

Liahona



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Four Gifts, No Wrapping Needed, p. 54

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Good Tidings of Great Joy, by Walter Rane

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, . . .

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:8–11).



Liahona, December 2012

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FOR ADULTS

After enjoying "Prophets at Christmastime" (page 20), you can visit christmas.lds.org to watch "The Coat: A Story of Charity" from the life of President George Albert Smith.

FOR YOUTH

Kevin and Jacqueline (see page 28) are siblings from El Salvador who had the blessing of participating in the cultural celebration before the San Salvador El Salvador Temple was dedicated. To watch a video about their life-changing participation, visit lds.org/go/temple12.

On page 50, Brother Gibson of the Young Men general presidency answers some questions about dating. You can learn more about dating from *For the Strength of Youth* at youth.lds.org.

IN YOUR LANGUAGE

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

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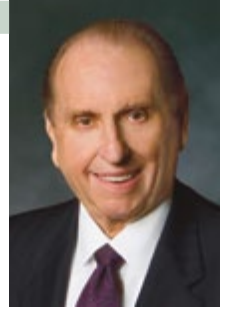
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By President
Thomas S. Monson



REDISCOVERING the Christmas Spirit

Years ago as a young elder, I was called with others to a hospital in Salt Lake City to provide blessings for sick children. Upon entering, we noted a Christmas tree with its bright and friendly lights and saw carefully wrapped packages beneath its outstretched limbs. We then went through corridors where small boys and girls—some with plaster casts upon an arm or leg, others with ailments that perhaps could not be cured so readily—greeted us with smiling faces.

A young, desperately ill small boy called out to me, “What is your name?”

I told him my name, and he inquired, “Will you give me a blessing?”

The blessing was provided, and as we turned to leave his bedside, he said, “Thank you very much.”

We walked a few steps, and then I heard him call, “Oh, Brother Monson, merry Christmas to you.” Then a great smile flashed across his countenance.

That boy had the spirit of Christmas. The spirit of Christmas is something I hope all of us would have in our hearts and lives—not only at this particular season but also throughout the year.

When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of the year: “For unto you is born this day in the city of

David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

In our day the spirit of giving gifts plays a large role in commemorating the Christmas season. I wonder if we might profit by asking ourselves, What gifts would the Lord have *me* give to Him or to others at this precious season of the year?

May I suggest that our Heavenly Father would want each of us to render to Him and to His Son the gift of obedience. I also feel that He would ask us to give of ourselves and not be selfish or greedy or quarrelsome, as His precious Son suggests in the Book of Mormon:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who . . . stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

In this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, our opportunities to love and give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. Today there are hearts to gladden, kind words to say, deeds to be done, and souls to be saved.

One who had keen insight into the Christmas spirit wrote:



*I am the Christmas Spirit—
I enter the home of poverty, causing pale-
faced children to open their eyes wide,
in pleased wonder.
I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax
and thus paint a bright spot on his soul.
I cause the aged to renew their youth and
to laugh in the old glad way.
I keep romance alive in the heart of child-
hood, and brighten sleep with dreams
woven of magic.
I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways
with filled baskets, leaving behind
hearts amazed at the goodness of the
world.
I cause the prodigal to pause a moment
on his wild, wasteful way and send
to anxious love some little token that
releases glad tears—tears which wash*

*away the hard lines of sorrow.
I enter dark prison cells, reminding
scarred manhood of what might have
been and pointing forward to good
days yet to be.
I come softly into the still, white home
of pain, and lips that are too weak to
speak just tremble in silent, eloquent
gratitude.
In a thousand ways, I cause the weary
world to look up into the face of God,
and for a little moment forget the
things that are small and wretched.
I am the Christmas Spirit.¹*

May we each discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ. ■

NOTE

1. E. C. Baird, "Christmas Spirit," in James S. Hewitt, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited* (1988), 81.

**TEACHING FROM
THIS MESSAGE**

As you share President Monson's message with the family, consider emphasizing the question he posed about what gifts the Lord would have us give to Him or to others this season. Encourage family members to record their thoughts and ideas (or, for young children, to draw a picture) about how to "discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ."

The Perfect Christmas Eve

By Jerie S. Jacobs

When I was growing up, one of the highlights of every year was Christmas Eve. My family and I made pizza, went caroling, and then gathered for a Christmas devotional. We sang hymns in shaky four-part harmony and blasted out carols on our odd assortment of musical instruments. Dad always ended the evening with a Christmas thought that left us in happy tears. Life didn't get any better than Christmas Eve.

When I was a little older, my mom began taking care of a young neighbor, Kelly. Kelly came over to our house every day after school while her mom, Patty, worked. Kelly followed me around like a puppy—loud and needy. It was always a relief when Patty collected her daughter and left my home and family in peace.

One December, I was horrified when mom invited Patty and Kelly to join us for Christmas Eve. *My Christmas Eve.* Mom smiled and assured me, "It won't change a thing." But I knew better. They would eat all our pizza. Kelly would make fun of our singing. I resigned myself to the worst Christmas Eve ever.

When the evening came, Patty and Kelly joined us, and we talked and laughed and sang. My mother was right. It was perfect. At midnight they thanked us and reluctantly parted. I went to bed with a full heart. I discovered that the truly precious gifts of Christmas are not diminished when shared. Instead they sweeten and multiply when we give them away.

CHILDREN

Five Christmas Gifts

President Monson said that we might want to think about which gifts the Lord would want us to give to Him or to others.

Circle the five children in the picture who are serving others. How are their actions gifts to Jesus?



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

Visiting Teaching, a Work of Salvation

Visiting teaching gives women the opportunity to watch over, strengthen, and teach one another—it is truly a work of salvation. Through visiting teaching, sisters minister in behalf of the Savior and help prepare women for the blessings of eternal life.

“We are ‘to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite [others] to come unto Christ’ (D&C 20:59), as the Lord said in his revelations,” said President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985).

Further, he said, “Your testimony is a terrific medium.”¹

When we as visiting teachers increase our knowledge of gospel truths, our testimonies strengthen and support sisters who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed. We help new members become anchored in the gospel. Our visits and love help “win back those who have gone astray [and] warm up the hearts of those who have grown cold in the gospel.”² And we encourage sisters to come unto Christ through temple attendance.

“You are going to save souls,” said President Kimball to visiting teachers, “and who can tell but that many of the fine active people in the Church today are active because you were in their homes and gave them a new outlook, a new vision. You pulled back the curtain. You extended their horizons. . . .



“You see, you are not only saving these sisters, but perhaps also their husbands and their homes.”³

From the Scriptures

Doctrine and Covenants 20:59;
84:106; 138:56

What Can I Do?

1. How does Relief Society prepare me for the blessings of eternal life?
2. What can I do to increase the faith of those I watch over?

From Our History

When the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society, he said that the women were not only to look after the poor but also to save souls. He also taught that women in the Church play essential roles in Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation.⁴ Guided by the principles taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we as sisters in Relief Society can work together to prepare women and their families for God’s greatest blessings.

“Let us have compassion upon each other,” said President Brigham Young (1801–77), “and let [those who are] strong tenderly nurse the weak into strength, and let those who can see guide the blind until they can see the way for themselves.”⁵

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 116.
2. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 83.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 117.
4. See Joseph Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 171–72.
5. Brigham Young, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 107.

THE GOSPEL OF
JESUS CHRIST
WAS RESTORED
THROUGH THE

PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

After the Crucifixion of the Savior and the death of His Apostles, people changed some of the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel. Even though many good people believed in Jesus Christ and tried to understand and teach His gospel, the fulness of truth was no longer available. The result was varying stages of apostasy among the surviving Christians. While they had many truths, none of them had the fulness of Christ's doctrines, ordinances, or priesthood.

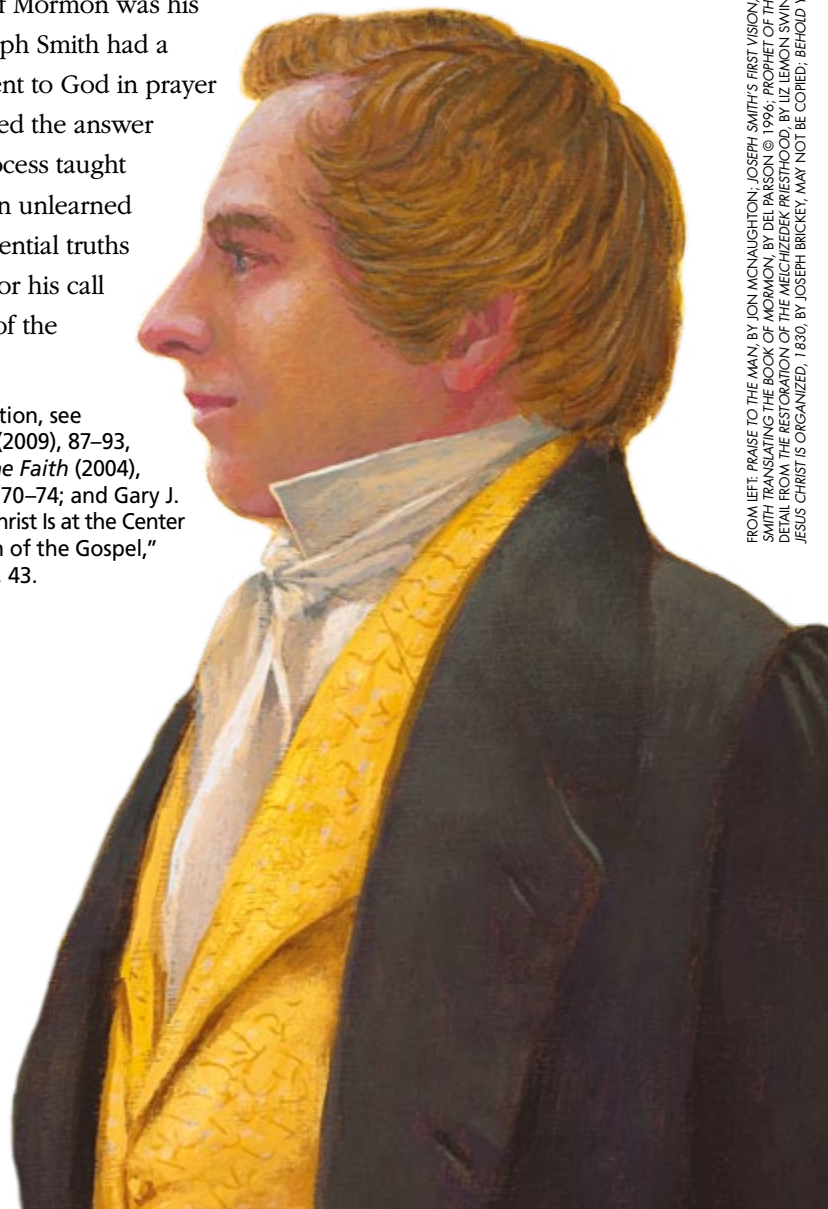
Our Heavenly Father knew that this gradual loss of truth would occur, so He preserved the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in an ancient volume of scripture comparable to the Bible. In the early 1800s, a heavenly messenger named Moroni directed Joseph Smith to where this holy scripture had lain hidden for centuries. Written on golden plates, this record contained the writings of prophets telling of God's dealings with some of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. The Prophet Joseph Smith translated the writings on these plates by the gift and power of God.

This record is the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

The process of translating the Book of Mormon provided Joseph Smith with an education in God's doctrines—the Spirit was his teacher, and the Book of Mormon was his text. When Joseph Smith had a question, he went to God in prayer and God revealed the answer to him. This process taught Joseph Smith, an unlearned young man, essential truths that were vital for his call as the Prophet of the Restoration. ■

For more information, see *Gospel Principles* (2009), 87–93, 95–100; *True to the Faith* (2004), 124–28, 135–39, 170–74; and Gary J. Coleman, "Jesus Christ Is at the Center of the Restoration of the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 43.

While we believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, we worship our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.



FROM LEFT: PRAISE TO THE MAN, BY ION MCNAUGHTON; JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION, BY GREG OLSEN; MAY NOT BE COPIED; JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON, BY DEL PARSON © 1996; PROPHET OF THE LORD, BY DAVID LINDSEY; MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM THE RESTORATION OF THE MECHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY LIZ IEMON SWINDE; MAY NOT BE COPIED; THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ORGANIZED, 1830, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY; MAY NOT BE COPIED; BEHOLD YOUR LITTLE ONES, BY DAVID LINDSEY © 1983

The Prophet Joseph Smith Testifies

1. "I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; . . . I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it."¹



2. "By the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics, the knowledge of which was lost to the world, in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries, with a new revelation."²



3. "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."³



4. "I . . . hold the keys of the last kingdom, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy Prophets since the world began, under the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood."⁴ (See D&C 27:12–13.)



5. "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded upon direct revelation, as the true Church of God has ever been, . . . and through the will and blessings of God, I have been an instrument in His hands, thus far, to move forward the cause of Zion."⁵



6. "[The Book of Mormon] tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent [the Americas] after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing."⁶

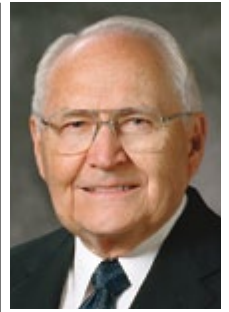
NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 60.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 64.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 511.
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 195.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 64.

Be certain you are creating a rich environment in which your family can look forward to special times of the year when traditions hold you together as a great eternal family unit.



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



THE TRADITION OF LIGHT AND TESTIMONY

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is truly a worldwide Church. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that the Church could never have become what it is today without the birth of a great nation, the United States of America. The Lord prepared a new land to attract the peoples of the world who sought liberty and religious freedom. This new land was blessed with strong leaders who felt duty bound to establish a government that allowed individuals to worship according to their own conscience.

The Founding Fathers of the United States believed that religious faith was fundamental to the establishment of strong government. Many people in the world, however, have forgotten the central importance of religious beliefs in the formation of the policies, laws, and rules of government. Many Americans, for example, do not understand that the founders believed the role of religion would be as important in our day as it was in their day. The founders did not consider religion and morality an intellectual exercise—they forcefully declared it an essential ingredient of good government and the happiness of humankind.

This position was set forth by the first U.S. president, George Washington, in his Farewell Address. He said:

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. . . . Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

“It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.”¹

The United States is the promised land foretold in the Book of Mormon—a place where divine guidance directed inspired men to create the conditions necessary for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was the birth of the United States of America that



Where do I look to learn about how to build a contingency plan for the spiritual security of my family? I look to the Church—the scaffolding with which I build an eternal family.

ushered out the Great Apostasy, when the earth was darkened by the absence of prophets and revealed light. It was no coincidence that the lovely morning of the First Vision occurred just a few decades after the establishment of the United States.

The First Vision precipitated a flood of revealed truth. Knowledge was restored about the nature of the Godhead. A new translated scripture gave a second witness and testament of Jesus Christ. The restoration of the priesthood reendowed mankind with the power and authority to act for and on behalf of God in conducting priesthood ordinances and in reestablishing the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth. We are blessed to be members of the restored Church.

A Plan for Spiritual Security

One of the blessings of the restored Church is living prophets. President Harold B. Lee

(1899–1973) had a beautifully clear understanding of priorities. He taught, “Much of what we do organizationally [in the Church] . . . is scaffolding, as we seek to build the individual, and we must not mistake the scaffolding for the soul.”²

President Lee was not minimizing the role of the Church in the salvation of men, women, and families. Rather, he taught powerfully that the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ is individuals, families, and homes, which the Church functions to support.³ The Church, therefore, is the scaffolding with which we build eternal families.

I belong to a branch of the Wing family tree. Members of the Wing family still own the oldest home built in New England that has stayed in the same family. It is called the Old Fort House. It was the home of Stephen Wing and his family after they arrived in America about 1635.

The nucleus of the house was constructed for protection. Its walls are two feet (0.6 m) thick, made of hewn oak trunks driven into the ground to form the typical construction of a New England garrison. It has two separate walls. The space in between was filled with sandstone for protection against arrows and bullets. The fort was the center of the home. As the Wing family grew, it added onto the sides of the original fort house. But the fort remained their protection, their safe haven.

Perhaps each of us should consider building structures for our spiritual security that are free from the influences of the world—places where we can protect and teach family members how to meet the challenges of a world that is always threatening core gospel values. I prefer to be optimistic, so I continue to hope

for positive change in the world. But I'm also a realist, so I form a contingency plan in case positive changes don't come. My contingency plan for spiritual security must account for all the content—both good and evil—that is being pushed through various media. Where do I look to learn about how to build such a contingency plan for the spiritual security of my family? I look to the Church—the scaffolding with which I build an eternal family.

There are two principal reasons I appreciate President Lee's metaphor for the Church as scaffolding for our eternal families. First, it helps me understand what the Church is. Second, and equally important, I understand what the Church is not.

The Church as scaffolding is perhaps best represented by a statement the Prophet Joseph Smith made about his role as the leader of the Church. He said, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves."⁴ Eternal principles are the scaffolding the Church provides. These eternal principles are embedded in the doctrines of the kingdom of God and are reflected in His eternal plan of happiness. We meet as members of the Church to teach and learn from each other the principles of righteousness and to receive saving ordinances so the scaffolding is steady and stable as we build our eternal families.

Notice that the Church is not meant to do the work of parents; rather, it guides the work of parents. The Church offers an eternal form. As builders of eternal families, we are reassured by promises that if we build according to this eternal form, our efforts can provide the safety and protection we seek for those we love most.

Our challenge is to use the Church as scaffolding to build a family that is as spiritually strong or stronger than the Old Fort House is physically strong. How do we do this?

The Importance of Traditions

I believe family traditions are like the hewn oak trunks driven into the ground to build the Old Fort House. Make the honoring of family traditions—holiday traditions, birthday traditions, Sunday traditions, dinnertime traditions—and the development of new ones a priority throughout your lives. Honor them, write them down, and make certain you follow them. Studies show that the reason young people join gangs is for the tradition and ritual of belonging to something larger than self. That is what a family should be. Be certain you are creating a rich environment in which your family can look forward to special times of the year when traditions hold you together as a great eternal family unit.

Understand that this is neither a simple nor an easy solution. Just as Rome was not built in a day, neither are family traditions. Family traditions can offer basic and lasting support, but there's a lot that must be built around them. Perhaps family traditions work only when they create a role for every member of the family and when there is united effort to build them. This means family members need to spend time together and learn how to work together. When it comes to families, there is no such thing as quality time without a certain quantity of time.

When you consider employment, for example, reflect on how much time a job will demand of you each day. Is it one that will keep you working 14 hours a day and prevent



Family traditions work only when they create a role for every member of the family and when there is united effort to build them. This means family members need to spend time together and learn how to work together.

We must be bold in our declarations and testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. We want others to know that we believe He is the central figure in all human history.

you from arriving home until after your children are in bed? I'm not suggesting such employment opportunities are out of bounds, but if you choose them, you must find creative ways to remain connected to your family. The scaffolding of the Church will help remind you of your eternal priorities.

For my career I selected retail business. Our stores were open six days a week from 10:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night. My normal workday was at least 10 hours, sometimes 12 to 15. I had to be very careful to have time for my children, and I believe that seeing the Church as scaffolding continuously reminded me of my eternal priorities.

For example, I involved all of my children in part-time jobs at our stores. My oldest

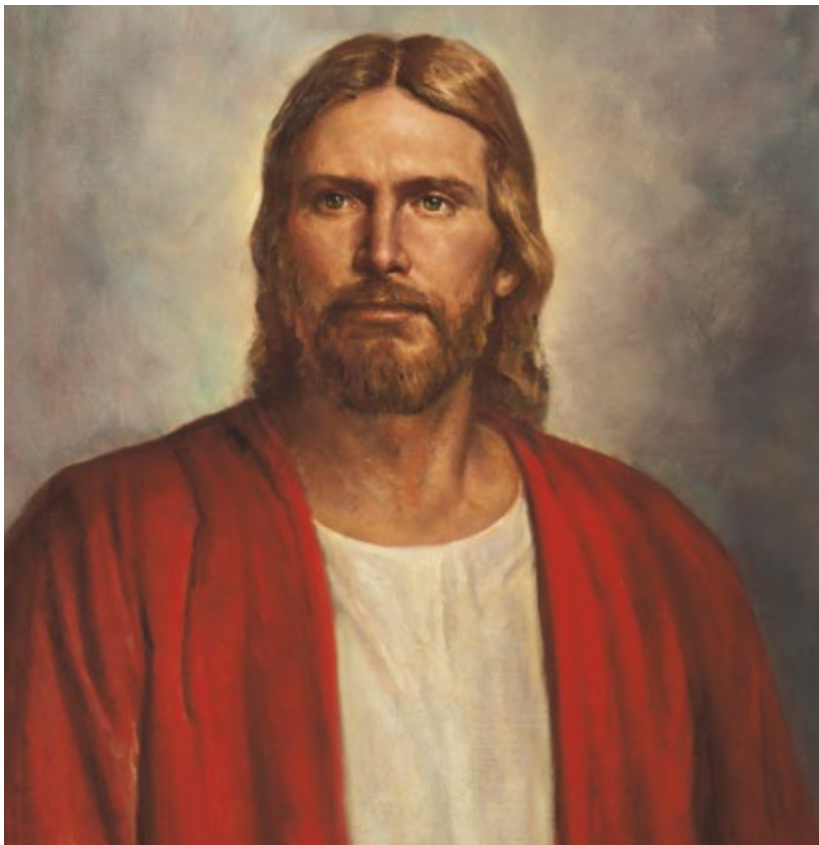
daughter used to come in and update sales figures so that my reporting was always current and I could make year-over-year comparisons. I had my son work in accounts payable during the summer. I taught my youngest daughter how to run a cash register so she could be a part-time cashier. This gave us the opportunity to see each other during the day, have lunch together several days a week, and spend precious one-on-one time together. The best time together was during the daily commute to and from work.

Scaffolding for Our Professional Lives

I also believe the Church can provide scaffolding for our professional lives. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we represent the Savior and His Church. For us, being as good as someone else from another church is not good enough. President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) taught this lesson when he said:

“Within the last year, I have had the privilege of meeting and conversing on the gospel with some men who live in this community [Salt Lake City], not members of our Church. One man had resided here for twenty years, a man whose life is above reproach, a good citizen, a splendid businessman, one who has kindly feelings towards our people. He told me that he had . . . come to the conclusion that we were just as good as our neighbors who are members of other churches; he could not see any difference in us.

“I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that is no compliment to me. If the gospel of Jesus Christ does not make me a better man, then I have not developed as I should, and if our neighbors not in this Church can



live among us from year to year and see no evidence of the benefits that come from keeping the commandments of God in our lives, then there is need for reform in Israel.”⁵

A member of the Church who is worthy of a temple recommend should always stand out in whatever professional circles he or she belongs to. Dare to be different. Never worry about offending others by living up to the standards of the Church. I promise you that living up to temple recommend standards will bless and never hurt you in any situation in which you may find yourself.

Reflecting the Savior’s Light

As I read and watch the news each day, I am shocked at the difficulties we are creating for ourselves. As times and conditions change and become more complex, there seem to be fewer and fewer individuals capable of shouldering the responsibilities of leading positive change. I issue a challenge to you who are leaders and future leaders to recognize that the world is changing rapidly. There is an urgent need for leaders capable and bold enough to take on the immense challenges that face us today.

The moral foundation of a strong Judeo-Christian tradition appears to be eroding in the United States and in other nations. This tradition was based on justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity. It was not based on laws and regulations but on the Light of Christ in every good and decent citizen.

The number of people who subscribe to these beliefs and values is dwindling, but you and I remain true. We have covenanted with the Savior to represent Him. By representing

Jesus Christ and reflecting the Light of Christ in our lives, we can help many of our brothers and sisters remember their Judeo-Christian traditions and heritage.

We must be bold in our declarations and testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. We want others to know that we believe He is the central figure in all human history. His life and teachings are the heart of the Bible and the other books we consider to be holy scriptures. The Old Testament sets the stage for Christ’s mortal ministry. The New Testament describes His mortal ministry. The Book of Mormon gives us a second witness of His mortal ministry. He came to earth to declare His gospel as a foundation for all mankind so that all of God’s children could learn about Him and His teachings. He then gave His life in order to be our Savior and Redeemer. Only through Jesus Christ is salvation possible. This is why we believe He is the central figure in all human history. Our eternal destiny is always in His hands. It is a glorious thing to believe in Him and accept Him as our Savior, our Lord, and our Master.

Remember all that the Church has done, is doing, and can do for you and your family. And remember that this is not just any other church; it is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. ■

From a devotional address delivered on January 24, 2012, at Brigham Young University–Idaho. For the full text in English, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. *Washington’s Farewell Address*, ed. Thomas Arkle Clark (1908), 14.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 148.
3. See *Teachings: Harold B. Lee*, 148–49.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 7–8.



Remember all that the Church has done, is doing, and can do for your family. And remember that this is not just any other church; it is the restored Church of Jesus Christ.



By Elder David S. Baxter
Of the Seventy

LEAVING ADVERSITY BEHIND

*There will
come a time
when we can
leave adversity
behind and,
with the Lord's
help, emerge
from darkness
into an abun-
dance of light.*

One of the great hymns of the Restoration, penned by Parley P. Pratt, speaks of how the dark curtains of apostasy opened to the glorious light of truth restored:

*The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.*

*The clouds of error disappear
Before the rays of truth divine; . . .
The glory bursting from afar
Wide o'er the nations soon will shine.¹*

Interestingly, the Apostle Paul also uses the analogy of light in explaining how he could testify that “we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not

in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

He explains his escape from the brink of it all this way: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Most of us at some time in our lives feel the chill winds of adversity. Storms brew, winds blow, rains fall, floods rise. It may seem that there is no end in sight, that we simply face a future of uncertainty and doubt, trial and tribulation.

As well as experiencing periodic thunderstorms, we can experience horrific hurricanes and tempests of turmoil, which can destroy our confidence and shake our sense of self-worth. All that we hold dear can suddenly



feel so ephemeral, slipping through our fingers. Major life changes can knock us off balance, disrupting our sense of equilibrium.

Perhaps an unexpected layoff has led to long-term unemployment, lack of financial freedom has cut choice, or mortgage meltdown has left us in monetary misery. Perhaps anticipated retirement after a long, busy, and productive career has brought a sense of loss. Perhaps sudden sickness or devastating disability has left us feeling “boxed in,” helpless, hopeless, and uncertain. In such circumstances, fear can come easily, while faith can be hard to sustain.

I know all of this for myself. While recovering from surgery to remove two sizeable brain tumors, I experienced periods of melancholy and dismay from the emotional and mental impact of it all. I discovered that I was not as invincible as I once thought I was. Medication did not help, and a relapse or two brought additional despondency. I began to feel sorry for myself.

Decide to Be Happy

Then some wonderful things began to happen. Good friends and trusted Church leaders offered their support and understanding, and I began to listen to their counsel and accept their encouragement. Late one night as I shared my gloomy feelings with our youngest son, he said, “Well, Dad, I have always thought that happiness is a decision.” He is right.

I found myself increasingly expressing gratitude for all the blessings I still enjoyed. I discovered for myself that “this kind [of trial] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

I felt the strength, refreshing power, and love of the Savior. With Paul, I came to rejoice in the knowledge that tribulation, distress, and peril could not separate me from the love of Christ (see Romans 8:35).

Fortunately, the hopeful and certain truth is that no matter what, we can find strength and encouragement. Our burdens can become lighter, even if they do not suddenly

Even if at times our faith seems no bigger than a mustard seed, as we move forward, Providence will move with us. If we seek heaven's help, we will receive it—perhaps even in unexpected ways.

go away. We can emerge on the other side of the darkest abyss, stronger and more resolute, better men and better women.

Having been proven in the crucible of affliction, we will have cultivated a character that is able to face and withstand future life shocks. As a result, we can use our experiences to lift and empathize with others. Our own example of personal perseverance can give hope to others and inspire our families. We become more fit for the future.

While adversity may be slow to leave us, *we can choose* to leave it any time. The Lord's promise to us is as it was to Alma and his people in the midst of horrendous persecution:

“Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

“And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs” (Mosiah 24:13–14).

Furthermore, the Lord has confirmed, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

Seek Heavenly Help

Heavenly help may not be obvious. We may not immediately see or know that some other burdens that would have come our way have been lifted, diverted from our door.

The Lord assures: “Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me” (D&C 38:7).

Of course, we may need to be supremely patient with others and ourselves; it often takes time for everything to work out.

Even if at times our faith seems no bigger than a mustard seed, as we move forward, Providence will move with us. If we seek heaven's help, we will receive it—perhaps even in unexpected ways.

We can find the wherewithal to be thankful for what we have, rather than mourn what we have lost. Interestingly, we often hear that same sentiment expressed by those who have lost all of their worldly possessions in a natural disaster, such as a wildfire, flood, or hurricane. In virtually every case, they say, “At least we still have what is really important.”

The testimony of Paul is encouraging:

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11–13).

As has been written, “All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”²

Whatever our circumstances, there will come a time when we can leave adversity behind and, with the Lord's help, emerge from darkness into an abundance of light. ■

NOTES

1. “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.

Never Alone

By Andrea Dayne Quilla-Soleta

For the past three years, I have had the opportunity to be tested. I have come to realize that no matter what you go through, with God you do not have to do it alone.

Shortly after my 16th birthday, I discovered that I have eczema. It was difficult every morning to look in the mirror and see the rashes that covered my body. I challenged myself to see this as an opportunity to be tested. Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I tried to do what my Young Women teachers taught me: to count my blessings each day despite my trials. Even though I don't have clear skin right now, I am grateful for my family and friends and for my musical talents. I am grateful to have two legs, two hands and feet, eyes to see, and ears to hear. I know that true beauty lies within one's self, not on the outside.

But my eczema gradually got the better of me. I was no longer as friendly as I used to be and no longer smiled. The many doctors I consulted were certain that I would be "flawless" before Christmas. But I wasn't. I prayed every day for

strength to overcome the shyness brought about by my skin disease.

Everybody kept telling me not to think about my plight, that I should act normally and pretend there was nothing wrong with my skin. But this was not easy to do. My mom would gently repeat scripture stories over and over again, hoping to comfort and encourage me.

Doctrine and Covenants 24:8 says, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days." This scripture gave me words to live by. I have them written on

bookmarks, on notebooks, and in my room. It is now one of my favorite verses for encouraging me to do my best despite my trial.

Enduring this trial has been difficult, but now I am more prepared for future trials. Heavenly Father has prepared me so that I can handle whatever challenges come. Now I know that no matter what I go through, I do not have to do it alone. ■



Prophets at Christmastime



The lives of our 16 latter-day prophets exemplify the Christmas spirit, reminding us of that incomparable event that took place in the stable at Bethlehem over 20 centuries ago: the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We can never go wrong by following their example—especially at Christmas.

Gifts of Love

Giving gifts of love and service to those less fortunate has been a hallmark of the prophets' Christmas experiences. In 1931, during the Great Depression, President Harold B. Lee was president of a large stake in Salt Lake City, Utah. President Lee determined that he would know the needs of his stake members and do everything he could to alleviate their want. By survey he learned that more than half of his stake, almost 5,000 people, were dependent on others for help, including almost 1,000 children under the age of 10.

He mobilized members to collect toys and organized workshops to repair, paint, and clean old toys or make new ones so no child would be without on Christmas. He decided that every family in the stake should have a dinner for Christmas and solicited food donations to make that happen.¹ Later as an Apostle, Elder Lee was asked to organize the Church's welfare program based on similar principles of service, sacrifice, and work.

As a boy, President Thomas S. Monson was celebrating Christmas when his friend asked a startling question, "What does turkey taste like?" He responded that it tasted like chicken, but then he realized that his unfortunate friend had never tasted either. Not only that, but there was nothing in his friend's house with which to prepare a Christmas dinner. "I pondered a solution," said President

Monson. “I had no turkeys, no chickens, no money. Then I remembered I did have two pet rabbits. Immediately I took my friend by the hand and rushed to the rabbit hutch, placed the rabbits in a box, and handed the box to him with the comment, ‘Here, take these two rabbits. They’re good to eat—just like chicken.’ . . . Tears came easily to me as I closed the door to the empty rabbit hutch. But I was not sad. A warmth, a feeling of indescribable joy, filled my heart. It was a memorable Christmas.”²



Drawing Together as a Family

One of the sweetest Christmases President Ezra Taft Benson remembered occurred in 1923, when he returned home on Christmas Eve to the family farm in Whitney, Idaho, USA, after a two-and-a-half-year mission to England. This joyful reunion with his parents and 10 brothers and sisters was also filled with enthusiasm and excitement for Christmas. As a special treat, his parents allowed him to stay up to help with Christmas preparations after the other children were in bed. As he worked alongside his parents, he quietly shared his missionary experiences. He couldn’t hold back the tears during this “choice evening” in his childhood home.³

The prophets’ lives encourage us to draw close to our families at Christmastime. President Joseph F. Smith remembered one Christmas as a young father when he had no money—not even a penny—to buy gifts for his children. Just before Christmas he left his home and walked down the street, looking at all the wonderful things in the shop windows but knowing that he could buy none of them. Near despair he found a private place and “wept like a child” to relieve his aching heart. But, drying his eyes, he went home and played with his children all day, “grateful and happy only for them.”⁴ Despite his inability to provide a material Christmas for

his children, he had nevertheless given them the greatest gifts any father could—his love and his time.

The Prophet Joseph Smith spent the Christmas of 1838 imprisoned in Liberty Jail in Missouri. He and several companions were held in a small basement dungeon that was cold, dirty, and smoky from the open fire they were forced to use. The ceiling was so low they couldn’t stand up straight. But there was a bright moment that Christmas season. The Prophet’s wife, Emma, was able to visit Joseph shortly before Christmas for several days. What’s more, she had brought their son, Joseph Smith III. Feeling the love of his family, Joseph wrote words of encouragement to the Saints from the dungeon: “We glory in our tribulation, because we know that God is with us.”⁵

In 1937, President Joseph Fielding Smith was adjusting to life without his beloved wife Ethel, who had recently died. Ethel had asked that Jessie Evans, a single woman with a beautiful singing voice, perform at her funeral. Through that encounter, Jessie Evans and Joseph Fielding Smith became better acquainted and their mutual attraction blossomed into love. She accepted his proposal of marriage shortly after Christmas. In contemplating the gifts he had received the Christmas of 1937, President Smith wrote, “I have received [Jessie] as a Christmas present, for which I am grateful.”⁶ They were married the following April.



One of President David O. McKay's annual family traditions was to take the grandchildren riding on a bobsleigh pulled by a fine team of horses, "bells a-jingle." The ride was one of their favorite traditions. President McKay continued it into his 80s. To stay warm, President McKay wore his long, thick raccoon coat and big gloves. The smaller grandchildren rode in the sleigh, but the older ones "whizzed along behind on their own sleds" tied to the back of the bobsleigh. These long-to-be-remembered Christmas celebrations sometimes ended with carols around the piano and singing "Love at Home."⁷

A Testimony of Jesus Christ

Perhaps most important, the Christmas experiences of the prophets teach us to increase our testimonies of Jesus Christ as we make Him the center of our celebrations. In 1876 the St. George Utah Temple was nearing completion. The dedication ceremony for the basement, main room, and sealing room was scheduled for January 1, 1877.⁸ With Christmas just seven days before the dedication, many in St. George worked frantically to help ensure the temple was completed in time.

President Wilford Woodruff, who served as the first president of the temple, recorded in his journal that on Christmas day the men were busy at work with buzz saws and that 40 women spent the whole day in the temple sewing carpets. They laid carpet and put up curtains.⁹

Although they nearly didn't finish in time, their offering that Christmas season was worth the effort. This work was their Christmas celebration. With 2,000 people present on January 1, President Woodruff gave the dedicatory prayer for portions of the temple—over 30 years after Latter-day Saints had been forced to abandon the Nauvoo Temple.

During World War II, many cities in the United States enforced nightly blackouts to conserve fuel. In Salt Lake City the floodlights on the Salt Lake Temple were turned off. The temple stood dark in a dark city for years. When the ceasefire was declared in Europe, President Heber J. Grant ordered the floodlights of the temple turned back on.

For Christmas 1945, President George Albert Smith planned an inspiring and meaningful Christmas card. On the front was a photograph of the three eastern spires of

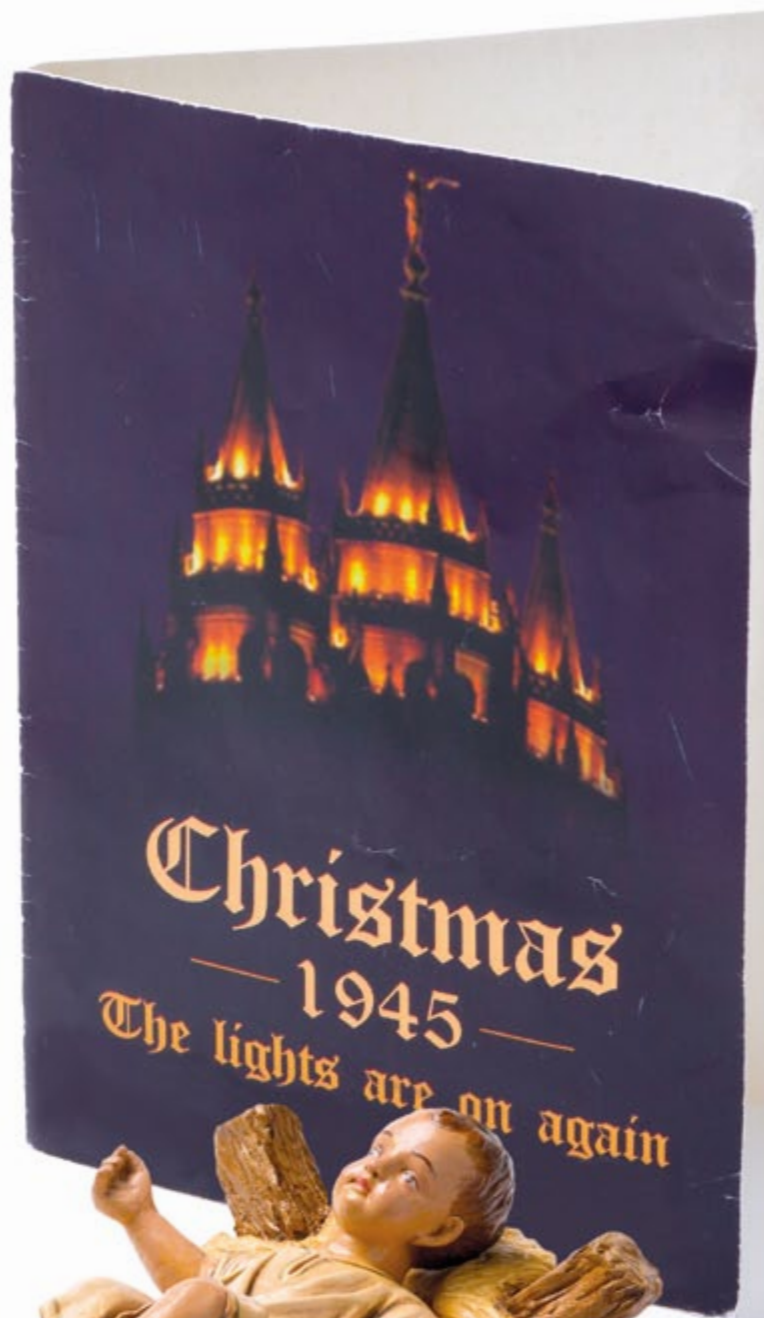
the Salt Lake Temple beautifully lit against a dark blue background with the angel Moroni figure standing above. Across the bottom were the words “Christmas—1945” and the message “The lights are on again.”¹⁰ Nothing could have better reflected the joy felt by everyone after so many long years of death and destruction.

But this beautiful Christmas card was also President Smith’s way of bearing his testimony of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of the gospel. Just as the end of the war brought peace and light in dark places, the Restoration of the gospel following the centuries-long Apostasy turned the bright lights of truth “on again” for all the people of the world.

The examples of our latter-day prophets of love, service, faith, and sacrifice testify that true joy during the Christmas season comes through living as Christ lived. As President Howard W. Hunter said, “The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force. The real spirit of Christmas lies in the life and mission of the Master.”¹¹ ■

NOTES

1. See Larry C. Porter, “Remembering Christmas Past,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2001): 94–96.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings,” *New Era*, Dec. 1986, 7.
3. See Porter, “Remembering Christmas Past,” 104–5.
4. Joseph F. Smith, “Christmas and New Year,” *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1919, 267.
5. Joseph Smith, in Porter, “Remembering Christmas Past,” 53.
6. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. and John J. Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith* (1972), 255.
7. See David Lawrence McKay, *My Father, David O. McKay* (1989), 70–71.
8. Final dedication of the completed St. George Utah Temple was held four months later, on April 6–8, 1877.
9. See *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (1983–85), 7:297.
10. See Albert L. Zobell Jr., “It Being Christmas,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1949, 826–27.
11. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 269.



By Aaron L. West

Church Publishing Services Department

SACRED Transformations

The San Salvador El Salvador Temple has done more than transform the landscape; its influence is changing hearts, families, and an entire nation.

Transformation of a Hill

On September 20, 2008, approximately 600 Latter-day Saints gathered on a rain-soaked hill in the city of San Salvador, El Salvador. They stood on land that had been used for many years as a plantation. Under the direction of the Central America Area Presidency, they prayed together and shared words of testimony. Some of them sank new shovels in the ancient soil, anticipating a change that would soon come to that chosen spot.

On August 21, 2011, thousands of reverently exuberant Latter-day Saints greeted each other on that same hill. No longer a plantation, it had been transformed into the most sacred spot in El Salvador. The Saints gathered around a temple. They eagerly awaited the arrival of a prophet, President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, who would dedicate that temple to the Lord. One longtime member of the Church, speaking almost in a whisper,



The ground-breaking for the San Salvador El Salvador Temple marked the beginning of a sacred change to the area.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH GRAY, MAY NOT BE COPIED

Like the land that was transformed to build the San Salvador El Salvador Temple, the lives of Amado and Evelyn Vigil were transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

said that the place felt separated from its surroundings—“a little piece of heaven on earth.”

Transformation of a Family

In April 2010, Evelyn Vigil was concerned that her husband, Amado, was losing his faith. He had not attended any church for 11 years, having arrived at the conclusion that the true Church did not exist. Meanwhile, Evelyn had never stopped believing in God, and she went from one church to another, yearning to hear His word but never satisfied with what she heard. Some mornings she awoke in tears. On such days, she pled for guidance from her Heavenly Father. She asked Him why she never felt right in any of the churches she attended, even though she wanted so desperately to learn of Him. She also prayed that her family would someday find unity in one church.

By August 23, 2011, Amado and Evelyn Vigil had experienced a transformation not unlike the change that had occurred on that hill in their capital city. Dressed in white, they entered a sealing room with their daughter, Michelle, age nine, and their son, Christian, age three. They were the first family sealed for time and eternity in the San Salvador El Salvador Temple. Like the temple they had entered, they were newly dedicated to the Lord's service, and they were united in their dedication.

The Vigils' Story

“Our story began,” Amado recalls, “when we found a pair of elders—rather, when they found us. We were leaving the home of Evelyn's parents, and we were carrying shopping bags. We noticed that the elders had seen us and were crossing the street toward us. One of them kindly asked if they could help us.

“They also asked if we would allow them to visit us. I said yes, mostly out of curiosity. Up to that point, I didn't

know much about the Church—only comments I had heard from other people.

“After I agreed to let the elders visit our home, I told my wife, ‘Don't get too excited about this. Don't get any illusions about me deciding to join a church. I'm just curious to see what they have to say.’

“The elders started visiting us. I was ready to politely tell them to go away if they said anything that didn't seem right to me. But they were so kind, and I was impressed that they never said anything bad about other churches. They taught with such love and diligence, and they were patient when I asked many questions. They quickly endeared themselves to us.”

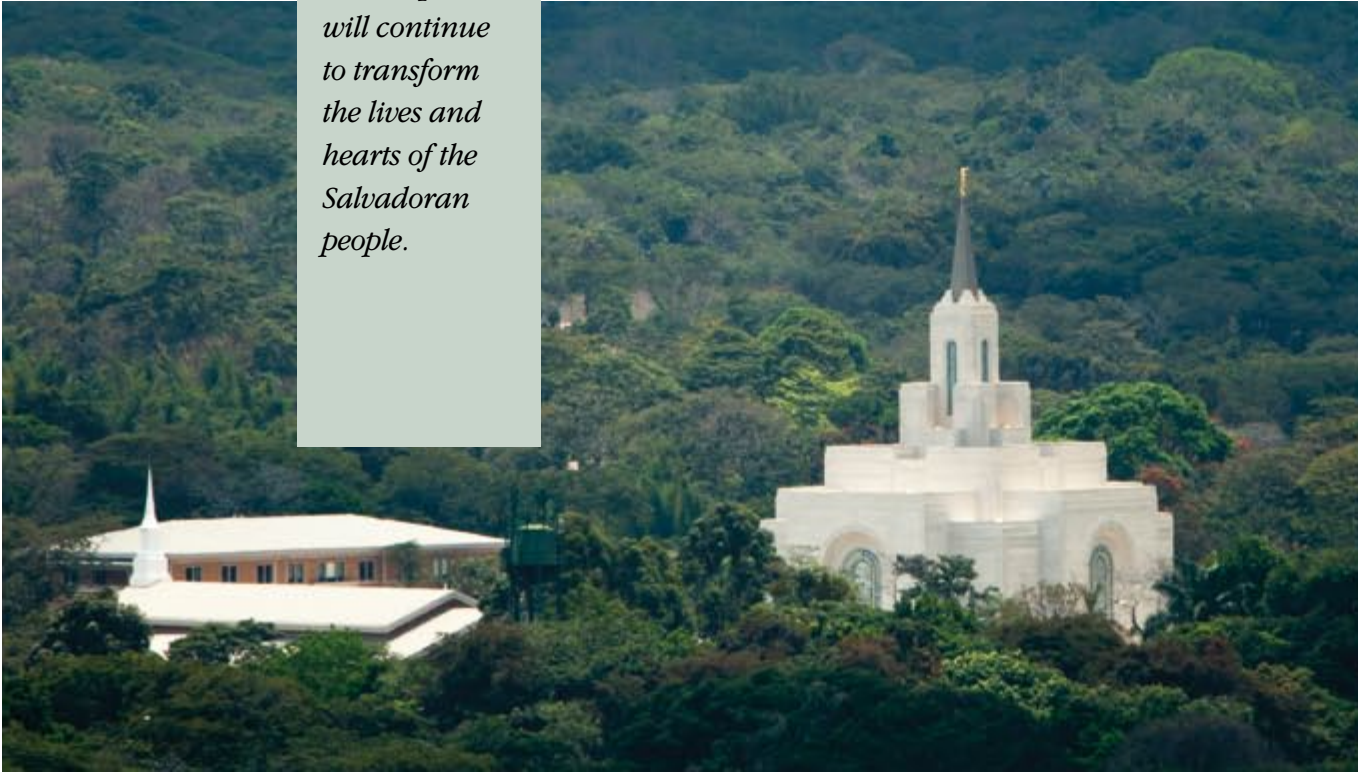
Bit by bit, Amado and Evelyn prepared themselves to be baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Evelyn's biggest challenge was the Word of Wisdom. She was saddened by the realization that she would need to let go of her desire for coffee. Amado didn't need to let go of any bad habits; he just needed to learn to grab hold of the truth. He believed what the missionaries were teaching, and he even recognized many doctrines and practices that he and his wife had felt were missing from other churches, such as eternal families, baptisms for the dead, and fellowship and organization in the Church. But he hesitated to commit to be baptized. He worried that he would join the Church only to find that he had made the wrong decision.

These concerns soon faded. Evelyn prayed for help and overcame her coffee habit, saying, “I'm not going to let this keep me from receiving blessings.” After about two months of indecision, Amado committed to be baptized. Now, according to Evelyn, he frequently says, “We need to embrace the doctrine.”

Changes and Blessings

Amado, Evelyn, and Michelle were baptized and confirmed in early June 2011. “From the time that we were

*The temple
will continue
to transform
the lives and
hearts of the
Salvadoran
people.*



baptized,” Evelyn says, “I could feel that everything started to change. My family was united in the Church. We had found the restored gospel. We have had trials and sickness since then, but our Heavenly Father has poured many blessings on us.”

Amado observes: “The first change I noticed was unity in our family. It’s not that we were dysfunctional before, but we started to unite more. The doctrines of the gospel helped us. As Church leaders taught us about the sacredness of the family, we thought more about the value we should place on our family.”

The Vigils’ bishop, César Orellana, also saw changes in their lives. Soon after their baptism, Amado approached Bishop Orellana and said, “We want to pay tithing, but we don’t know how.”

Bishop Orellana explained that tithing was 10 percent of their increase. Amado was somewhat concerned. At the time, Evelyn had a job, but he did not. “We always come up short,” Amado explained to his bishop, “but we want to pay tithing.”

Bishop Orellana responded, “Brother, the Lord has made many promises.” Together they read scriptures about the blessings that come from faithfully paying tithing, including the Lord’s words through the prophet Malachi: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . .

and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10).

After reading these scriptures together, Bishop Orellana looked at the new convert and said, “If paying tithing means that you can’t pay for water or electricity, pay tithing. If paying tithing means that you can’t pay your rent, pay tithing. Even if paying tithing means that you don’t have enough money to feed your family, pay tithing. The Lord will not abandon you.”

The next Sunday, Amado approached Bishop Orellana again. This time he didn’t ask any questions. He simply handed his bishop an envelope and said, “Bishop, here is our tithing.”

Reflecting on this experience, Bishop Orellana says, “Ever since then, they have been faithful tithe payers.” The family received some commodities from the bishops’ storehouse during their financial difficulties. Beyond that, the Lord blessed them to be able to care for themselves. Evelyn received a promotion, and Amado found a good job. Evelyn later lost her job, but they continued to pay tithing and to receive spiritual and temporal blessings for their faithfulness. Once Bishop Orellana asked Amado how the family was doing financially. Amado responded,

“We’re doing all right. Sometimes we don’t have much to eat, but we have enough. And more than anything, we trust in the Lord.”

After paying tithing for some time, Evelyn and Amado spoke with Bishop Orellana about the blessings they had received. Referring to Malachi 3:10, they said, “We have proven the Lord.” And true to Bishop Orellana’s promise, the Lord never abandoned them.

A New Perspective

Evelyn and Amado speak tenderly of the day their family gathered in the sealing room. They had worried that by the time they were endowed and ready for the sealing ordinance that same day, their children would be restless. They were particularly concerned about their energetic three-year-old son, Christian. But the children entered the sealing room with peaceful reverence, suggesting that they understood the reason they were there. And when it was time for the children to participate in the sealing ordinance, Christian, without any instruction or prompting, walked to the altar and kneeled by his parents.

Evelyn remembers seeing the family’s reflection in the mirrors. Amado also speaks of seeing, not only in the temple but in everyday life. He expresses gratitude for the eternal perspective that now guides his life—a perspective that Michelle and Christian seemed to sense when they were in the Lord’s house. This perspective has expanded even more since then, especially as the Vigils have welcomed a new daughter into the family—Andrea, who was born in the covenant in August.

A Light upon a Hill

The Vigil family will be forever changed through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the influence of His temple in their land. Because a plantation has been



The Vigils were the first family to be sealed in the San Salvador El Salvador Temple, dedicated in August 2011.

transformed into sacred ground, their own home has become more sacred.

In many ways they represent the promise of an entire nation. El Salvador is home to millions of good, honest people who are bombarded every day by the noise and allure of the world. The Salvadoran Saints love their homeland, and they find renewed hope as they see the Lord’s temple there. They find assurance in the following words from the temple’s dedicatory prayer given by President Eyring:

“We pray for Thy blessings to rest upon this nation of El Salvador. Touch the hearts of those who govern, that the people may be blessed with freedom and opportunity. May peace reign in the land.

“Prosper Thy work in this land. May the gospel message touch the hearts of people throughout the nation. May they come into the waters of baptism, and remain faithful and true unto Thee. . . .

“ . . . With grateful hearts, we dedicate and consecrate this hallowed structure and its surroundings to the accomplishment of Thy will and the fulfillment of Thine eternal work. We pray that its influence may be felt throughout the land as a light upon a hill.”¹

Much of this influence is sure to be felt through the service and example of people like the Vigil family. Brushing back tears and struggling to speak through his emotion, Amado Vigil now speaks lovingly of the missionaries who made it possible for him and his family to come unto Christ and receive the blessings of the temple. “It is our hope that our children will serve missions,” he says, “so they can bless other families, just as those young men blessed ours.” ■

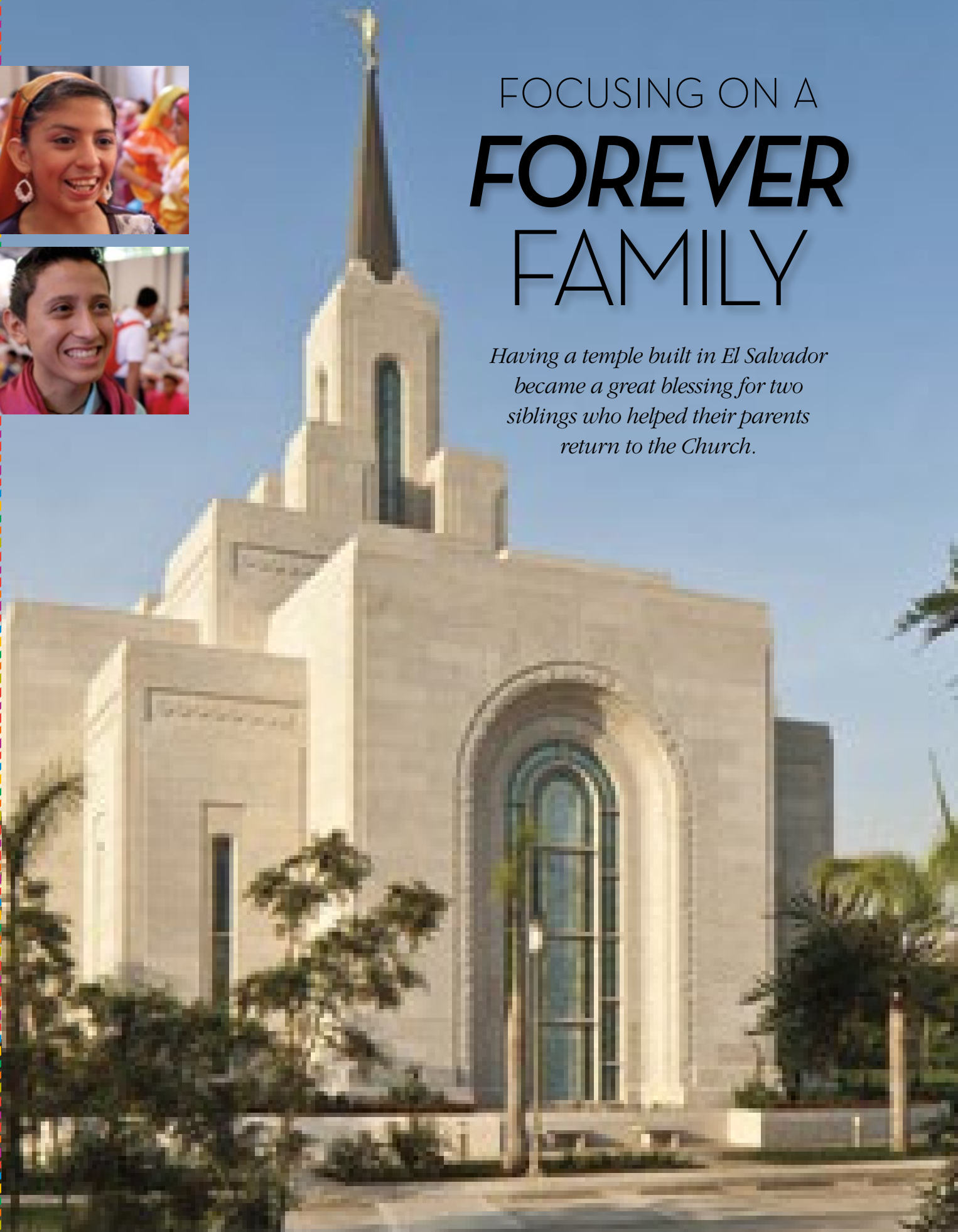
NOTE

1. “‘May Peace Reign in the Land’—Dedicatory Prayer for El Salvador Temple,” *Church News*, Aug. 27, 2011, ldschurchnews.com.



FOCUSING ON A
FOREVER
FAMILY

*Having a temple built in El Salvador
became a great blessing for two
siblings who helped their parents
return to the Church.*



By Mindy Raye Friedman

Church Magazines

Kevin and Jacqueline S., a brother and sister in El Salvador, are the best of friends, and they stick together in everything. They have a great love for the gospel and for their family. They want their family to be together forever.

When Kevin and Jacqueline were younger, people at church would ask their father, “When are you going to be sealed in the temple?” And he would respond, “When there is a temple in El Salvador.”

Praying for Their Parents

However, by the time the San Salvador El Salvador Temple was announced in 2007, Kevin and Jacqueline’s parents had stopped attending church. But Kevin, now 18, and Jacqueline, 15, kept going to church, praying that one day their parents would return.

“I never stopped praying and asking Heavenly Father that they would become active again,” Jacqueline says. “I know Heavenly Father wants the best for us, and He wants us to be an eternal family.”

They also tried to be good examples for their parents. “I never lost hope,” Kevin says. “I always read the scriptures and prayed, and my parents would see me study and leave to go do home teaching visits and to go to Church activities. As I worked to keep the commandments and to progress, my parents saw my example.”

Feeling the Spirit of the Temple

Kevin and Jacqueline’s prayers for their parents began to be answered as the temple neared completion. “When our leaders announced the dedication and cultural celebration, we invited our parents,” Kevin says. “We told them about the privilege we would have as youth to participate, and this motivated them a lot and helped them progress spiritually.”

In addition to attending the cultural celebration, the family was also able to attend the temple open house.

“Even though my parents hadn’t been going to church,

they still view the Church and the gospel as something sacred,” Kevin says. “When we entered the temple, my father began explaining to my sisters and me that when we enter the temple, we wear white and that this is where we perform sacred ordinances.”

Kevin was amazed that his two-year-old sister, who normally has a lot of energy, remained quiet while they were inside the temple, and he noticed how his mother had tears in her eyes as she viewed the different rooms and paintings. When the family entered a sealing room, a volunteer tour guide explained to them that this is where families are sealed together forever.

“Our little sister then began to touch each one of us and say, ‘My mom, my dad, my Kevin, my Jacqueline,’” says Jacqueline. “It was like Heavenly Father spoke through her to tell us that we are all hers.”

“Then she hugged us and started giving us kisses and pointing to the mirrors,” Kevin says. “We looked at ourselves together in the mirrors, and it was amazing. When we left the sealing room that day, we made a goal to be able to get back there.”

Regaining Perspective

After attending the temple open house, the family began





THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL

"If you have not yet been to the temple or if you *have* been but currently do not qualify for a recommend, there is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple. . . . The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God."

President Thomas S. Monson, "The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2011, 93.

ONLINE EXTRA

Watch a video about Kevin and Jacqueline and the San Salvador El Salvador Temple dedication at lds.org/go/temple12.

making some changes. "Since we went to the temple, our family has regained perspective," Kevin says. "Since then we have been having family home evening, and our parents are bringing us to church and sitting with us on the front row of the chapel."

In August 2011, Kevin and Jacqueline felt blessed to sit with their parents in the stake center as they viewed the broadcast of the temple dedication.

"When the temple was announced in 2007, my parents were less active, and I thought I would never have the opportunity to be with

them at the dedication," Kevin says. "When they were sitting with me, I could really feel that Heavenly Father had answered my prayers. To be there with my family was one of the greatest blessings I have had in my life."

"This experience of the temple has strengthened me," Jacqueline says. "What has strengthened me more than anything is seeing that the temple changes lives, because it helped my parents become active in the Church again. Now we have made the goal that we will be sealed in the temple. I know Heavenly Father wants the best for us." ■



WHEN THERE'S LOVE AT HOME

Kevin and Jacqueline are very close as brother and sister, and they have learned that the bond between siblings can be a very rewarding part of life. Here's how they support each other.

Jacqueline says, "My brother always helps me in my duties

at home and at school. I always have his support, and I know without a doubt he loves me and will support me at anytime. When I am sad or feeling down on myself, he is always there to encourage me."

Kevin says, "When I feel discouraged, my sister supports me and encourages me. She tells

me positive things about myself, and it makes me feel much better. I have learned a lot from her example. In times when I start to give up on my faith, she tells me to not doubt and that things are going to come out better than I hoped."

These two youth say they enjoy their relationship and the fact that they don't fight like a lot of other siblings do. "You could say that we are weird, but I thank my Heavenly Father for this relationship with my sister," Kevin says.

FEELING HIS LOVE THROUGH SERVICE

By Mishelle Wasden



ETERNALLY IMPORTANT SERVICE

“Perhaps the most familiar and most important examples of unselfish service and sacrifice are performed in our families. Mothers devote themselves to the bearing and nurturing of their children. Husbands give themselves to supporting their wives and children. The sacrifices involved in the eternally important service to our families are too numerous to mention and too familiar to need mention.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Sacrifice,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2012, 22.

It was two weeks before Christmas, and the familiar stress of the season was upon me. I had presents to buy, a tree to decorate, and gifts to deliver.

For several months I had felt overwhelmed by the daily tasks that face a mother of five young children. I had even felt mechanical in my Church attendance as I wrestled with my little ones on the bench. I longed for an increase of the Spirit and of spiritual experiences in my life.

About this time my sister purchased a new home in a neighboring state and was trying to get things settled before Christmas. That would be a lot of work for any family, but for hers it would be even more difficult. My sister was eight months pregnant, a mother of two small children, and the caregiver of her quadriplegic husband.

Realizing the struggle she faced, I called her to see how things were progressing. She was optimistic about the move and hopeful that members of her new ward would be supportive. After our conversation I hung up the phone, wishing her good luck and wondering how I could help

from 400 miles (650 km) away.

That evening the thought kept coming to my mind that I needed to be there to help. But as I looked at my schedule, I dismissed the thought and went to bed.

The next morning I awoke with the same prompting. The feeling was so strong this time that I could not deny it. I called my husband and said, “I need to go help my sister.” Without hesitation, he responded, “I’ve been thinking the same thing.”

I called my sister, told her my plans, and booked a flight for that afternoon. I quickly packed my suitcase, kissed my children good-bye, and headed to the airport.

Over the next three days I unpacked boxes, organized rooms, and helped decorate a Christmas tree. After most of the boxes were unpacked, I sat with my sister and her family, admiring their pretty tree. My five-year-old niece, pleased that her family was ready for Christmas, exclaimed, “This is going to be a great Christmas!”

As I flew home, I knew that by giving part of myself to this sweet family,

I had felt the Spirit, which I had been yearning to feel. It came because I had served others.

It is easy to talk about giving service at Christmastime, as long as giving that service fits into our schedules and doesn’t cost much or take us out of our comfort zone. But to really feel the true spirit of Christmas, we need to reach beyond ourselves. Doing so helps us comprehend the love our Savior has for each of us. ■



By Bishop Gary E. Stevenson
Presiding Bishop

The Safety and Peace of Keeping the Commandments

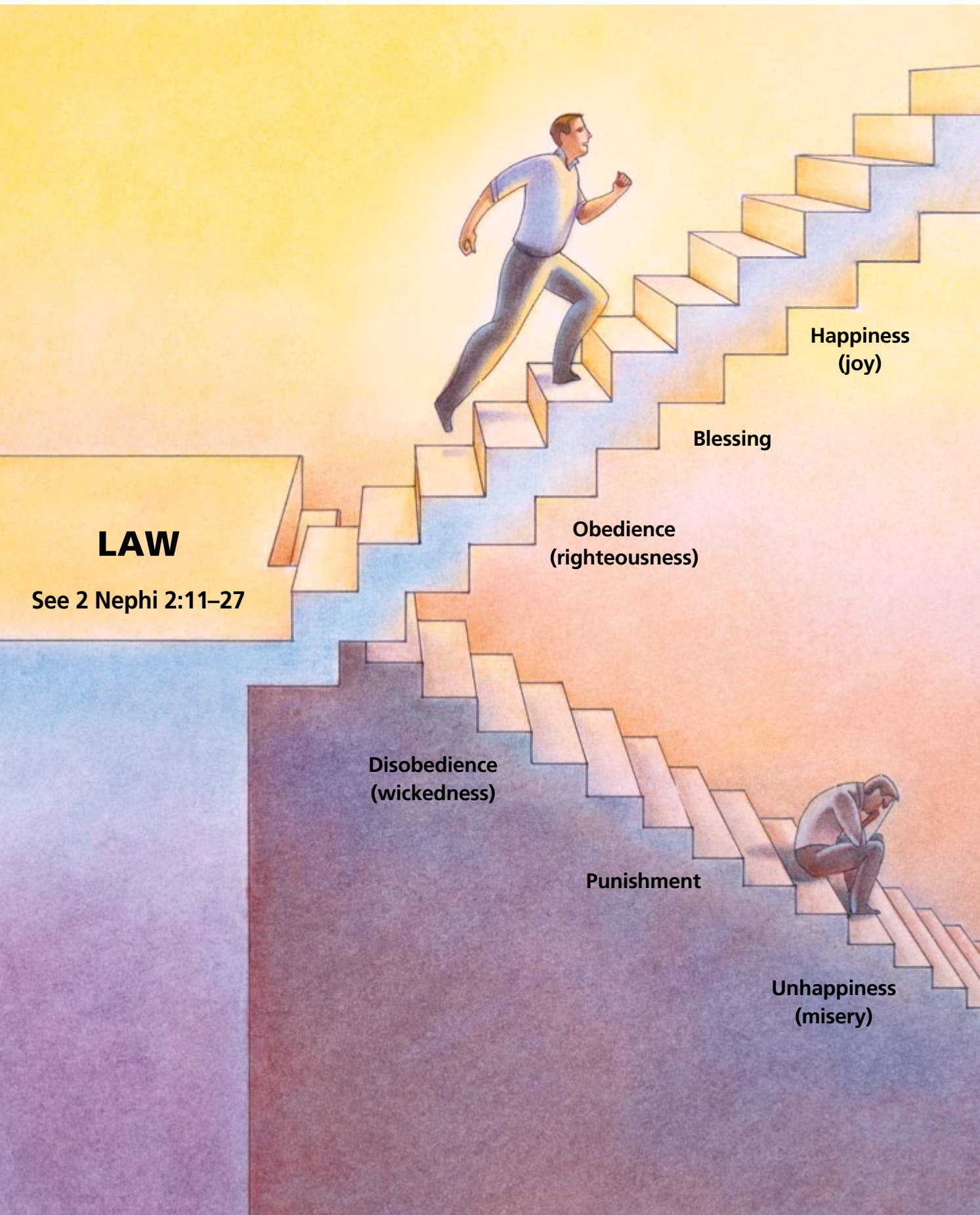
*The patterns and truths found in the Book of Mormon
are clear and instructive, plain and precious.
When we begin with righteousness and obedience,
we will end with blessings and joy.*

In our digital information age, it seems that a 24-hour news cycle cannot pass without the chapters of a familiar story being played out over and over. The characters of the well-worn plot have usually earned celebrity and prominence through extraordinary talent as actors, athletes, politicians, or business leaders. Years of practice or dedicated service and sacrifice—vehicles to the pinnacle of their success in a particular craft or profession—are dashed to pieces in the midst of scandal.

The final scene is often the somber image of the characters making a tearful plea to a judge, shareholders, or constituents or to family, friends, or fans for forgiveness for their misguided actions. The outcome usually casts a broad net of unintended consequences—including heartache, shame, and misery—over them, their loved ones, and their associates.

The plain yet profound words of the ancient Book of Mormon prophet Alma in exhortation to his son seem as relevant in the 21st century as they were more than 2,000 years ago: “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

In virtually every scandal today, a knowledge of and obedience to the commandments found in the restored gospel would have been enough to avert personal and professional disaster.



LAW

See 2 Nephi 2:11-27

Happiness
(joy)

Blessing

Obedience
(righteousness)

Disobedience
(wickedness)

Punishment

Unhappiness
(misery)

A Formula for Happiness

A formula embodied in the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the pathway to happiness. It is a plain and precious truth found throughout the Book of Mormon. It is described particularly well in the teachings of the prophet Lehi to his sons as he neared the end of his life. In speaking to his son Jacob, he taught, “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). A few verses later he added, “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

Lehi’s teachings in this sermon to Jacob may be summarized simply: Obedience and righteousness lead to blessings, which lead to joy. Conversely, disobedience and wickedness lead to punishment, which leads to sorrow. The Savior is the great Mediator of all mankind and the sponsor of the pathway to happiness and eternal life. The devil is the miserable father of lies and the sponsor of the pathway to captivity and death.

Clearly, the adversary understands that we would not knowingly choose captivity and death, yet because he will be miserable forever, he seeks also the misery of all mankind (see 2 Nephi 2:27). He does this by distorting the consequences of sin and disobedience. That is one reason he is called the father of lies.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said: “All of you . . . know of Satan, the father of lies. You know how he turns the truth into a lie. He garnishes evil to make it appear beautiful, pleasing, easy, and even good.”¹

Satan would have us believe that the formula for happiness begins with wickedness and sin. We are warned that his temptations are cloaked so cleverly that sometimes he even appears “nigh unto an angel of light” (2 Nephi 9:9). The Lord described the fall and goals of Satan:

“Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

“And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will” (Moses 4:3–4).

The pathway to happiness begins with righteousness through obedience to the commandments. The commandments have been given to us as a divine playbook to direct us away from many of the calamities of mortality. The Lord proclaimed this in the infancy of the Restoration: “Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, *and gave him commandments*” (D&C 1:17; emphasis added).

Keep the Commandments

Some people find it counterintuitive that the commandments are at the trailhead of the path to happiness rather than something to be carried along the way. The following story from my service as a mission president in Nagoya, Japan, some years ago illustrates this.

My wife, Lesa, and I became acquainted with a young woman soon after she came to church to attend an English class taught by the missionaries. She was outgoing, vibrant, and in control of her life, which included a good job, a longtime boyfriend, and her family. Her association with the missionaries and members through English class piqued her interest in the Church, and she began to receive the missionary lessons. Her testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel seemed to blossom each time she met with the missionaries. As she read the Book of Mormon and pondered and prayed about it and the things she was hearing, she knew they were true.

When the missionaries began teaching her the commandments, she knew she must obey. She broke up with her boyfriend and quit her job, which required that she work Sundays. She began observing the Word of Wisdom and accepted the law of tithing. Her faith was so strong that she began keeping the commandments virtually the moment she learned them.

When she announced to her family her interest in the Church and her study of the restored gospel, her parents told her that their relationship with her would suffer as

a result. Within a few weeks of accepting the commandments, she found herself without a job, an apartment, or family support. Clearly, the consequences of her obedience affected her life in what appeared to be a devastating way.

I worried deeply about her situation. Late one night, at the end of a hectic day, Lesa and I left the mission home for a walk, seeking some quiet time together. We were surprised as we came upon a busy intersection at the same time this vibrant young investigator approached on her bicycle. She greeted us with a warm smile and a hug. Surprised that she was out so late, we asked what she was doing.

“I am on my way to my new job working the graveyard shift at the drive-up window of a fast-food restaurant,” she gleefully exclaimed.

This job represented a significant drop in pay, responsibility, and hours from her previous job. Despite significant trials and setbacks in the temporal affairs of her life, happiness exuded from her. She then announced that her baptismal date had been set. As we walked back to the mission home, Lesa and I marveled at how her faith and obedience to newfound commandments had put her on the pathway to true joy.

A few weeks later she was baptized. After some time had passed, she reconciled with her family and found better employment. A few years following her baptism, she was sealed in the Tokyo Japan Temple to a returned missionary she had met at a young single adult activity. Now an eternal family, they were recently blessed with a beautiful baby boy. A short, sweet hymn describes what occurred in her life as a result of keeping the commandments:



Keep the commandments; keep the commandments!

In this there is safety; in this there is peace.

He will send blessings; He will send blessings.

Words of a prophet: Keep the commandments.

In this there is safety and peace.²

We were surprised as we came upon a busy intersection at the same time this vibrant young investigator approached on her bicycle. We marveled at how her faith and obedience to newfound commandments had put her on a pathway to true joy.

The patterns and truths found in the Book of Mormon are clear and instructive, plain and precious. When we begin with righteousness and obedience, we will end with blessings and joy. ■

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 70.
2. “Keep the Commandments,” *Children’s Songbook*, 146–47.

HOW CAN WE FEED SO MANY?

As Relief Society president, I felt overwhelmed by the needs and challenges some families in our little branch were facing. Times had been tough, and several members had lost their jobs.

Outside the Church, discouragement, sadness, and hopelessness could be seen in the eyes of many who were having difficulty providing for their families. Even children and youth exuded feelings of uncertainty and turmoil.

Branch leaders felt the need to carry a bit of hope and love to the most needy—something that could help people in our community feel that a loving Heavenly Father knew of their

trials and was watching over them.

As Christmas drew near, we proposed inviting the poorest children in our community to a dinner. Branch members would hold fund-raisers, buy food from a fast-food chain, and prepare our meetinghouse to receive our guests. Everyone got involved, including the Primary children, young women, and young men.

We arranged for the fast-food chain to provide the food, and we contacted social workers to locate families with the greatest needs. The workers gave us a list of about 100 children, which was more than we had anticipated. Our spirits did not fail, but it seemed impossible to raise

enough money to purchase food for that many children.

When the day of our dinner arrived, the branch president, accompanied by several deacons, took the funds we had raised and headed to the restaurant, wondering how we were going to feed so many children with our limited funds. They prayed as they went, thinking that maybe we should invite only the smallest children, divide the meals in half, or call off the activity.

When they reached the restaurant, the branch president put the money on the counter. That's when their prayers were answered.

The restaurant manager looked at them and, with a smile, said the restaurant would be happy to contribute as many meals as necessary—at no cost! I cannot express the joy we all felt upon learning of this kind gesture, which allowed us to bring some cheer—and plenty of food—to a large group of needy children.

Thanks to the restaurant's generosity, we were able to use the money that we had raised to purchase food and make food baskets for the neediest families.

From this experience we learned that no effort is in vain when we put our talents and good desires to the service of our fellow beings. Our testimonies were strengthened that the Lord opens doors after we do all we can. ■
Marta Fernández-Rebollos, Spain

As the branch president put the money on the counter, their prayers were answered.



I HOPE SOMEONE WILL LOVE HER

When my son was three years old and my daughter was four, they were part of a neighborhood preschool group. That winter those of us in charge of the group decided to do a Christmas project that included having each child donate a toy to a needy family.

We taught many lessons in the preceding weeks about how gratitude and sharing with others make us happy. I told my children to start thinking about which toys they would like to give, wanting them to have the experience of choosing what to give. Our family finances were limited, and I was curious which of their few toys they would be willing to part with.

One Saturday morning I told the children it was time to select their donation. I helped Hunter wrap the truck he had chosen and then went to see how Mikelle was doing. The scene I witnessed from the doorway of her room brought tears to my eyes.

Mikelle was holding her favorite doll, Mella, dressed in her best doll clothing, and she was singing to her. Then she tucked a small blanket into the bottom of a gift bag. She smiled at the doll, hugged and kissed her, and lovingly placed her in the bag. Seeing me, she said, "Mella's all ready, Mom. I hope someone will love her."

One Saturday morning I told the children it was time to select their donation. The scene I witnessed from the doorway of Mikelle's room brought tears to my eyes.



Knowing how my daughter felt about this doll, I was stunned she was giving her away. I almost wanted to tell Mikelle she didn't have to give up her favorite doll, but I stopped myself.

"She understands giving," I thought. "She is giving her very best."

Suddenly I recognized that part of me was willing to give and share but not at too great a personal sacrifice. I had placed limits on my charity, and I knew I needed to change.

I thought of how Heavenly Father gave up His only perfect Son and allowed Him to suffer and die for me. I pictured a loving Father in Heaven kissing His Beloved Son and sending

Him to earth as a baby, hoping that we would love and follow Him.

The Savior Himself held nothing back and gave everything He had to give.

I wondered if Mikelle would change her mind before the Christmas program, when the toys were to be donated, but she did not. I wondered if she would later regret her choice and feel sad, but she did not.

Seeing my daughter's Christlike example, I decided that whether I have much or little to give, I would always cheerfully give my best when I have an opportunity to share. ■

Brittney Pyne, Utah, USA

YOU SANG FROM YOUR HEARTS

In December 2000 our stake choir was preparing to host a choral festival. Several choirs of great renown in the city of Posadas, Argentina, had confirmed that they would be participating, and many people would be attending. Through our singing we hoped to share our testimony of the birth of the Savior.

As the choir director, I was a bit anxious. Adding to my anxiety was that I was eight months pregnant with twins. I experienced pains during our final rehearsal a week before the concert and had to conduct sitting down.

By the time the rehearsal ended, I could no longer stand. My husband, Carlos, and my father gave me a blessing. Carlos then took me to the hospital, where doctors determined that the babies would arrive that day. I was fearful, but Carlos told me to trust in the Lord.

Soon the cry of a newborn baby flooded the room. My heart leapt for joy at the sound, but then the doctor drew close and said, “That is Kira crying, but Abril did not make it.”

I have no words to describe the feelings that swept over me. Soon I was moved to another room, where my husband was waiting for me. We embraced and wept.

“Dafne, we don’t know the Lord’s purpose in taking Abril to Himself,” Carlos said. “But we must be strong, accept His will, and move forward in faith.”

A little while later, Carlos held Kira’s tiny body and blessed her to live. She did, but because of complications, she remained in the hospital for the next 10 days.

I was released the following week. Because of frequent trips to the hospital to see and feed Kira, I gave no thought to the choir. The night before the festival, my father asked me if I had decided whether to conduct. “Pray about it, Dafne,” he said, “and surely whatever decision you make will be the right one.”

I thought about Kira, who still lay

As the voices melded with the instruments, I was overcome with the sensation that I was in a beautiful place.



in the hospital. I thought about the choir members, who had worked hard to prepare for the concert. I thought about the Savior and His birth, life, and sacrifice. I knew what I needed to do.

The demonstrations of love our family received the next evening from choir members moved us deeply, and the spirit of harmony among them created a heartfelt desire to touch those who attended.

Because we hosted the festival, our stake choir sang last. When the piano and violin played the introduction to “The First Noel,” tears spilled onto my cheeks. Then, as the voices melded with the instruments, I was overcome with the sensation that I was in a beautiful place.

When we finished, I turned around to see that most audience members had tears in their eyes. People who perhaps had never heard the gospel’s message of peace and love had felt through our music the beauty and wonder of the birth of the Son of God.

Afterward, the director of one of the other choirs said to us, “We had good technique, but you sang from your hearts.”

On Christmas Eve my husband and I thanked God for sending Kira to our home and for sending His Son to earth. Because of the Son’s Atonement and our sealing in the temple, we know that Abril will someday be ours again. ■

Dafne Analia Romero de Tau, Misiones, Argentina

POPCORN, PIONEERS, AND PEACE

Mom put bricks in the oven and then wrapped them in blankets so our feet would stay warm as we traveled in our car without a heater. It was 1935, and we were making the 60-mile (96 km) drive from Salt Lake City to Payson, Utah, to visit my grandparents in early December. The snow was falling lightly around us and swirled in what looked like little tornadoes on the road ahead. My big brother, Fred, and I were bundled in heavy coats and itchy wool socks and mufflers. The drive seemed endless to me as a seven-year-old.

We made this trip every December. The Christmas season didn't really start until we were in Grandma and Grandpa Tanner's warm kitchen making popcorn balls. Grandpa would stoke up the fire, and Grandma would fill a wire basket with popcorn and shake it vigorously over the fire until it filled with puffy, white corn. Then Grandma would pour hot honey butter over the popcorn in a big cast-iron kettle and mix in peanuts. When the mixture cooled, we would dig in with our butter-covered hands and make festive balls to share with family and friends.

This Christmas, however, would be different. Usually Fred and I rode in the backseat, but this year we were wedged between

my parents on the bench seat up front. A small white coffin carrying the body of my one-year-old brother, Gerold, took up the backseat. A case of measles had turned into pneumonia and snuffed out his young life. Earlier we had gone to the mortuary to pick up the small wooden coffin.

As we made the two-hour journey, Dad led us in singing Christmas songs. Mom and Dad harmonized, and the beautiful music comforted us as we grieved the loss of our baby.

When we got to Grandpa's house, the usually jovial crowd of family and relatives was waiting solemnly. The coffin was taken from the backseat and brought into Grandma's spotless parlor. My grandparents' bishop spoke a few kind words, and then we were back in the car to ride to the cemetery, where we all wept as this precious little boy was laid in the frozen ground.

Christmas did come. The fire was

stoked, the popcorn was popped, and the festive popcorn balls were delivered on Grandpa's horse-drawn sleigh. There was sadness that day but also a resonant peace as I listened to my faithful grandparents reading the story of Christ's birth.

My grandparents had been born of pioneer parents who had laid many babies in the ground. As our family mourned our loss, we turned to where our ancestors had turned—to the Son of God and His words. I remembered the Christmas story with a different heart that year, for it was because of the baby born in a manger that the baby we had laid in the ground would rise again and be ours.

Many decades have passed since then, but each Christmas I still pour honey butter over popcorn, mix in peanuts, shape the mixture into balls, and remember. ■

Shirlee Hurst Shields, Utah, USA

As we made the two-hour journey, Dad led us in singing Christmas songs. Mom and Dad harmonized, and the beautiful music comforted us as we grieved.





By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

Christmas WITHIN YOU

*Keep your faith.
Look for the good
in your situation.
Do something
kind for someone.
Seek Christ devoid
of wrapping and
tinsel.*

I suppose everyone remembers his or her first Christmas away from home. The reason for being away might have been mission or military service, student life, or employment. Whatever the reason, that first Christmas away is a poignant memory for all of us. To those who have been away from home at Christmas, or who may be away from home this year, I dedicate my own such remembrance.





ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL MANN

In my case it was my service as a missionary. For 19 years I had enjoyed Christmas surrounded by family and friends. I suppose in my youthful self-centeredness I had never considered spending it any other way.

Then, as the Yule season approached in 1960, I found myself half a world away from all that. I had been in England less than three months when, on the first of December, I was summoned to the mission office to meet Elder Eldon Smith, newly arrived from Champion, Alberta, Canada—my first junior companion. We were sent to open missionary work in the conservative city of Guildford, in the county of Surrey, an area that had never had Latter-day Saint missionaries and, to our knowledge, had only one member hidden somewhere within its boundaries. We were young, inexperienced, and a bit overwhelmed, but we were not fainthearted.

We registered with the police, arranged for lodging, and, initially unable to locate our lone member of the Church, threw ourselves into the only thing we knew to do—knock on doors. We knocked on doors in the morning, we knocked on doors at midday, we knocked on doors in the afternoon, and we knocked on doors at night. We rode our bicycles through those streets in what must have been

the rainiest British December in history—or so it seemed to us. We were wet in the morning, we were wet at midday, we were wet in the afternoon, and we were wet at night, but we kept knocking on doors. And we got in almost none of them.

So it went until Christmas Eve, when people were even less inclined to hear a couple of missionaries “from the colonies.” That evening, weary but devoted, we retired to our one-room rental and had a Christmas devotional. We sang a Christmas hymn and then offered an invocation. We read from the scriptures and listened to a tape recording titled *The True Story of Christmas*. Then we sang another hymn of the season, said a closing prayer, and went to bed. We were too tired to have visions of sugarplums dance in our heads.

On Christmas morning we kept our morning study schedule and opened the two or three packages that had caught up with us following our transfer. Then we went out to knock on doors. We knocked in the morning, we knocked at midday, we knocked in the afternoon, and we knocked at night. We didn’t get in any of them.

For such an uneventful Christmas—clearly the least festive of any I ever had before or since—it says something that those special days in December of 1960 remain in my heart

(after more than 50 years!) as one of the sweetest Christmases I have ever had. I think that is because for the first time in my life, I found myself understanding Christmas rather than just enjoying it. I think for the first time in any truly significant way, I was getting the message of Christ's birth and life—His message and His mission and His sacrifice for others.

I should have made that connection at an earlier age, but I hadn't—at least not strongly enough. But that Christmas in England—as a cold, wet, somewhat overwhelmed 19-year-old—I “got it.” I can truly say that because of my mission, Christmas, like so many other aspects of the gospel, has meant more to me every year since that experience.

On this Christmas I send my love to every missionary, every man or woman in the military, every student, and every employee and traveler who won't “be home for Christmas,”¹ as the carol says. Keep your faith. Look for the good in your situation. Do something kind for someone. Seek Christ devoid of wrapping and tinsel. You will find that despite external circumstances, Christmas—like the kingdom of God—is “within you” (Luke 17:21). ■

From “A Mission Christmas,” Church News, Dec. 17, 2011, 10.

NOTE

1. James “Kim” Gannon, “I'll Be Home for Christmas” (1943).



By Mary N. Cook

First Counselor in
the Young Women
General Presidency



Christmas Ornaments, Christlike Friends

Preparing to decorate our Christmas tree, I unpacked a box filled with Christmas decorations that I hadn't seen or used in several years. As I pawed through the Christmas lights and linens, I discovered a dress box filled with Christmas ornaments I had collected when I was single and teaching school. I discovered a plain, cross-stitched ornament that simply said "Christmas Open House—1984." My mind raced back to that year. I was unmarried and had apprehensively moved from a young single adult ward to a family ward.

I love the Christmas season, but some had been very lonely for me. Being in my 30s, single, and not having children, I sometimes felt left out. It was easy for me to feel sorry for myself, falling back into what I called the "poor little old me syndrome." That particular year, 1984, I remember making a conscious decision to conquer the syndrome, to look beyond myself and see what I could do to make Christmas joyful for others.

I was relatively new to the ward

and thought that opening my modest apartment to members of the Relief Society would help me celebrate the holidays and become better acquainted with the sisters.

As I reminisced about that open house, I remembered the small Christmas tree decorated with my box of ornaments, the smell of the shortbread cookies my single friends helped me bake, and the sweet taste of Mom's "white Christmas punch" I served to the guests.

As I studied the variety of ornaments, warm feelings of love and gratitude filled my heart as I thought of the many Christlike friends, young and old, who loved and mentored me through challenging times.

I picked up the starched, lacy snowflake that an older woman had crocheted for me and was reminded of her caring ways. I thought of the older sisters of the many wards in which I had lived who had passed on their knowledge to me. I learned to crochet, knit, sew, and tat from these sweet sisters who were willing to give

their time and especially patience so that I could enjoy what they enjoyed.

I held the tiny brass horn and thought of the invitation of the musically gifted choir director who invited me to join in early morning practices for a special musical program as a teenager. Her confidence instilled in me love of classical music and the confidence to participate in choirs the rest of my life.

With a smile I picked up the Mickey Mouse ornament and was grateful for the couple who shared their toddlers with me. Their children became my children. I held them in church, read to them, played with them, and loved them, helping to fill a painful and empty void.

The Savior taught us in Matthew 10:39, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

That conscious decision in 1984 to "lose my life" by looking outward was indeed a turning point in "finding" myself. As I pondered the past, I realized that many, in turn, had followed our Savior's words and lost their life for me. *Christmas* ornaments had become a sweet reminder of *Christlike* friends. ■



The Christmas Handkerchief

By **Scott M. Mooy**

Church Magazines

Every year when I was young, I helped my mother wrap the family Christmas presents. I had 5 married siblings and 13 nieces and nephews, so this was no simple task. But even in the colorful mess, I noticed that we seemed to always wrap a handkerchief for my sister. Even if my mother was giving her a nightgown or a blouse or some kitchen gadget, there was that handkerchief for Ann again. I understood that handkerchiefs were practical and inexpensive, but I began to wonder what my sister would think about receiving this gift so often.

One December, I finally commented: “Another handkerchief for Ann? Mom, it seems you give her one almost every year. Have you considered maybe she has enough by now? How many does she need? And another gift makes her family parcel more expensive to mail. I don’t think you need to do this.”

ILLUSTRATION BY SAM LAWICOR

My mother put her scissors aside. “Let me tell you a story. Then maybe you’ll understand. This happened before you were born.

“You know how I came to this country.” (I did. My mother’s family was surprised when she married a widower with four children but shocked it meant she was leaving Holland for the United States.) “But some things you don’t know. When we came here, we had nothing. Life was hard. Your father was working two jobs but with little pay. I took in washing and ironing. Still we didn’t have enough money.

“Ann was 17 then and understood how much money we owed. She decided she could help. She went to work. She found a job in the city at a candy store. She had to take the bus there and stand at the counter all day. She gave us almost all her salary, keeping just enough for bus fare and to buy some lunch, since she couldn’t keep any food behind the counter.

“Ann would tell me she was glad she had a job and that her salary could help us. But she didn’t tell me she worried for her little brothers. Christmas was coming. Their new American friends were talking about the toys they had asked Santa to bring them. What if Santa didn’t bring any presents to our house?

“A few days before Christmas, Ann gave me some money. But it wasn’t

her payday. I asked her where she got this money. She told me she had saved it by not eating lunch. It wasn’t a lot of money, but I knew it meant she hadn’t had lunch for weeks. She told me to take the money and buy Christmas presents for her brothers. She trusted me, the new stepmother, to buy what was right.

“I had to buy little things. But I decided I could make a Christmas for the whole family. Tangerines to eat, teddy bear soaps, crayons, little toy cars, socks for your father. And I bought Ann a handkerchief. It was plain, but I stayed up late at night to embroider it and make it pretty. I was so happy my new daughter was giving us Christmas. I wanted her to have something special for Christmas too.

“Christmas came. We were surprised when our church friends brought us a Christmas tree and a box full of presents. They apologized that it was simple things wrapped up in newspaper, but it was wonderful! There were so many useful things and good food to eat. And then another surprise, Ann’s and my secret surprise: Santa had come to our house! Your brothers were so excited! Soon they were on the floor of that little living room, running cars over and under the newspaper. Newspaper everywhere! And Ann opened her present and found the handkerchief. She cried. I cried a little too.

“We made our Christmas meal. Oh, we had treats we hadn’t had in such a long time! Then we cleaned up. Ann went to put her handkerchief away. But it was gone. We looked everywhere. And then I thought, oh no, your father had thrown the newspaper in the fire. Had the handkerchief gone in the fire? It must have because we never found it. But Ann didn’t complain. What had happened had happened. She said she was happy because her brothers were happy.

“The next Christmas, I gave Ann a handkerchief. I made sure that one didn’t get lost. When she got married and moved away, I mailed her a Christmas handkerchief. I don’t give her a handkerchief now because I think she needs it. I give her a handkerchief to tell her I will never forget what she did for our first Christmas together.”

Several years after my mother told me this story, we were able to celebrate Christmas with our entire family. In the commotion, I watched my sister unwrap a handkerchief. I saw her eyes glisten as she reached over and gave our mother’s hand a squeeze. I understood. It wasn’t just a handkerchief. It was their special remembrance of love, gifts, and sacrifice. And, in its simple way, it reminded me of why we celebrate Christmas—because of a very great and loving gift that required sacrifice. ■

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

It’s difficult to talk about something you don’t understand, and there’s a lot we can’t understand about the temple until we are able to go there ourselves. Outside the temple we are careful in how we discuss temple ordinances because they are sacred. However, we can still talk about the blessings and purposes of the temple. We can tell our friends that in the temple, members learn eternal truths, receive sacred ordinances for themselves, and perform these ordinances on behalf of their ancestors and others who are deceased.

The more you know about temples, the better prepared you will be to answer your friends’ questions. To learn more, talk to your parents or Church leaders. You and your friends can also read the special issue of the *Liahona* on temples (October 2010) and find answers at Mormon.org under “Temples” in Frequently Asked Questions.

You can also share how you feel about the temple. If you have been in the temple to do baptisms or have been on the temple grounds, you can tell your friends about the feeling of peace you had while there.

If your friends ask why the temple isn’t open to everyone, you can explain that because of the sacred work that goes on in the temple, only those who are spiritually prepared and have a valid temple recommend can enter. Before new temples are dedicated, an open house allows people in the community to tour the temple and learn more about it. After the temple is dedicated, anyone can tour the grounds. If possible, invite your friend to a temple open house or to visit the temple grounds with you.

Be Temple Worthy



I would tell my friends what the temple represents for me: happiness, strength, sacrifice, and eternal families. I would explain how to stay worthy. If they can see that I live my life with the temple as one of my most important goals, they will feel the power of the

temple. Everyone can see the outward beauty of the temple, but by living my life the right way, I can show my friends the hope and happiness that going inside the temple brings.

Emma R., age 18, Utah, USA

Invite Your Friends to Learn More



Tell your friends all you know—as long as it is appropriate. Tell them we don’t discuss some things about the temple because they are sacred. If they ask something you don’t know, tell them honestly that you don’t know. And if they want to know more, invite them to church and tell them that God blesses those who keep His commandments with more spiritual knowledge. We believe in learning spiritual things line upon line, precept upon precept.

Carmela B., age 18, Philippines

Pray for the Spirit to Prompt Your Answer



To answer my friends’ questions, I first pray to Heavenly Father about what to say. It may take a lot of patience, but it is worth waiting for the Spirit to prompt you in what to say. Second, go to church and to the temple baptistry to receive more spiritual knowledge. When my friend asked questions about the temple, I told her that baptisms are done for our deceased

ancestors who didn't have a chance to be part of the gospel while they were alive. Then in heaven they have the choice to accept or reject the ordinance.

Lydia P., age 13, Florida, USA

Invite Your Friends to Meet the Missionaries

When friends ask me about the temple, I say that it is the house of the Lord, where we can do special ordinances that keep us close to our Heavenly Father and make it possible for us to return to Him. I also ask my friends if they would like to meet with the missionaries to learn more. If they say no, I write down their questions and ask the missionaries myself. Then I let my friends know what I found out. This way I get to learn more about the temple too.

Kimmie H., age 13, Montana, USA

Show Pictures of Temples



I love to read books that show temples from around the world. When I had a friend ask me about temples, I

knew that my explanation wasn't enough to help her understand. So I brought my books on temples and showed her what the temple is, the purpose of the temple, and how thankful we are to visit the temple. I decided to invite her to church on Sunday, where the missionaries and

Sunday School teachers could help her learn more.

Jessica A., age 18, Indonesia

Talk to Your Parents



Search for answers. Read the scriptures and ask Sunday School teachers. Questions can always be answered;

all you have to do is look. Pray about it! When I have questions about the temple, I ask my parents. They are easy to talk to and are willing to help.

Bryson B., age 18, Utah, USA

Go to the Temple

If we try to go to the temple as often as we can, we are able to connect with our Heavenly Father better. That means that we can pray to Him about our friends' questions. If we don't know that much about the

temple, it means we need to study more. Each time before going to the temple, study and pray about what you should think about while at the temple. We can then answer questions like "What is the feeling you have at the temple?"

Sara T., age 14, Idaho, USA



HOLINESS TO THE LORD

"The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord.

It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us."

President Howard W. Hunter (1907-95), "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 5.

NEXT QUESTION

"How can I resist temptation?"

Submit your answer by January 15, 2013, at liahona.lds.org, by e-mail to liahona@ldschurch.org, or by mail to:

Liahona, Questions & Answers 1/13
50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

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

HOW TO GIVE GIFTS TO CHRIST



By President
Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in the
First Presidency

HOW YOUTH HAVE APPLIED THIS

"I invite a friend to church, a Mutual activity, or even dinner. A little care can go a long way in helping someone feel they're loved."
Armand F.

"I try to write to missionaries from my ward."
Jenny R.

"Sometimes it's just being a friend to those who need help."
Ryan B.

The spirit of Christmas puts in our hearts a desire to **give joy** to other people. The celebration of Christmas helps us **keep our promise to always remember the Lord** and His gifts to us. And that remembrance creates a desire in us to **give gifts to Him**.

He has told us what we could give Him to bring Him joy. First, we can, out of faith in Him, **give a broken heart and a contrite spirit**. We can repent and make sacred covenants with Him.

Second, you can give Him the gift of **doing for others what He would do for them**.

There is a long list of possibilities in the book of Matthew. There we read words from our Redeemer, which we all hope to hear and to speak when we see Him after this life:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and **fed thee?** or thirsty, and gave thee drink?"

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and **clothed thee?**

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and **came unto thee?**

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:37–40).

In those words the Lord makes clear what gifts we might give Him out of our gratitude. Each **act of kindness** to anyone becomes a kindness to Him because He loves all of Heavenly Father's children. And because that brings joy to Him, it also brings joy to His Father, to whom we owe thanks beyond measure.

Many of you will in the Christmas season find ways to give food to people who are hungry. As you do, you bring joy to the Lord. Yet He taught us that there is a way to give **an even more priceless and lasting gift**. He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). With all the kindnesses we give for Him, the greatest we can offer is to **point those we love and serve toward Him**, the only source of eternal life. ■

From the 2010 First Presidency Christmas Devotional address "The Gift of a Savior."

Share Your Experiences

Share *your* experiences in applying these principles and read the experiences of other youth by going to lds.org/go/gift12.



OH, COME, LET US ADORE HIM

“We rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World,
who has invited us all to come unto Him and into the light.”

Elder Patrick Kearon of the Seventy, “Come, Let Us Adore Him,”
Liahona, Dec. 2011, 42; *Ensign*, Dec. 2011, 30.



What about Dating?



By Larry M. Gibson

First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Spending face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

As I have had the privilege to talk with young men and young women throughout the Church, I have often heard that while a great many of you are interested in building better friendships with those of the opposite sex, you often struggle with knowing exactly how to make that happen.

It would seem that with all of the social media, we should easily be better connected than ever before. In ways, however, technology may be causing us to have relationships that are less meaningful. Merely tweeting, texting, e-mailing, and friending cannot genuinely create a well-rounded relationship. Spending real face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

It is time for you, our wonderful youth, to bring back the old definition for when young men and young women get together for a social experience. You may have heard the term; this experience was once referred to as a date.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Many of you have questions regarding dating and the counsel given in the new *For the*

Strength of Youth pamphlet. Here are some of the questions I have been asked, along with answers from this wonderful guidebook.

I'm not sure if I'm ready to date. Are there any special reasons why I should?

Dating is relevant for a number of reasons. *For the Strength of Youth* explains that a date “allows a young man and a young woman to get to know each other better. In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and eventually find an eternal companion.”¹

We hear that we should not date before we are 16 and never date anyone seriously while we are young. Why?

For the Strength of Youth says: “You should not date until you are at least 16 years old. When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person. Developing serious relationships too early in life can limit the number of other people you meet and can perhaps lead to immorality.”²

A young man wants me to go on a date, but I don't really feel like he has my same standards. What should I do?

For the Strength of Youth teaches: “Choose to date only those who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. . . . Always be kind and respectful when you ask for a date or when you accept or decline one.”³

Sometimes I can't think of any ideas for dates besides watching a movie. What should I do?



For the Strength of Youth gives these helpful principles: “Plan dating activities that are safe, positive, and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Go only to places where you can maintain your standards and remain close to the Spirit.”⁴

Those four simple criteria—dates that are safe, positive, inexpensive, and where the Spirit remains close—leave room for many great dates.

As I have reflected with my wife on our early dating experiences, those that stand out most were the times when there was little or no cost, when we were with at least one other couple, and we were able to have meaningful conversations and interaction.

Protecting Each Other’s Virtue

Let me conclude with another important quote from *For the Strength of Youth* and then one last point. First, “Remember that a young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to protect each other’s honor and virtue.”⁵ As you go on dates, make sure to do nothing of which you would ever be ashamed. As President Thomas S. Monson

taught, “In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you.”⁶

The Difference between Dating and Courting

Finally, although some have defined *dating* as “courting,” dating in the Church among youth does not imply that they are “going steady” or can date no others. By Church standards, dating is intended to be a chance for social relationships that can establish many friendships.

As you enter your adult years—after missions for young men—then the Lord says, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). This is the time that dating becomes courting as stressed in *For the Strength of Youth*: “Make dating and marriage a high priority. Seek a companion who is worthy to go to the temple to be sealed to you for time and all eternity. Marrying in the temple and creating an eternal family are essential in God’s plan of happiness.”⁷ ■

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an experience with applying counsel from these guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*?

- Service
- Sexual purity
- Tithes and offerings
- Work and self-reliance

Please e-mail your experience to liahona@ldschurch.org with “For the Strength of Youth” in the subject line. Include your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and parent’s permission (by e-mail) to print your response.

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 4.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4–5.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
5. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Standards of Strength,” *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 5.
7. *For the Strength of Youth*, 5.



By Hikari Loftus
Church Magazines

No two families are alike, yet God ordained the family as “the most important social unit in time and eternity.”¹ No matter where you live or what your family is like, the gospel can help you develop stronger relationships and spiritual strength as it brings greater happiness into your family. Read what these teens from around the world have to say about why families are important to them.

Because of **FAMILIES**



Have you ever thought about all the ways you are blessed by being part of a family?



Family Is Eternal

Erin, from North Carolina, USA, and her family (left) have always had one goal in mind: to become an eternal family. However, Erin’s father was not a member of the Church.

“Of course my mom and siblings wanted my dad to share in the blessings of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ made us happy, and we wanted Dad to share in that happiness. We also all desperately wanted to be sealed together as a family,” Erin says.

Determined to become a forever family, Erin and her siblings and mother did all they could to keep the commandments and develop strong faith, and they prayed together for their father’s heart to be touched by the gospel.

Though it took several years, Erin’s father was finally baptized and confirmed. Ten days after his baptism, he was able to baptize Erin’s younger brother and sister. Soon their family will reach their goal of being sealed in the temple.



Family Brings Strength and Support

Ever since the passing of their father, Elizabeth and her brother, Enaw, of Cameroon, Africa, have relied on their mother. “She has been a source of aid to us ever since our father died. God has blessed us and protected us in everything we do,” Elizabeth says.

Elizabeth’s family (above) rallied together after the passing of her father. Then, after they joined the Church in 2010, Elizabeth and Enaw learned the eternal significance of the family.

“One of the important things we have learned [from the gospel] is about the importance of the family,” Elizabeth says. “The family has been of great importance to me because through my family, I have been able to become what I am today.”

Family Brings Growth and Peace

Adina, from Switzerland, learned how family members can help one another develop talents as they enjoy wholesome recreational activities together.² Her family plans a monthly family outing where they learn more about each other’s hobbies. “We have the opportunity to give our siblings a deeper insight into our life and our passions,” she says. One time, her father taught the family about dog training (below). “It was nice to see his enthusiasm and how happy he was to share an important part of his life and hobby with us,” Adina remembers.

Through these family activities, Adina has developed many skills. She has also noticed more peace in her life: “The family is a place where I can rest from the stress of everyday life and breathe peacefully, as well as gain strength and know that I don’t have to stand alone in this life. I am thankful for this because the world today is so fast and loud. I am glad I have a place to regenerate and rest.”

Even though their reasons may be different, these teens have found that they can rely on their families for support, peace, and love. ■

NOTES

1. *Family Guidebook* (booklet, 2001), 1.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



DEVOTED FAMILIES

“The most important cause of our lifetime is

our families. If we will devote ourselves to this cause, we will improve every other aspect of our lives and will become, as a people and as a church, an example and a beacon for all peoples of the earth.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “That the Lost May Be Found,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2012, 98.





GIFTS YOU CAN'T WRAP

Service

One of the greatest gifts you can give is service. Your parents will love it.

- Clean the house.
- Offer to babysit.
- Set and clear the table.
- Make dinner for your family.
- Do the dishes or sweep the floor.
- Help a sibling with his or her homework.
- Depending on the climate where you live, shovel the walkway or weed the garden.



By Elyse Alexandria Holmes

At Christmastime we often focus on giving gifts to those we love. But remember that some of the greatest presents are those you can't wrap. Here are some unforgettable gifts you can give your parents.





Family Time

Even though you have a busy schedule, make time for your family. Your presence will help support your parents, and they will thank you for your efforts.

- Participate in family home evening (without having to be reminded about it).
- Play with your siblings.
- Be on time for family dinners.
- Talk with and listen to family members.
- Participate in family prayer and scripture reading.
- Spend time with your family instead of just your friends, or invite your friends to family activities (with your parents' permission).



Commitment

Let your parents know you are committing to something important. The best way to show your commitment is to start now and keep going.

- Prepare to serve a mission (for young men). Start now by building up a mission fund if possible.
- Study the scriptures daily.
- Save some of your earnings.
- Go to school without complaint and do your homework on time.
- Attend seminary. If you attend seminary in the morning, wake up on your own.
- Prepare for temple marriage. Make a list of important qualities to look for in a future spouse and then develop those qualities in yourself.

Attitude

Your parents will appreciate a good attitude toward them and your other family members.

- Have a positive attitude.
- Don't point out flaws in your parents or siblings.
- Make a habit of saying thank you, even for the small things.
- Write a thank-you letter to your parents for all they've done for you.
- Resolve conflicts with your parents or siblings without anger or argument.
- Count your blessings—literally. Create a list of things you've been able to do because of your parents' support, and share the list with them. ■

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

In these verses the Apostle Paul declares that Christ's Resurrection means that all shall rise again.



those yet to be born and yet to die had just been rescued.

“As the result of Christ’s victory over the grave, we shall all be resurrected. This is the redemption of the soul.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “He Is Not Here but Is Risen,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2011, 4.

20 But now is ^aChrist ^brisen from the dead, *and* become the ^cfirstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man *came* ^adeath, by man *came* also the ^bresurrection of the dead.

22 For as in ^aAdam all ^bdie, even so in ^cChrist shall all be made ^dalive.

In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive



“I wonder if we fully appreciate the enormous significance of our belief in a literal,

universal resurrection. The assurance of immortality is fundamental to our faith. . . .

“In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milepost that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. . . . We also know, from modern revelation, that without the reuniting of our spirits and our bodies in the resurrection we could not receive a ‘fulness of joy’ (D&C 93:33–34).”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Resurrection,” *Liahona*, July 2000, 17–18; *Ensign*, May 2000, 15.

Now Is Christ Risen from the Dead



“No words in Christendom mean more to me than those spoken by

the angel to the weeping Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they approached the tomb to care for the body of their Lord: ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen’ (Luke 24:5–6).

“With this pronouncement, those who have lived and died, those who now live and one day will die, and

Firstfruits of Them That Slept

Firstfruits—the fruits, vegetables, and grains that ripen earliest in the harvest.

Under the law of Moses, the firstfruits were offered as a holy sacrifice to the Lord to show gratitude and devotion. Since the firstfruits are a sign that the harvest has begun and many more crops are yet to come, the Apostle Paul is saying that Jesus Christ was the first from among the dead (“them that slept”) to rise again and that many more will yet be resurrected.

As in Adam All Die

Because Adam and Eve fell, all humankind must endure physical death (see 2 Nephi 9:6; Moses 6:48).

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



FEEDING THOSE WHO HUNGER

Through small means we were able to meet great needs—both physical and spiritual.

By Dallin C. Wilcox

In December 2004, I was serving as a full-time missionary in Lins, São Paulo, Brazil. The local ward and branch decided to participate in Brazil’s annual “Natal sem Fome” (Christmas without Hunger) program. Teaming up with several other entities—including soldiers from the Brazilian army, mail carriers, and members of other faiths—we passed through several neighborhoods collecting food that would later be given to the needy of the city. We also used this as a great opportunity to give out pass-along cards, or “friendship cards” as we called them. About 2,000 cards were given out.

Many of the members commented on the great feelings they had felt as they served and shared the spirit of Christmas under the hot Brazilian sun. It was an impressive sight to see the soldiers handing out pass-along cards from a church they didn’t even belong to.

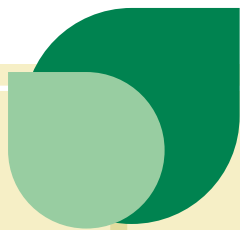
One week later we received 127 requests for the *Joy*

to the World Christmas DVD featuring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The next week we received 22 more. My companion and I started teaching these people and were able to enter into many homes as a result of this project.

I will never forget the joy and love of that special project, when we helped spread the gospel and bring relief to many families’ hunger. Both spiritual and physical hunger were lessened.

I know that through small and simple things (such as a pass-along card) many great and wonderful things (such as the salvation of the souls of men) come to pass. This experience was evidence that many opportunities surround us during Christmas and other seasons to bring forth this marvelous work and a wonder. ■

The Joy to the World DVD and pass-along cards for the DVD are available at store.lds.org.



1.8 M
(6')

1.4 M
(4'8")



GROWING TOGETHER AS DEACONS

Although they look very different, these two young men have a lot in common.

T Tyler W. is six feet (1.8 m) tall, has red hair, and wears size 13 shoes. Gerrit V. is four feet eight inches (1.4 m) tall, has brown hair, and wears size 2 ½ shoes. But although they are physically different, their families call them “twins” because they are best friends and have a lot in common.

Gerrit and Tyler are both 12 years old and in the same deacons quorum. They both enjoy playing sports, spending time with their families, and learning new things. They also both have testimonies of the gospel and strive to honor the Aaronic Priesthood. “We need to fulfill our priesthood duties so that we can learn,” Gerrit says.

Both of them enjoy fulfilling those duties by passing the sacrament and collecting fast offerings.

They also help fellowship other deacons in their ward by inviting them to come unto Christ. “If someone’s not there, one of us writes a note to him with all the things we learned at church. Then we give it to him, saying, ‘Please come to church,’” Gerrit says.

Gerrit and Tyler also participate in Duty to God. They have each made plans to read the scriptures more. “It can really help your belief and strengthen your testimony,” Tyler says.

These young men are deacons just like you or the ones you know. There are things that make them different and things that make them similar. But most important, they are both children of God and want to serve Him, united in their priesthood quorum. ■

HOW TO BUILD QUORUM UNITY

When you are ordained a deacon like Tyler and Gerrit, you become part of a priesthood quorum. Here are some ideas for how you can help build unity in your quorum:

- Include everyone.
- Do service together.
- Give encouragement.
- Listen to one another.
- Follow instructions from leaders.
- Help each other live gospel standards.



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are called as special witnesses of Jesus Christ.

How can I be a witness of Jesus Christ?

We are witnesses of Jesus Christ when we live so as to reflect His teachings. The way we act, speak, look, and even think should reflect Him and His ways.

We are witnesses of Jesus Christ when we talk to others about our feelings about Him.

We are witnesses of Jesus Christ when we live with a happy outlook that shows our faith in Him.

We are witnesses of Jesus Christ when we bear testimony to others and help them learn of and follow Him.

By Rachel Lynn Bauer

Based on a true story

*“All God’s children,
come to adore, bringing
gifts of love evermore”
 (“The Shepherd’s Carol,”
Children’s Songbook, 40).*

Time for family home evening!” Dad called.

I hurried to the living room. We always did fun things on the first family home evening of December.

My younger sister, Michelle, ran ahead of me and jumped into the soft blue armchair.

“No fair!” I exclaimed. “You got to sit there last week. It’s my turn.”

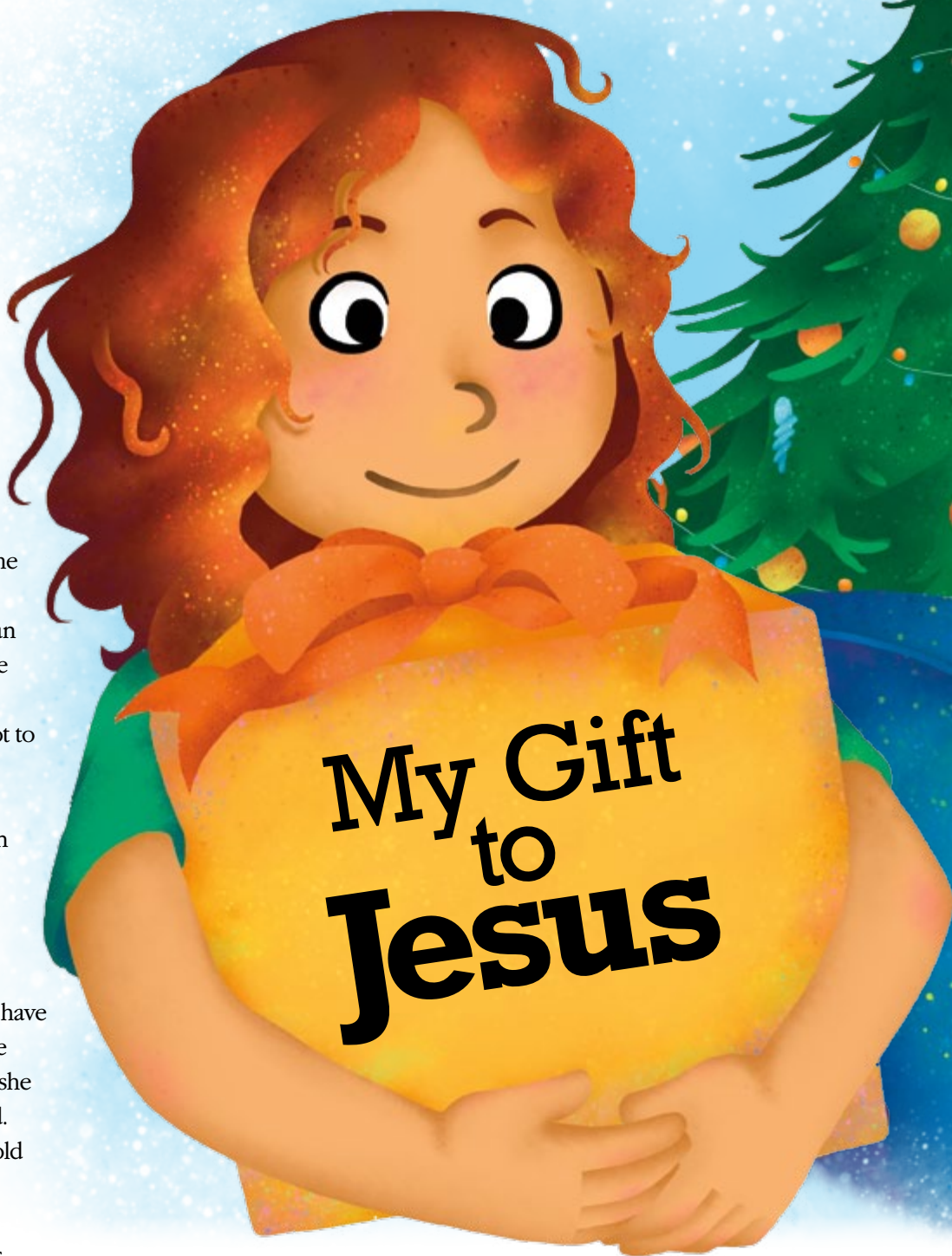
“I got here first, so I get to sit here,” she argued. “You can sit on the couch.”

“I don’t want to sit on the couch,” I snapped.

I stormed over to the rocking chair and turned it so I wouldn’t have to look at Michelle. She made me so mad sometimes! She thought she could have whatever she wanted. Whenever I complained, Mom told me I needed to be unselfish.

After our family sang a hymn and prayed, Dad said, “Christmas is an exciting time, and we need to remember the true meaning of the holiday. Tonight we are going to start with our gifts to Jesus.”

Our gifts to Jesus. I had forgotten about that!



“We celebrate Christmas because Jesus was born,” Dad continued. “He made it possible for us to receive the greatest gift—eternal life with Heavenly Father.”

“And what has He asked us to do

in return?” Mom asked.

“To follow Him and keep His commandments,” my brother answered.

Mom gave us each a card and pen. We were supposed to write



others, even if they made us angry. I knew Jesus wanted me to love my sister. I wrote, “I will be nice to Michelle.”

We put our cards in a box wrapped in gold paper. We put the box under the Christmas tree. Every time we looked at the box, we were supposed to remember the Savior’s gift to us and our gift to Him.

A few days later, I saw that Michelle had taken my favorite shirt without asking. I wanted to yell at her. Then I looked at the gold box and remembered how much I loved Jesus. I could show Him love by being kind to my sister. I said, “You look really pretty today, Michelle.”

She smiled. “I’m sorry I didn’t ask to wear your shirt. You weren’t there when I got dressed, and I

wanted to look extra nice for my class Christmas party today.”

I felt warm inside. I was glad I had chosen to be nice to Michelle instead of getting angry at her.

For the rest of the month, I tried to remember that good feeling and my goal to be like Jesus. I got better at being patient and loving.

On Christmas Eve, Dad read the nativity story, and the rest of us acted it out. I decided to be the angel instead of arguing with Michelle over who got to play the part of Mary.

Next we opened the gold box and read our gifts to Jesus out loud. When I read mine, Mom said, “I’ve noticed that you’ve been extra nice to Michelle. I’m so proud of you!”

I was proud too. I hadn’t unwrapped any presents yet, but I had already received something special: a feeling from the Holy Ghost telling me I had done the right thing. ■

how we would show Jesus we love Him. That was our gift—to choose something we would do to be more like Jesus.

I knew immediately what my gift should be. Jesus taught us to love



“This Christmas season, through all of our various Christmas traditions, I hope that we are focused first upon the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Christ the Savior Is Born,” *New Era*, Dec. 2006, 2.

Our Page



THEY LOVE TO SEE THE TEMPLE

The Primary children of the La Florida Third Ward in Santiago, Chile, visited the temple grounds with their Primary leaders and members of the bishopric. As they toured the beautiful gardens, they talked about the purpose of temples, and they sang “I Love to See the Temple” (*Children’s Songbook*, 95). They also saw a video about the life of Jesus Christ.



COME TO THE TEMPLE

I send greetings from the temple. It was a marvelous day when I and the other children from the Libertad Ecuador Stake were able to visit the grounds of the Guayaquil Ecuador Temple. We invite all the children of the world to see the temple if they can—it is a very beautiful place.

Aida V., age 10, Ecuador



It Is Christmas—Christ Is Born,
by Oluchukwu O., age 9, Nigeria



Aaronic Priesthood Restoration,
by Felipe L., age 12, Brazil

I WILL TEACH ABOUT THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

In Primary we learned “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer” (*Hymns*, no. 26), and now it is my favorite hymn. When I am a missionary, I will share the story of the Sacred Grove with the people I teach. I love Jesus Christ and the Prophet Joseph Smith. I know the Church is true.

Axcel C., age 5, Peru



The Sacred Grove, by Axcel C.



SHE ENJOYS FAMILY HOME EVENING

Helena C., age 9, from Costa Rica, felt immediately like she was a member of the Church after she was baptized by her father. She enjoys family home evening lessons about Jesus Christ. She also likes to go to school and play with her friends.



A CHIGIRI-E OF PRESIDENT MONSON

Over the course of six months, the Primary children of the Fuji Ward in Shizuoka, Japan, created a *chigiri-e*, a collage from hand-torn paper, illustrating President Thomas S. Monson. It took a lot of time and work, but everyone worked together while thinking and learning about President Monson.

BRIGHT IDEA

“Come unto Christ.”

—Moroni 10:32

CHILDREN



THE LIGHT of the World



By Kimberly Reid

Based on a true story

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Erin stood on Temple Square in Salt Lake City looking at life-sized statues of the nativity scene and waiting for the music and story to begin. Christmas lights twinkled all around her. But it didn’t feel like Christmastime.

“Are you all right?” Mom asked her. Erin nodded, but she wasn’t so sure.

Only a few days ago, a boy from Erin’s class at school had died in a car accident. She had seen a lot

of people crying at the funeral, and she had cried a lot herself. She hadn’t known the boy that well, but Erin knew his family loved him as much as her family loved her. She felt scared to know that something like that could happen to someone her age.

Now she didn’t feel excited for Christmas. She felt worried all the time—scared to get in a car, scared to be apart from her parents, scared to leave her house in case something bad happened to her while she was away. All the Christmas lights on Temple Square couldn’t erase the worried feeling inside her. How could she be

happy in a world where she wasn’t always safe?

“It’s about to start,” Dad said. He pointed to the nativity scene.

The loudspeakers crackled to life, and a voice began speaking. Music played, and spotlights shone down on statues of shepherds, Wise Men, Mary, and Joseph. Erin listened to the familiar story. The baby Jesus was born and laid in a manger. Angels sang. Shepherds worshipped. Wise Men rejoiced.

Erin looked at the faces of her parents and the crowd gathered around the nativity scene. They all seemed happy. But why was



“Jesus Christ is . . . the light of the world because his example and his teachings illuminate the path we should walk to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Light and Life of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 64.

everyone so happy about the baby Jesus if His birth didn’t stop bad things from happening? Erin didn’t like the question circling through her head. All she wanted was to stop feeling afraid.

The story ended, and a recording of the prophet’s voice came over the loudspeaker. He bore his testimony and read a scripture from the Bible: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Erin’s heart beat faster. She said the words again in her mind, trying to remember them. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

The scripture said that *everyone* would die—young people, old people—everyone. Erin knew that, of course, but she hadn’t thought about it much before. She thought she was too young to think about such things. But she wasn’t too young to have a testimony of the truth: because of Jesus Christ, *everyone* would live again. That’s why the shepherds and Wise Men rejoiced. They understood what Jesus had come to earth to do.

Erin looked from the little stable to a window in the visitors’ center behind the nativity scene. Inside the building a light shone on a large statue of Jesus stretching out

His scarred hands. Erin thought about the little baby in the manger and how He grew into someone who had all power. And yet He chose to sacrifice His life for her. He had been born so she could live again. No matter what happened, Erin could feel safe in Jesus’s love.

Peace washed over her. She couldn’t quite explain how, but her worry disappeared. When she looked at the statue of Jesus Christ, shining brighter than twinkling Christmas lights, she barely noticed the dark night sky. She was too busy feeling the warmth of hope flickering inside her. ■

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God

Imagine traveling across the desert. The journey is long, your camel ride is bumpy, and you're not even following a map! Instead, you follow a star. How would you feel? Would you have the faith to keep going?

Two thousand years ago, the Wise Men did exactly that. They saw a brilliant star in the east and journeyed to Bethlehem to honor the Christ child with beautiful gifts. And the Wise Men weren't the only ones watching the star. Across the ocean, on the American continent, the Nephites saw the star and knew that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born.

Today, thinking of that star reminds us of the Savior. It shone in the darkness and showed the Wise Men the way, just as Jesus showed us how to live. The star was also constant, just like the Savior's love for us. The next time you look at the stars, remember that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Light of the World! ■

SONG AND SCRIPTURE

- "The Nativity Song," *Children's Songbook*, 52–53
- Doctrine and Covenants 11:28

CTR ACTIVITY: SYMBOLS OF THE SAVIOR

Jesus Christ compared Himself to many things. By studying these comparisons, we learn more about Him. Read these scriptures as a family and discuss what these symbols tell us about the Savior.



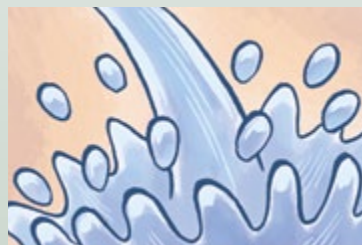
Shepherd (see Psalm 23:1)



Lamb (see John 1:29)



Bread (see John 6:51)



Water (see John 4:14)



Rock (see 2 Nephi 8:1)



JUST YOU

Make Christmas ornaments to remember how the Savior blesses your life. Cut out the stars and mount them on heavy paper. On the back of the ornaments, glue a picture of yourself or your family and write what you want to do to follow Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Cut out the holes at the top and loop string through the holes to finish the ornaments.

A Christmas PRAYER Answered



By Peggy Schonken

Based on a true story

“The Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous, which have been put up unto him” (Mormon 5:21).

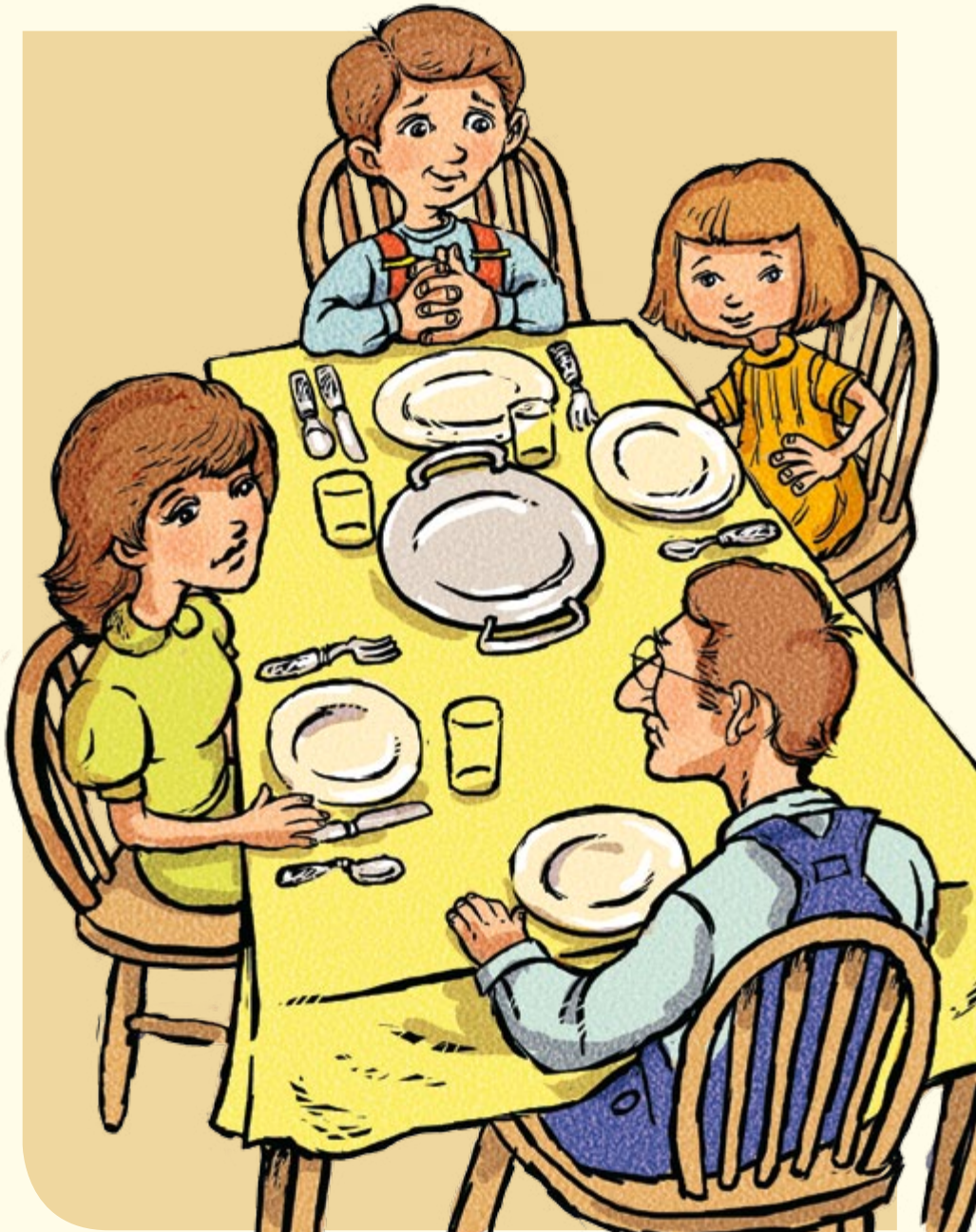
Peggy awoke on Christmas morning. She was excited to receive a fun new toy and eat a Christmas feast. But as she looked around, she knew this year would be different. Even though her father worked hard, money had been scarce for her family.

There were no signs of an upcoming Christmas feast. The vegetable trays were empty, and there was no food in the refrigerator.

Peggy and her brother, Malcolm, walked to the door of their parents’ bedroom and saw them kneeling next to their bed. They quietly listened as Mother and Father prayed that Heavenly Father would help the family have food.

“Come on,” Peggy said to Malcolm. “Let’s go outside.”

Peggy and Malcolm went out and collected some of the wild ferns that grew near the garden. Maybe there



wouldn't be any toys this year, but they could still make their home feel like Christmas.

They felt better after they decorated the house with green ferns, but there was still no sign of food.

"The Lord will provide," Mother said. "Now let's set the table."

Father placed plates on the table while Mother set out forks and spoons.

The children looked at each other with confusion in their eyes. The table was ready, but there was still no food. Breakfast soon passed and lunchtime neared. Peggy could feel a few hunger pangs. She wondered how her family would get food.

The clock ticked to 12:00, then 12:30, then 12:45. Still nothing. Then Peggy heard a knock on the door.

She rushed to open the door and was shocked to see the Kirk family standing there. They were holding ham, bread, chicken, salads, and sweets. Peggy couldn't believe her eyes.

"We were just sitting down to eat our Christmas meal when we



thought of you," Brother Kirk said.

"We hope you can use this food."

Father shook Brother Kirk's hand, and Mother began to set the food on the kitchen table. Peggy was still shocked. She looked with wide eyes at Mother and Father, but they looked like they expected this to happen.

Peggy knew the feeling she had in the morning was right. This Christmas *was* different. This was the Christmas that she learned that Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. And that was the best gift she could have received. ■



"Humble, trusting prayer brings direction and peace."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 8.

Sandwich Buddies

By Heidi Poelman

Based on a true story

1. William hopped into the car next to Jeremy and buckled his seat belt.

Is everybody ready for preschool?

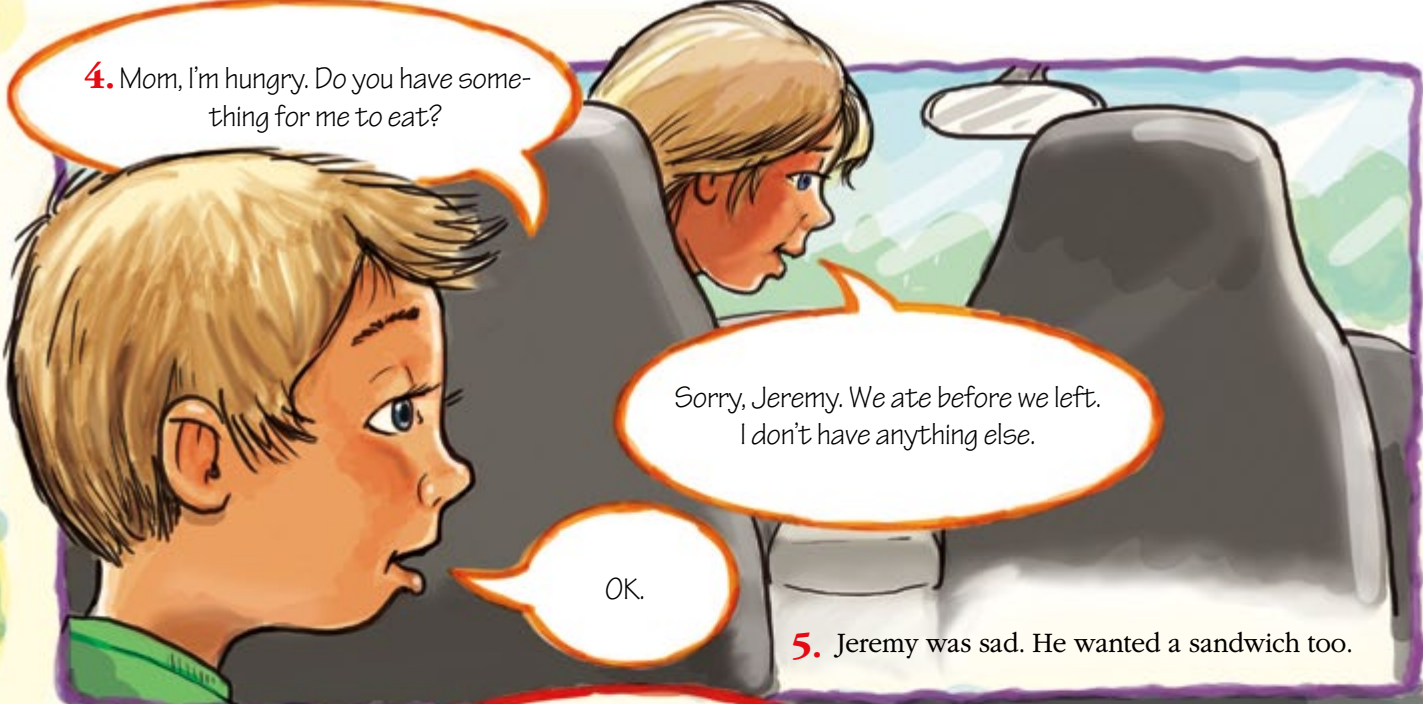
Yes!

Yes!

2. Jeremy's mom started driving down the road, and William opened his lunch box. He pulled out a peanut butter sandwich and took a big bite.

3.

Jeremy looked at William's sandwich. It looked yummy. Jeremy was hungry.




4. Mom, I'm hungry. Do you have something for me to eat?

Sorry, Jeremy. We ate before we left. I don't have anything else.

OK.

5. Jeremy was sad. He wanted a sandwich too.



6. William saw that Jeremy was sad. He pulled off a piece of his sandwich and handed it to Jeremy.

Here you go!

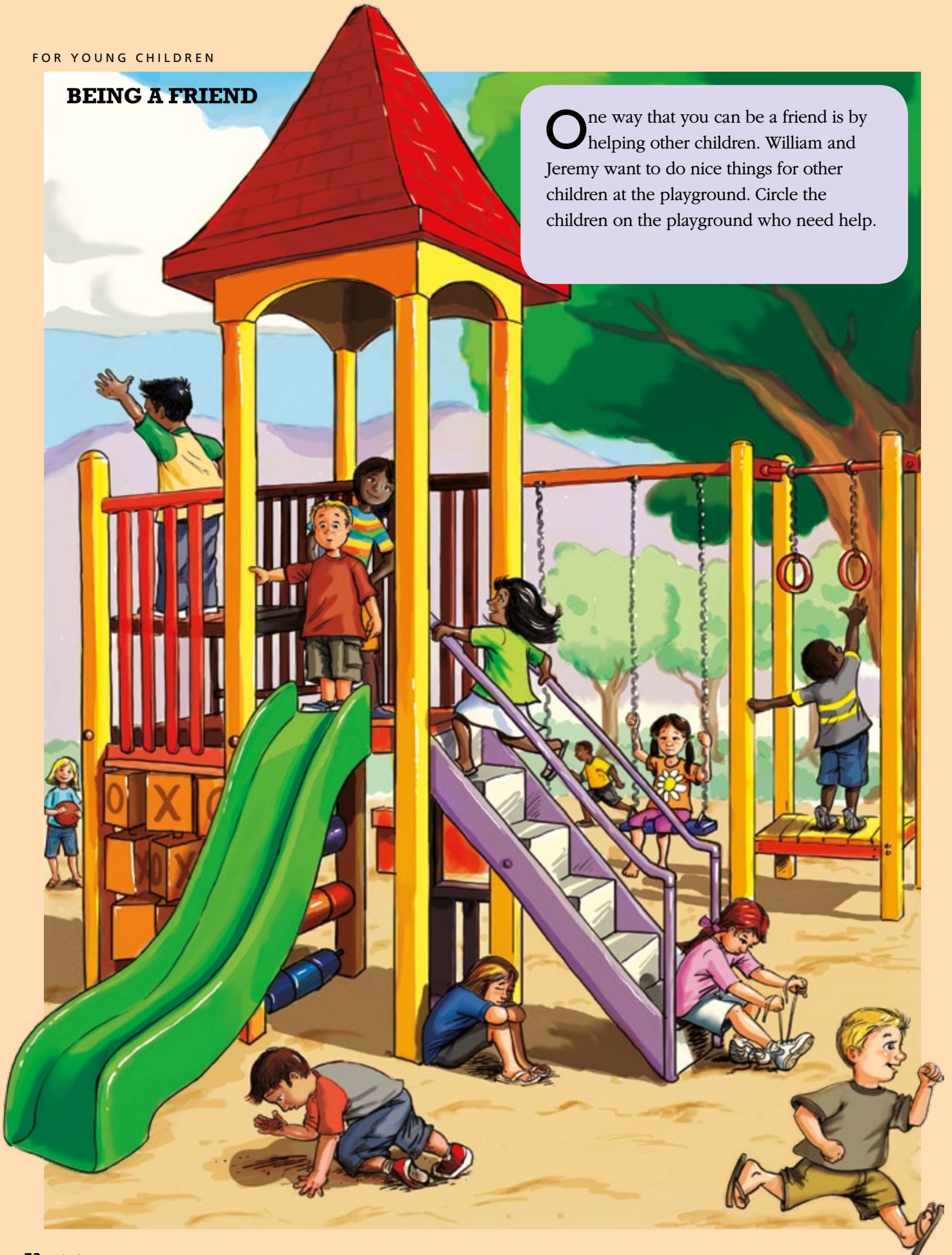


7. Thanks, William. You're nice.

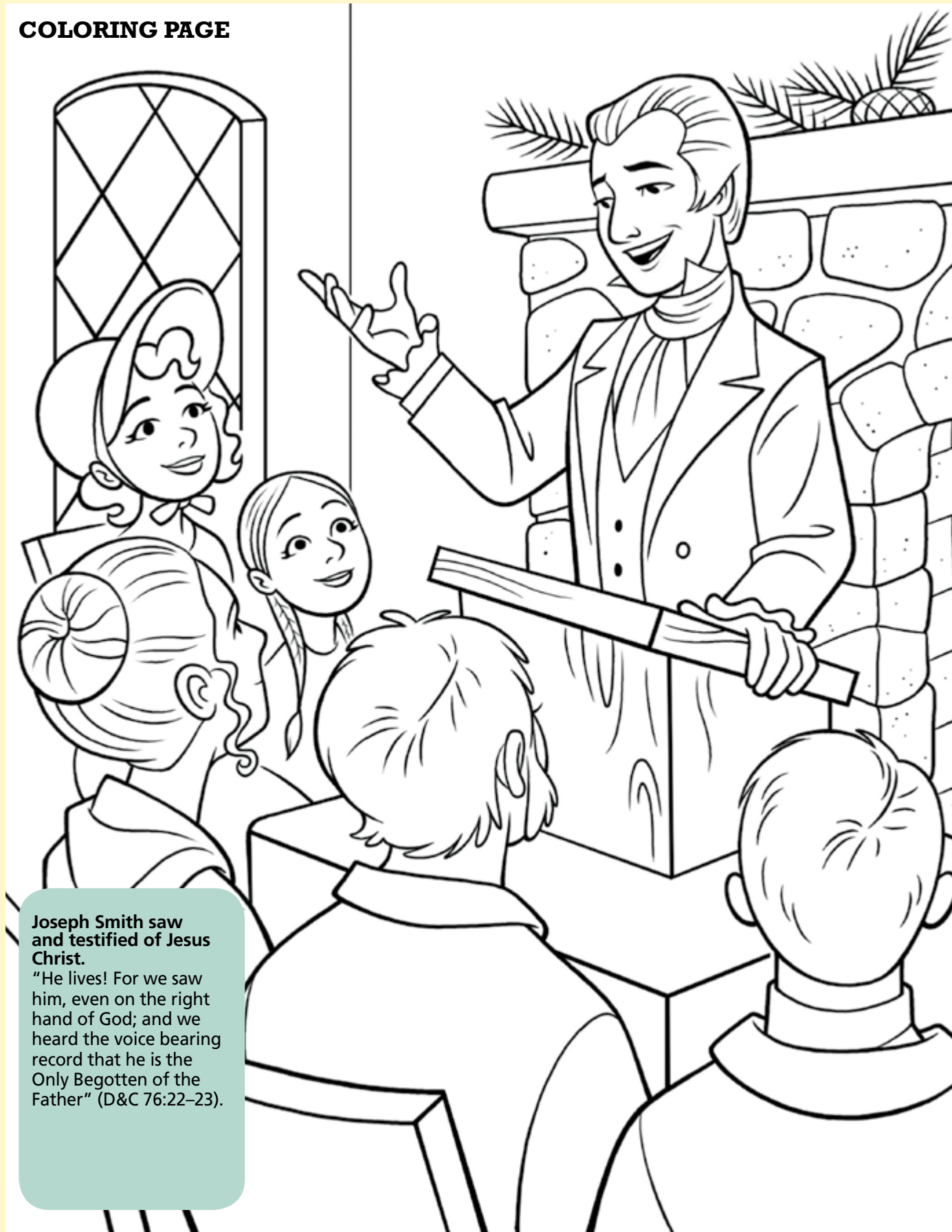
No problem. That's what friends are for!

BEING A FRIEND

One way that you can be a friend is by helping other children. William and Jeremy want to do nice things for other children at the playground. Circle the children on the playground who need help.



COLORING PAGE



Joseph Smith saw and testified of Jesus Christ.

“He lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

News of the Church

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

Members Invited to Share the Gospel through Magazine Subscriptions

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

As the Church's Materials Management supervisor for Thailand, Kanogwan Wongwiraphab regularly handles requests from members for Church equipment and supplies such as sacred clothing and LDS publications.

But she was surprised one day when a woman visited her office to renew her Church magazines subscription. In that part of the world, members normally renew their subscriptions through their unit's magazine representative. The woman, however, explained she did not have a ward representative. She was Buddhist and had learned about the Church magazines when a friend who was a member of the Church gifted a subscription to her.

"She started to tell me wonderful things about the Church magazines and how valuable they are to her children," Sister Wongwiraphab wrote. "When her children came back from school and saw the magazines, they were so excited, and they read and finished them quickly."

The woman praised the magazines for their "great worth" and for teaching her children good morals and

vocabulary. She was so impressed she renewed her own subscription and gifted subscriptions to her coworkers so their children could also benefit.

"Even nonmembers can feel and see the value [of the magazines], and [they] want to share it with others," Sister Wongwiraphab wrote.

Church leaders have consistently encouraged members of the Church to read the Church magazines and share them with others.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has highlighted the far-reaching benefits of

Help is also available by contacting local magazines representatives, e-mailing help@store.lds.org, or calling a country customer service representative. A list of telephone numbers for these representatives by country is available on store.lds.org. Click on **Contact Us** under **Customer Support** at the bottom of the page, then on the **by telephone** link under **Contact Us**.

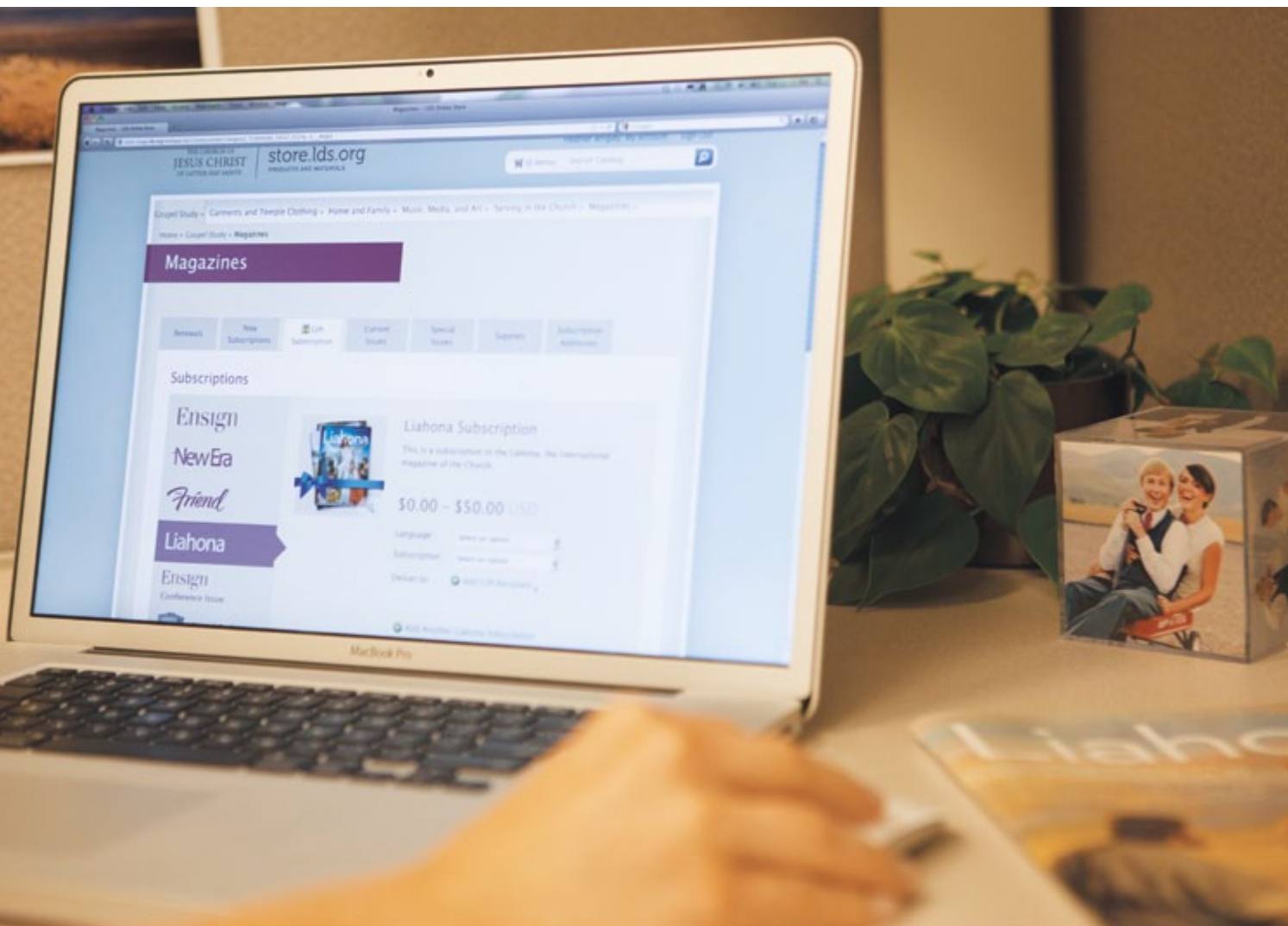
the magazines. "The good spirit in these magazines will help fill your homes with warmth, love, and the strength of the gospel," he said ("The Importance of the Family," *Liahona*, May 2003, 42).

Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy serves as Assistant Executive Director in the Priesthood Department and Editor of the Church magazines, and he sees the value they hold for every individual.

"Church magazines are an important segment of the authoritative voice of the Church through which prophetic counsel from the Lord is made available to all of our Father's children of all ages on matters pertinent in today's world," he said. "Each month, interesting and engaging articles address circumstances common to all people throughout the earth, whether in or out of the Church. All earnest seekers of truth are greatly benefited by the inspired teachings and guidance found therein."

If every subscriber of the Church magazines were to send a gift subscription to a nonmember friend or relative, nearly 1.7 million new subscribers would be brought into a friendly, monthly contact with the Church.

Through the Church's Online Store—store.lds.org—individuals can quickly and easily subscribe to one or more of the magazines or gift a



Members are encouraged to share the gospel with nonmember friends and family of all ages, religions, and backgrounds through gift subscriptions to the Church magazines.

subscription of the magazines to a family member or friend. The *Friend*, the *New Era*, and the *Ensign* are available in English only, while the *Liahona*, which contains articles concurrently printed in the three English-only magazines, is available in dozens of languages.

One bishop in Arizona's Peoria Stake has found gifting a yearlong subscription of the *Friend* to children in his ward to be an effective way to help surround them with the words of living prophets and apostles.

Penélope B. Woodward of Texas, USA, sent a gift subscription of the *Liahona* to her cousin, as well as to a friend and teacher in another country.

"I hope that it will help [my cousin] learn the importance of making and keeping covenants," she wrote. She continued, saying that the gift subscription is a way of "preparing the ground for [my friend] to one day hear and accept the restored gospel."

To order or gift a subscription, go to store.lds.org. Magazine ordering information is on the left side

of the page. The online ordering process walks individuals through renewals, new subscriptions, and gift subscriptions.

Store.lds.org is available in Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Those who don't speak those languages or who don't have Internet access can order or gift magazines by contacting or visiting Church distribution centers, which are located in many countries. ■

Language Pages Provide Church Materials in More Than 100 Languages

For members around the world who don't speak one of the 10 prevalent languages—Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish—finding Church materials in their native tongue may be a challenge. But for those who are aware of LDS.org's language pages, accessing core Church materials is only a few clicks away.

At the top right or bottom left of the LDS.org homepage, click on the **picture of the world** to find links to all the available language pages on LDS.org. By the end of 2012, the LDS.org team hopes to have 108 language pages, including Hrvatski (Croatian), Malagasy (spoken in Madagascar), and Twi (spoken in Ghana).

This year the language pages were updated with some new items, including PDFs of the *Liahona* local pages in more than 40 languages and a simple text PDF of the April 2012 general conference in more than 90 languages. The PDFs of the Book of Mormon in 99 languages added

24 more language pages to those already available on LDS.org.

Translated items appear according to the Church's worldwide plan for introducing Church materials in specific languages.

In this phased plan, core items—sacrament prayers, the Articles of Faith, the *Gospel Fundamentals* manual, select general conference talks, and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* pamphlet, for example—have precedence in being translated.

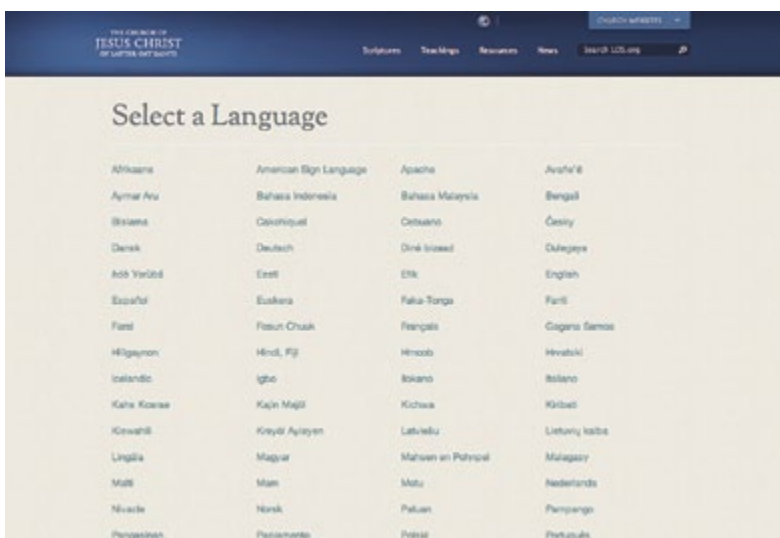
Additional translated materials such as the scriptures, music, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” and the First Presidency and Visiting Teaching Messages are introduced as the number of Church members who speak a language increases.

Materials are translated and made available following approval from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Area Presidencies can also request that certain materials be made available in a particular language if they notice a need.

“These pages are available to all members for personal as well as Sunday use,” said digital channels senior product manager Matt Robinson. “Local leaders may use this resource for their personal study as well as point members to it for use in callings and families.”

Sargis Ayvazyan, second counselor in the Yerevan Armenia District presidency, reports that Armenian members enjoy using the Armenian language page to print materials that help them fulfill their callings. They also use it to receive and read information about the Church and to find general conference materials in their native tongue. ■

Dozens of new printable and downloadable materials have been and continue to be added to LDS.org's more than 100 language pages.



President Monson's Life Celebrated with Night of Song, Music, Tributes

By Gerry Avant

Church News editor

In a grand celebration and in honor of President Thomas S. Monson's 85th birthday, some 20,000 people filled the Conference Center on August 17, 2012, for a night of music, narration, and tributes in a program titled "Golden Days: A Celebration of Life."

The selections included music and messages of some of President Monson's favorite Broadway shows and other inspirational songs in celebration of his 85th birthday, which occurred on August 21.

President Monson sat on the first row in the audience with his wife, Frances Johnson Monson, and members of their family.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, told of witnessing a tribute to President Monson on "a country road in the deserts of Arizona" where President Monson stopped to shake hands with a couple and their small children, but ended up patiently greeting many more who appeared.

President Eyring said he has witnessed President Monson "going for the Lord to people,"

usually including children, in settings across the world. "Not only were those he greeted given a golden moment, but so were those of us who saw it happen," he said. "I am not the same, nor is any of the participants, because having felt that love, we are changed."

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, also congratulated President Monson "on a life full of golden days. . . . President Monson, you are a friend who brings light to the dark, and you are the prophet of God for our time. We love and sustain you. We pray for you," he said.

"Golden Days: A Celebration of Life" took a nostalgic look back at President Monson's life—his childhood, marriage, military service, and Church service—through music and song.

Many other Church, religious, and civic leaders, as well as longtime friends, paid tribute to President Monson via prerecorded video greetings. He was also recognized for his years of Scouting involvement.

In the program's concluding moments President Monson echoed the words of the Scottish writer and poet James Barrie, who wrote, "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives" (See Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335).

"Tonight I have received an entire bouquet of memories," President Monson said.

Almost as a crowning touch, the Conference Center's stage was adorned by hundreds of yellow roses, symbolic of the "golden" days of his life. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEBRA GEHRIS

First Stake Created in Cape Verde

On Sunday, April 29, 2012, Elder Erich W. Kopischke, then-Europe Area President, organized the first stake in Cape Verde (also known as Cabo Verde) in the capital city of Praia, with more than 1,000 Saints in attendance.

Called and set apart to preside over the new Praia Cape Verde Stake was Rosiveltt Teixeira, president, with Adilson Monteiro as first counselor and José Pires as second counselor.

London Chapel Rededication Extends the Gospel to Many

The Church's historic Hyde Park Chapel in London, England, was remodeled and rededicated as a chapel for worship services and as a visitors' center just prior to the 2012 Olympics, on July 1, 2012.

Elder Erich W. Kopischke of the Seventy, then-President of the Europe Area, rededicated the building. "My hope is that literally hundreds of thousands of people over the years will come into the building to learn about the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said.

New Caledonia Celebrates Church Growth

On May 27, 2012, Elder James J. Hamula of the Seventy, Pacific Area President, organized the first stake in New Caledonia as 800 Church members looked on.

"Latter-day Saints and all of New Caledonia will be blessed as the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught and embraced by more and more people," said Elder Hamula.

The new stake, the Noumea New Caledonia Stake, includes 2,000 members and eight meetinghouses.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDER JOSÉ A. TEIXEIRA



The members of the Praia Cape Verde Stake presidency are (left to right): Adilson Monteiro, first counselor; Rosiveltt Teixeira, president; and José Pires, second counselor.

"Our most important mission will be to preach the gospel and all its principles to the people of New Caledonia, which will bring happiness for them, for their families, and in their work environments and communities," said Georgie Guidi,

who was called to be the first president of the stake. Marc Mocellin and Thierry Gorodey were called as his counselors.

First LDS Meetinghouse in Ethiopia

Members in Ethiopia are already seeing blessings come from the country's first meetinghouse. Located on the highway between the cities of Addis Ababa and Adama, the building has three floors and includes an underground parking garage.

But more important than the technical aspects of the meetinghouse is how it serves as a symbol of faith to the branch members, who have been meeting in residential property not far from the new building.

Debre Zeit Branch president Efrem Aemero Mekonen said, "Every time I go by the new building I am reminded of our covenants. Like when Captain Moroni raised the title of liberty, I am strengthened."

Update

The First Presidency has announced a change in the Central America Area Presidency, reassigning Elder Robert C. Gay to Church headquarters and calling in his place Elder Kevin R. Duncan as Second Counselor. This change modifies the assignments appearing in the Area assignment chart published in the August *Ensign* and *Liahona*.

COMMENT

Liahona Contains Answers

I am a member born in the Church. Sometimes I do not value the many blessings of the gospel in my life. Then as I think about these things, I know I can never thank my Heavenly Father enough for all I have. One of those blessings is the inspired *Liahona* magazine. It is incredible how I receive the exact answers I need each time I read it. Thank you for these messages.

Ludmila L., age 13, Argentina

Our Testimonies Grow

The *Liahona* has changed my life and my family's lives. It is a great tool, because from it one can learn and gain knowledge. Thanks to the magazine we are strengthened, and our testimonies of the Church grow.

Ana Marcela Echenique Hoyos, Colombia

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Call for Family Home Evening Ideas

The *Liahona* is looking for your family home evening ideas and experiences. The ideas can be short—just tell about a successful or meaningful family home evening or how you have adapted your family home evening to fit specific needs in your family.

Please send your ideas and experiences (in any language) to liahona@ldschurch.org. Please include your full name, e-mail address, and ward or branch and stake or district.

FAMILY HOME EVENING IDEAS

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



“The Tradition of Light and Testimony,” page 10: Summarize the article and consider inviting your family to create a visual aid to demonstrate the purpose of scaffolding. Discuss how the Church gives your family “scaffolding” to reach higher to build your family and other aspects of your life.

“Prophets at Christmastime,” page 20: After reading several stories from the lives of prophets, consider sharing some experiences you have had in which your life or the lives of others were touched by a special experience during a past Christmas. You may want to discuss ways to follow the examples of our prophets during this season.

“Safety and Peace in Keeping the Commandments,” page 32: Those with young children can have them draw pictures of people doing righteous things along a road leading to a temple. Other

families might consider reading the entire article and discussing it, emphasizing that “the pathway to happiness begins with . . . obedience to the commandments.”

“How to Give Gifts to Christ,” page 48: Read the article from President Henry B. Eyring together. Perhaps your children could write down what they would like to give to the Savior for Christmas and wrap their commitments as a Christmas gift. Consider discussing people they know who could use physical or spiritual help or both.

“A Christmas Prayer Answered,” page 68: Read the story about Peggy Schonken with your family. You may want to share times when you have received answers to your prayers and encourage your children to do the same. Consider keeping track of all the answers to prayers your family receives during the Christmas season.

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Testimony Without Words

My son Derek has global apraxia, which means he has a hard time speaking. Derek loves family home evening and spends months preparing lessons to share with the family.

One of his most memorable lessons was “Lehi’s Dream.” He strung rope all over the house and outside too. We started the lesson by listening to a CD of the hymn “I Believe in Christ” and looking at a picture of Lehi’s dream displayed on the table. Derek then took us, one by one, along the rope.

As we walked along, there were pictures of Christ on one side and distractions (such as the radio, TV, and games) on the other. We knew we had reached the end when we heard music—Derek’s favorite song, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

After everyone had gone through, Derek turned on the DVD *The Testaments* and had us watch the end, where Jesus Christ appears to the people of the Americas. The Spirit was so strong as my son conveyed his testimony of the Savior without using any words.

Wendy Thompson, USA

By Elder
Quentin L. Cook

Of the Quorum of
 the Twelve Apostles



SUNBEAMS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND GOSPEL JOY

A few years ago, when Elder M. Russell Ballard and I were the General Authority advisers to the Church Public Affairs Department, we realized that media outlets often contacted people who weren't members of the Church to find out about the Church. Desiring a change, Elder Ballard and I, under the direction of the First Presidency, began visiting the editorial boards of major newspapers, sharing the message that, as Latter-day Saints, we are politically neutral. We don't take a position in terms of candidates or parties. We do, however, want to be the ones who define our own faith. "We want you," we told them, "to come and talk to us if you're going to discuss what we believe."

Those visits were well received, and we found that our request resonated. And we're now finding a much better understanding of Latter-day Saints among the media. Some old stereotypes have been broken down, and we see other people recognizing us as people of character who try to approach life from an educated and informed point of view. We've also noticed a realization outside the Church that Latter-day Saints aren't all the same; our people are very different from one another in good and interesting ways.

With these shifting attitudes, it's a wonderful time to be a member of the Church and for members to speak up and answer questions from their friends and neighbors about our beliefs. As we do so, there is nothing more

*What do
 Sunbeams
 have to do with
 public affairs?
 A lot when they
 represent the joy
 of the gospel.*

significant than that we feel joy and that we rejoice in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what the ultimate outcome is, we know who Jesus Christ is, and we have the opportunity of having a loving Father in Heaven bless us.

I find it interesting that our best member missionaries, those who take the opportunity of sharing the gospel, are often people who are joyful. When I was the Executive Director of the Missionary Department, we suddenly noticed some baptisms in France. Thrilled, we wondered about the reasons, and there were several. But one of the main reasons was a sister who went to work on Monday morning and talked about Sunbeams. After the Sabbath, she would—with great joy and delight—tell her co-workers about her experience teaching young children the day before. Before long, her associates could hardly wait for her to talk about the Sunbeams. And what did that do? Here was a group of people living with the same concerns we all have about our world and the future, and all of a sudden, there was a person who was not only joyful but joyful about children—who represent the future. This sister clearly loved the Savior, and that love radiated. Her co-workers wanted to know more.

If we rejoice in what we have, if we feel joy and express it, we are happier. We do what the Lord wants us to do, we become better people, and by association, those around us—our children and friends and neighbors—are happier. Joy is the key. As we share the joy of the gospel, we accomplish what the Lord wants us to accomplish. ■

Adapted from a Mormon Channel interview. To listen to the entire interview in English, go to mormonchannel.org/conversations/27.

The Book of Mormon, a Gift from Heavenly Father

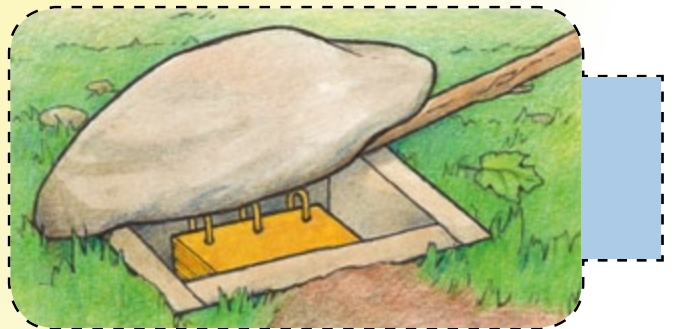
Joseph Smith—History 1:29–35, 42–54, 59–60



Joseph Smith



Angel Moroni



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



Like the lights that adorn some temple grounds at Christmastime, inviting visitors to enjoy the peace of joy found there, Jesus Christ shines as the Light of the World, inviting all to receive the peace and joy He offers through gospel ordinances, particularly those received in His holy house. Among the greatest joys anyone can experience is knowing that, through the sealing ordinances of the temple, a marriage can endure beyond death and family ties can last forever. See “Sacred Transformations,” page 24; “Focusing on a Forever Family,” page 28; and “The Light of the World,” page 64.



Liahona



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GET READY FOR New Learning Resources for Youth

Beginning in January, teaching and learning in Aaronic Priesthood quorums, Young Women classes, and youth Sunday School classes will be transformed.



Comments from Those Who Have Been Using the New Learning Resources for Youth

Over the past year, stakes throughout the world have been testing a new approach to Sunday learning. And those who have used it say it has made a big difference. Here's what they're saying:

From Youth

"What I love most is the learning—it doesn't stop at just Sunday School. You ... carry on throughout the week. And your teacher gives you assignments, and you need to come prepared for the next Sunday."

"Once you get going in the right direction, it's so easy to get people into these lessons because it's just all the rest of the quorum members who really are teaching."

"At the end of every class ... whoever has been teaching the lesson ... will give us a challenge ... So throughout the week we'll have that challenge to become better."

From Teachers and Leaders

"We discuss the challenges that the girls were given from the previous week. And typically, the experiences that they've had that week in trying to obey and learn the doctrine ... brings the Spirit quicker than anything else we could do."

"We've given the young men opportunities to do this, and they've succeeded. They've been able to be facilitators of gospel discussions."

"As [the youth] speak, their testimonies grow and their understanding of that doctrine becomes part of them."

Questions? See the inside back page of this special cover and lds.org/youth/learn.

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New Learning Resources for Youth

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why the change?

This new approach to learning will help youth be better prepared to talk about the gospel with their friends, prepare for missionary and family service now and in the future, and deepen their testimonies of the gospel. This will happen as they actively participate in searching the scriptures, share their thoughts, and accept invitations to apply what they're learning outside of class. In class they will study the current teachings of living prophets.

Which classes will use the new lessons?

Aaronic Priesthood quorums, Young Women classes, and Sunday School classes for youth ages ¹²to ¹⁸ will use the lessons in Sunday instruction. Each month, the quorums, the Young Women classes, and the Sunday School classes will focus on learning the same doctrine, such as the Godhead, and strengthening one another in living and teaching it.

What will Sunday lessons be like?

The lessons will focus on a specific theme each month, based around gospel questions youth have. Each theme—¹²in all—has several outlines teachers can choose from. More than one week can be spent on an outline if need be. Youth will be learning and practicing what it's like to teach the gospel as they share their experiences and thoughts about the monthly gospel theme.

What is in the learning outlines?

The outlines do not prescribe what or how to teach. Instead, they help teachers first learn the doctrine themselves and then provide learning experiences for the youth. Teachers can tailor the learning experiences to their students' needs. Each outline contains references and links, which will be updated regularly, to Church leaders' recent teachings.

Where does one find the new youth lessons?

Learning outlines (with separate ones for Aaronic Priesthood, Young Women, and Sunday School) are found online at lds.org/youth/learn. Printed copies will be available for those who don't have Internet access.

Will this new Sunday instruction affect Mutual?

Class and quorum presidencies are encouraged to consider the monthly themes while planning Mutual activities. Activity ideas from the learning outlines can be used as a starting place in that planning. To view the outlines go to lds.org/youth/learn.

Which languages will the lessons be available in?

The lessons will be available in Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Danish, Dutch, English, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Tongan, and Ukrainian. Units that do not use these languages will continue to teach from the lesson materials used in the past.



Coming in January—Come Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth

HOW WE LEARN TOGETHER IN THE LORD'S WAY

Youth

Learning in the Lord's way includes coming to class prepared to learn, searching the scriptures and words of the prophets, explaining gospel truths to others, and sharing how living the gospel is influencing your life.

Teachers

As you take a personal interest in the lives of your students, you will understand their needs, create relationships, and tailor learning experiences that will enable their personal conversion. The new curriculum will help you understand the doctrine and give you ideas to engage the youth in learning. Teaching this way is not a lecture but a conversation guided by the Spirit.

Parents

Taking a personal interest in what your children are learning will help you help them become responsible for their own learning. Your children will be invited to teach your family what they are learning. As you give them opportunities to do so, their testimonies and ability to share the gospel will grow.

Adult Leaders of Youth

You are responsible for how this curriculum is implemented in your ward or branch. As you provide ongoing training and set an example of teaching in the Lord's way, your teachers will adopt this type of teaching. Focus on the needs of the youth and find ways to help the youth; parents, leaders, and teachers discuss these needs. This new curriculum will help facilitate the conversion of the youth in your ward or branch.

For more information, see *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior's Way* and [lds.org/youth/learn](https://www.lds.org/youth/learn).



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

