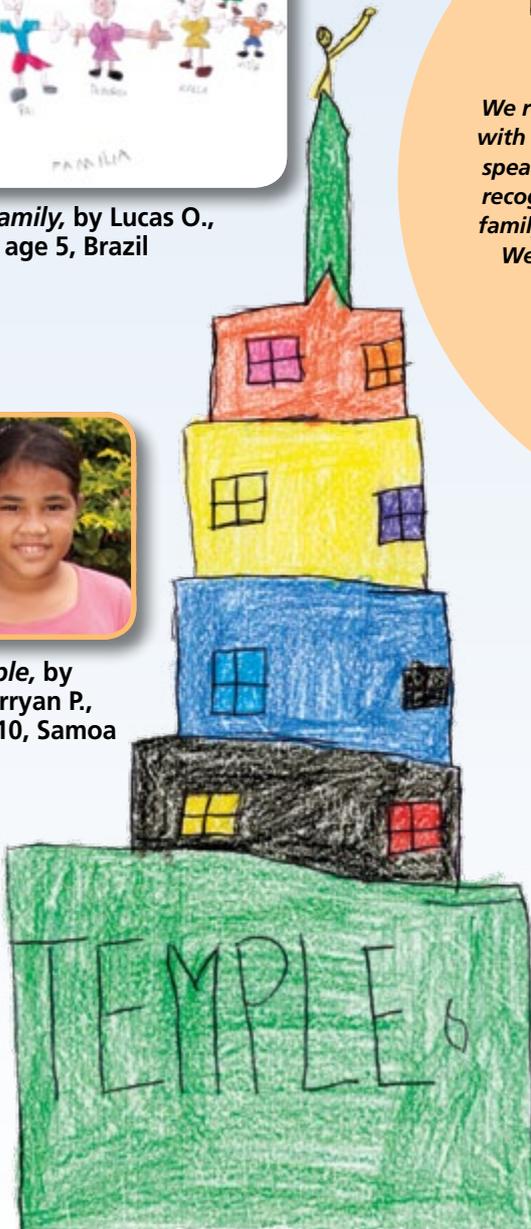
Alina A., age 7, Ukraine



My Family, by Lucas O., age 5, Brazil



Temple, by Scherryan P., age 10, Samoa



Eugene Y., age 12, from Malaysia, likes to play Chinese chess with his grandfather. In his free time he also likes to play basketball and badminton with his friends. He loves to make new friends and listen to Chinese songs.



WE KNOW HE LIVES AND LOVES US

We read the scriptures and study the teachings of Jesus Christ with our parents every evening. When we hear Church leaders speak in conference and quote stories from the scriptures, we recognize the teachings because we have studied them in our family. We understand the importance of daily scripture study. We know we are Heavenly Father's children, that He lives, and that He and Jesus Christ love us.

Thomas A., age 8; Aaron A., age 6; and Cecilia A., age 10, Argentina



I LIKE TO SET GOALS

I made a pillow with a picture of Jesus Christ because it was one of my goals. I am thankful that I was baptized. I like to keep a notebook where I can write down my goals. I like to do things, and I watch my mother and always do what she does.

Miriam C., age 8, Mexico

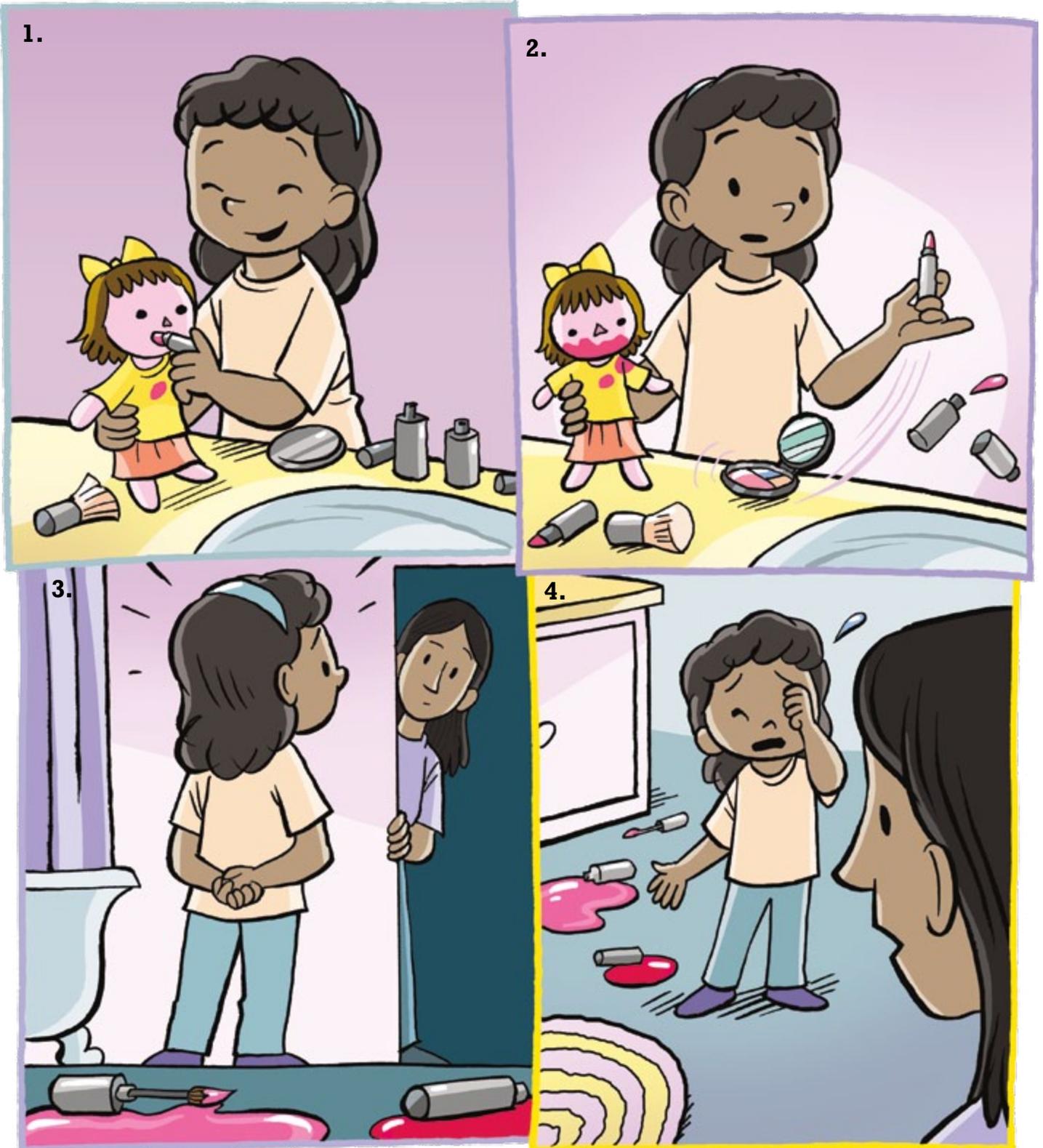


Kelsey Makes a Mistake

By Jane McBride Choate

"We believe in being honest" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Based on a true story





LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

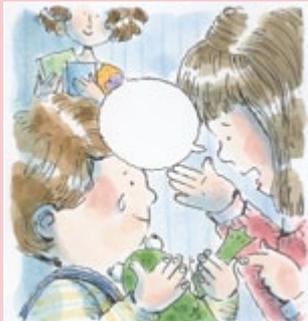
By Darcie Jensen

Sometimes we make mistakes, like Kelsey did. When we make mistakes, we can show we are sorry. Look at the drawings on this page. Circle the drawing in each column that is different from the others.

1. Admit you did something wrong.



2. Say, "I'm sorry," and ask for forgiveness.



3. Promise not to do it again.



4. Do your best to correct what you did wrong.



I CAN BE HONEST

The child in this picture is being honest. See if you can find a ball, candle, cell phone, clock, cookie, dog, doll, feather, pencil, piece of pie, scriptures, and spoon.



News of the Church

Visit news.lds.org for more Church news and events.

New Mission Presidents Called to Serve

The Church announced the names of 110 new mission presidents earlier this year. The majority will begin their two- or three-year calling, accompanied by their wives, this month.

MISSION	NEW PRESIDENT
Argentina Bahia Blanca	Manuel Parreno
Argentina Neuquén	Paul R. Lovell
Australia Adelaide	Bradley D. Carter
Australia Perth	R. Bruce Lindsay
Australia Sydney	Philip F. Howes
Belgium/Netherlands	Alden C. Robinson
Brazil Belém	Jose C. Scisci
Brazil Belo Horizonte	Paschoal F. Fortunato
Brazil Campinas	Carlos E. Perrotti
Brazil Cuiabá	Keith R. Reber
Brazil Porto Alegre North	D. Layne Wright
Brazil Porto Alegre South	Palménio C. Castro
Brazil Salvador South	Marcelo Andrezzo
Brazil São Paulo East	Ronald A. Ferrin
Brazil Teresina	Alvacir L. Siedschlag
Bulgaria Sofia	Michael S. Wilstead
California Oakland/ San Francisco	David N Weidman
California San Fernando	Kenneth T. Hall
California Santa Rosa	Rene R. Alba
Cambodia Phnom Penh	David C. Moon
Canada Calgary	Howard Nicholas
Canada Halifax	Brian Leavitt
Canada Winnipeg	Kirk M. Thomas
Chile Santiago East	David L. Wright
Chile Viña del Mar	Frederico M. Kähnlein
China Hong Kong	Val D. Hawks
Colombia Bogotá North	Mark F. Andelin
Colombia Bogotá South	Letvin Lozano
Colombia Medellín	Roberto O. Pitarch
Costa Rica San José	Chad R. Wilkinson

MISSION	NEW PRESIDENT
Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi	Phillip W. McMullin
Denmark Copenhagen	Shawn D. Sederholm
Dominican Republic Santiago	John Douglas
England Birmingham	R. Craig Rasmussen
England London	David J. Jordan
England London South	Roger C. Millar
France Lyon	Blake M. Roney
Georgia Atlanta	John R. Harding
Germany Berlin	Henry W. Kosak
Ghana Kumasi	Leon A. Holmes
Greece Athens	Eric B. Freestone
Haiti Port-au-Prince	Hubermann Bien-Aimé
Honduras Comayagüela	Candido Fortuna
Hungary Budapest	Lowell V. Smith
Idaho Pocatello	Marvin T. Brinkerhoff
Illinois Chicago	Jerry D. Fenn
India New Delhi	Peter E. Sackley
Japan Fukuoka	C. Samuel Gustafson
Japan Tokyo	L. Todd Budge
Korea Seoul	Brent J. Christensen
Madagascar Antananarivo	David R. Adams
Maryland Baltimore	Mark L. Richards
Massachusetts Boston	Daniel W. Packard
Mexico Cuernavaca	Bruce C. Kusch
Mexico Guadalajara	G. Wesley Wagner
Mexico Guadalajara East	Luis F. Camarillo
Mexico Hermosillo	Alberto E. Hernandez
Mexico Mexico City South	Roberto Valadez
Mexico Monterrey West	Edward M. Swapp
Mexico Puebla North	Ralph N. Christensen
Mexico Tampico	Ralph B. Jordan III
Mexico Xalapa	Paulo Lopez
Mississippi Jackson	Mark J. McDonough
Montana Billings	Kris J Mecham

New Missions Created

To better align resources to changing needs, the Church has created eight new missions and combined one with neighboring missions.

The **Colombia Medellín Mission** is being created by dividing the Colombia Barranquilla and Colombia Cali Missions.

The **Ghana Kumasi Mission** is being created by dividing the Ghana Accra and Ghana Cape Coast Missions.

The **Mexico Xalapa Mission** is being created by dividing the Mexico Veracruz Mission.

The Mexico Puebla Mission is being divided to create the **Mexico Puebla North and Mexico Puebla South Missions**.

The **Vanuatu Port Vila Mission** is being created by dividing the Papua New Guinea Port Moresby and Fiji Suva Missions.

The **Utah Salt Lake City West** and **Utah Salt Lake City Central** missions were created from a realignment of the Utah Salt Lake City, Utah Salt Lake City South, and Utah Ogden Missions.

The **Nevada Reno Mission** is being created from a realignment of the Nevada Las Vegas and Nevada Las Vegas West Missions.

The **Russia Moscow West Mission** is being combined with the neighboring Baltic, Russia Novosibirsk, and Russia Moscow Missions.

The changes will be effective in July, when mission leadership changes occur. The number of missions worldwide is now 347.

For maps of the newly created missions, visit ldschurchnews.com/articles/62067/New-missions-created.html ■

MISSION	NEW PRESIDENT
Mozambique Maputo	Paulo V. Kretly
Nebraska Omaha	Michael D. Weston
Nevada Reno	David N. Hermansen
New Mexico Farmington	Doyle L. Batt
New York New York North	Thomas B. Morgan
New York New York South	Kevin E. Calderwood
New York Utica	Joseph B. Wirthlin Jr.
Nigeria Calibar	John E. Kosin
North Carolina Charlotte	Ronald L. Craven
North Carolina Raleigh	Marc A. Bernhisel
Norway Oslo	Don A. Evans
Ohio Cleveland	Michael L. Vellinga
Oklahoma Tulsa	Scott K. Shumway
Papua New Guinea Port Moresby	Suliasi Ve'a Kaufusi
Paraguay Asunción	P. David Agazzani
Peru Lima Central	Alan M. Borg
Peru Lima South	Sean Douglas
Peru Piura	Chad A. Rowley
Philippines Bacolod	Marlo O. Lopez
Philippines Baguio	William J. Monahan
Philippines Laoag	Julius Jonah F. Barrientos
Portugal Lisbon	Stephen L. Fluckiger
Russia Rostov-na-Donu	William H. Prows

MISSION	NEW PRESIDENT
Russia Vladivostok	Gregory S. Brinton
Scotland/Ireland	Alan H. Brown
Singapore	Bradley S. Mains
South Dakota Rapid City	Curtis E. Anderson
Spain Barcelona	Mark L. Pace
Spain Madrid	Scott T. Jackson
Spain Málaga	Monte M. Deere Jr.
Taiwan Taipei	David O. Day
Texas Houston South	Brian K. Ashton
Thailand Bangkok	David M. Senior
Ukraine Dnepropetrovsk	J. Robert van Bruggen
Uruguay Montevideo	David K. Armstrong
Utah Ogden	Maurice D. Hiers Jr.
Utah Provo	John A. McCune
Utah Salt Lake City Central	Richard W. Moffat
Utah Salt Lake City West	Earl S. Swain
Vanuatu Port Vila	Larry E. Brewer
Venezuela Barcelona	Juan C. Chacin
Venezuela Maracaibo	Juan F. Zorrilla
Washington DC South	Matthew L. Riggs
Washington Spokane	Donald E. Mullen
West Indies	Daniel S. Mehr II
Zimbabwe Harare	Bryson C. Cook



Elder Dallin H. Oaks and his wife, Kristen, who served a mission to Sendai, examine progress that has been made in Japan since the deadly tsunami and earthquake of March 2011.

Elder Oaks Surveys Japan One Year after Earthquake

Nearly one year after earthquakes and an ensuing tsunami devastated Japan, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy visited the country and offered a message of hope and love.

For 12 days in February, Elder Oaks and Elder Hallstrom, accompanied by their wives, Kristen Oaks and Diane Hallstrom, traveled through the Asia North Area, stopping at Kumamoto, Nagasaki, Sendai, and Tokyo, as well as many coastal cities in the Tohoku area.

In a *Church News* article, Elder Oaks explained one purpose of the trip: “We sought to give comfort following the terrible disaster and tsunami that occurred just about a

year ago and also to give the teaching and testimony we always give when meeting with missionaries and members of the Church.”

Elder Oaks and other Church leaders met with Japanese Latter-day Saints, missionaries, and others and encouraged them to “look for the way that the Lord will consecrate your affliction for your gain.”

To read about the ministry of other Church leaders around the world, including Elder M. Russell Ballard in Brazil, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in West Africa, Elder David A. Bednar in the Caribbean, Elder Quentin L. Cook in Australia and New Zealand, Elder D. Todd Christofferson in Central Europe, and Elder Neil L. Andersen in Brazil, visit news.lds.org and prophets.lds.org. ■

Church Asks Members to Understand Family History Policies

By Sarah Jane Weaver

Church News assistant editor

Church leaders are asking Latter-day Saints to learn and better understand the Church’s family history policies on submitting names for temple ordinances.

The conditions of use for the New .FamilySearch.org website were set in place “for reasons of common sense, reasons of doctrine, and reasons of respect,” said Dennis C. Brimhall, managing director of the Church Family History Department.

The conditions are simple and straightforward. “Users should not submit the names of nonrelated persons for vicarious temple ordinances, including names of celebrities or famous people, or those gathered from unapproved extraction projects,” state the terms all users must accept every time they log onto the site.

The reemphasis on the guidelines, which are also stated in the Church’s *Handbook 2*, follows recent violations of the Church’s proxy baptism policy.

“One of the things we need to remember is that the searching out of our family and preparing the names for the work to be done in the temple is, yes, a responsibility, but it is also a privilege,” said Brother Brimhall. “That privilege is extended to the members by those who hold the keys to the work. The keys to this work are held by the First Presidency of the Church.”

Church leaders have asked members who are submitting names for proxy baptisms for the deceased to:

- Work only on their own family lines.
- Not submit names of celebrities.
- Not submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.

Church leaders issued a statement on February 21, 2012, in response to questions about violations of the Church policy, which was established in 1995 after discussions with leaders of the Jewish faith.

The statement repeated the Church's firm commitment not to accept the names of unauthorized groups for proxy baptism and noted that in order to bypass safeguards already in place, a submitter would have to use "deception and manipulation."

Such actions could lead not only to

suspension of a Church member's access to the New.FamilySearch.org website, but local leaders might also take disciplinary action in some cases.

"It is distressing when an individual willfully violates the Church's policy, and something that should be understood to be an offering based on love and respect becomes a source of contention," the statement said.

"We are going to see a season of education," Brother Brimhall said. "We will remind ourselves again of rights and responsibilities and keys and privileges and whose work this is and how it should be done and who directs the work. If we just remember that, I think we are going to be fine. . . . We can make the system better for everyone." ■

Church leaders have asked members who are submitting names for baptisms for the deceased to work on their own family lines, not to submit names of celebrities, and not to submit names of unauthorized groups, such as Jewish Holocaust victims.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK WALLACE



In preparation for a new website, those who direct the Addiction Recovery Program (meeting shown here) are seeking personal stories of addiction recovery.

Addiction Recovery Program Calls for Stories of Recovery and Healing

In preparation for an Addiction Recovery Program (ARP) website scheduled to debut later this year, the Church is seeking personal stories of addiction recovery.

Those who decide to share their stories should send an e-mail to arp@ldschurch.org containing the following information, which will be kept confidential:

- Full name, age, and gender
- A photo of yourself (preferred but not required)
- Your affiliation with the Church/membership status
- A brief description of your addiction or the addiction of your loved one
- An indication of your willingness to share your story through video, audio, text, or all of the above
- Your story. Include the consequences of your addiction (please do not share inappropriate detail, but do talk about the effects your addictive behavior had on you and those around you); a brief description of your life when you knew you needed help; an explanation about how you experienced healing through Christ and what you experienced when your hope was restored; and a description of your life today and the lessons and blessings you have experienced through forgiveness, repentance, and service.

Church Members in Fiji Provide Humanitarian Aid to Flood Victims

In February, three stakes in the Suva, Fiji, area held a drive to collect food, household items, and school supplies for flood victims in northern and western Fiji.

Fiji was hit by continuous heavy rainfall earlier in the year, causing widespread flooding and localized landslides in the western and northern areas. Flooding led to several deaths and forced thousands to evacuate their homes.

As the floods raged through the western and northern regions of Fiji, local Church leaders immediately opened up meetinghouses as evacuation centers for people whose homes were in the path of the flood.

Elder Taniela Wakolo, Area Seventy and the Church's Fiji Service Center manager, initiated the drive on February 6, shortly after local Church leaders were alerted about the flood. Members collected and sorted food, clothing, bedding, kitchenware, and school supplies; the items were then allocated to people in need.

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



Elder Steven E. Snow will step completely into the role of Church Historian and Recorder later this year.

Elder Steven E. Snow Called as Church Historian

The First Presidency recently announced the call of Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy as Church Historian and Recorder, a role previously filled by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy.

Elder Snow has been released from the Presidency of the Seventy, and Elder Jensen will be given emeritus status at the October 2012 general conference.

Until then, Elder Snow and Elder Jensen will work together for training and transition purposes. ■

The Pioneers Taught Me

Last December I was discouraged and did not want to decorate my house or celebrate Christmas. Then I read an article in the December 2011 *Liahona* that described how the pioneers celebrated Christmas: dancing to a whistled tune because they had no musical instruments—in spite of having no gifts and too little to eat (see “Christmas for the Early Pioneers” in “Small and Simple Things,” 9). That article helped me change my attitude and take heart. Sometimes we do not recognize or value all that we have.

Ana Rosa de Melo Ferreira,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Seek God Every Day

Thank you for the January 2012 issue. My husband and I had a wonderful experience reading Adam C. Olson’s article, “Rediscovering a Wonder of the World . . . and Avoiding the Dangers of Spiritual Apathy,” (page 20). It helped us realize the constant need we have to seek God every day of our lives. I know the messages in the magazine are inspired because many of them have come into my life when I most needed them.

Daiana Araceli Beloqui de Iannone,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Please send your feedback or suggestions to liahona@dschurch.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 some examples.



“The Strength of Our Heritage,”

page 16: Read the article with your family. Emphasize this statement by Elder L. Tom Perry: “Just as the pioneers made the desert blossom as a rose, so too our lives and families will blossom if we follow their example and embrace their traditions.” Consider asking how your family can better follow the example set by the early pioneers. You may want to close by singing “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30).

“Facing the Future with Hope,”

page 35: You may wish to summarize the story of Brother Grilo or tell a personal story of how you or someone you know faced the future with hope. Help family members apply the message to their lives by asking questions like “What are some challenges that make it hard for you to have faith in the

future? What can you do to keep a positive attitude as you face these challenges?” Consider concluding by reading the last two paragraphs of the article.

“What Is Pure Testimony?”

page 54: Start your lesson by sharing what the article teaches a testimony is. Then consider summarizing the questions about testimony bearing (see pages 56–57). If prompted, invite family members to bear testimony to each other during family home evening or to write their testimonies in their journals.

“A Whisper of Kindness,” page 59:

Read Luke 6:27. Then share the story about James and Carson, pausing to ask the children to answer the questions posed at the bottom of the first page. Encourage family members to be kind to others. ■

“Outdoor” Family Home Evenings

When I was 10 years old, I was baptized with my parents, brothers, and sisters. I’m so happy to have grown up having regular family home evening. Family home evening was the heart of our family.

I have now been a member of the Church for more than 45 years. With my own five children, the tradition continues. Monday nights are reserved for the family.

On the last Monday of the month, we have a longer activity we call our “outdoor” family home evening. We go to a movie, to visit the sick, to play in the park, to see Lola and Lolo (our grandparents), and so on.

The most unforgettable outdoor experience we have is when we serve street children. We cannot express the joy and happiness we feel in helping those in such need. We try, in our little way, to make those children happy and to let them know that somebody cares for them and knows we are all children of God. ■

Tita Mabunga Obial, Philippines

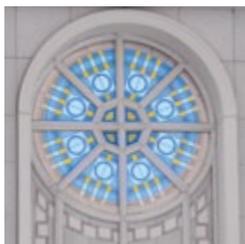
UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

By Julie Thompson

A few years ago, I arrived at the Bountiful Utah Temple to fulfill a late-night cleaning assignment. The turnout for the assignment was impressive, and I wondered for a moment if some would be sent home. I was more than ready to volunteer to leave early. Then I cynically thought to myself, “Of course they won’t let us go early. They will find menial jobs for all of us, thinking it is their duty to keep us here the entire two hours.” I remembered a previous assignment during which I had dusted for more than an hour, only to return a cloth that looked as clean as it had been when it was given to me. I prepared myself to spend two hours cleaning things that didn’t appear to need cleaning. Obviously, I had come to the temple that night out of a sense of duty more than from a desire to serve.

Our group was led to a small chapel for a devotional. The custodian who conducted the devotional said something that will forever change the way I look at temple cleaning assignments. After welcoming us, he proceeded to explain that we were not there to clean things that didn’t need cleaning but to keep the Lord’s house from ever becoming dirty. As stewards of one of the most sacred places on earth, we had a responsibility to keep it spotless.

His message penetrated my heart, and I proceeded to my assigned area with a new



I wondered why I was at the temple to clean when nothing was dirty. But I soon realized that cleaning wasn't really the point.

enthusiasm to protect the Lord’s house. I spent time with a soft-bristled paintbrush, dusting the tiny grooves in door frames, baseboards, and the legs of tables and chairs. Had I been given this assignment on an earlier visit, I might have thought it ridiculous and carelessly brushed over the areas in an effort to appear busy. But this time, I made sure the bristles reached into the tiniest of crevices.

Because this job was neither physically nor mentally taxing, I was blessed with time to ponder while I worked. I first realized that I never paid attention to such minute details in my own home but cleaned those areas that others would see first, neglecting those known only to members of my family and me.

I next realized that there were times when I had lived the gospel in a similar fashion—living those principles and fulfilling those assignments that were most obvious to those around me while ignoring things that seemed known only to my immediate family or me. I attended church, held callings, fulfilled assignments, went visiting teaching—all in full view of members of our ward—but neglected to attend the temple regularly, have personal and family scripture study and prayer, and hold family home evening. I taught lessons and spoke in church but sometimes lacked true charity in my heart when it came to interactions with others.

That night in the temple, I studied the paintbrush in my hand and asked myself, “What are the little crevices in my life that need more attention?” I resolved that rather than plan to repeatedly clean the areas of my life that needed attention, I would try harder never to let them become dirty.

I remember my temple-cleaning lesson each time we are reminded to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). ■



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House in Peterson, by LeConte Stewart

This peaceful scene of a farm in Peterson, Utah, is representative of the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to the Latter-day Saints in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, on January 14, 1847. Referred to as "the Word and Will of the Lord," this revelation was given to President Brigham Young as he prepared the Saints to leave their temporary homes in Winter Quarters and continue across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley:

"Let every man use all his influence and property to remove this people to the place where the Lord shall locate a stake of Zion.

"And if ye do this with a pure heart, in all faithfulness, ye shall be blessed; you shall be blessed in your flocks, and in your herds, and in your fields, and in your houses, and in your families" (D&C 136:1, 10–11).



“As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” explained President Thomas S. Monson, “sacred covenants are to be revered by us, and faithfulness to them is a requirement for happiness. Yes, I speak of the covenant of baptism, the covenant of the priesthood, and the covenant of marriage as examples.” Because keeping our covenants is essential to our happiness now and to eventually receiving eternal life, it is important to understand what we have promised our Heavenly Father. See “Understanding Our Covenants with God,” page 20.