



## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

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By Elder  
Larry Echo Hawk  
Area Presidency

### The Organization of the Church

**T**he Book of Mormon was published on March 26, 1830.

A few days later, on April 6, 1830, a small group of people convened in the log farmhouse of Peter Whitmer, Sr. On that day six men were elected as trustees of a new organization that would become known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were unanimously elected as the first and second elders of the newly organized Church of Jesus Christ.

### Growth of the Church

One-hundred and eighty-four years later, at the April 2014 General Conference, Brook P. Hales, Secretary to the First Presidency, reported that as of December 31,

2013, there were 3,050 Stakes, 405 Missions, 571 Districts, and 29,253 Wards and Branches. The total membership of the Church was 15,082,028. There were also 83,035 Full-Time Missionaries and 24,032 Church-Services Missionaries serving at that time. And, there were 141 temples in operation.

### Pioneer Heritage

17 years after the Church was organized, Brigham Young led a vanguard company in breaking a primary trail to the Rocky Mountains in search of a safe place for members to live and worship God in accordance with the restored gospel. These early pioneers were compelled to leave because of severe opposition and persecution experienced by members of the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They had earlier been driven out of Missouri. After rebuilding homes in and around Nauvoo, Illinois they faced more opposition. Eventually, in 1844 Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum Smith, while in custody in Carthage, Illinois, were killed by a mob. Not long thereafter, the Saints were again forced to leave their homes and their recently constructed temple in Nauvoo, Illinois.

On July 24, 1847 Brigham Young first saw the Salt Lake Valley and declared: "This is the right place, drive on." A monument now stands on the spot where he made this famous declaration. A "Pioneer Day Celebration" is held each year in the State of Utah. It is truly amazing to see how the Church has grown from its humble beginnings in that log farmhouse in New York. This enormous growth would not have occurred had it not been for the spiritual strength and sacrifice of many faithful members from the day

the Church was organized in 1830.

### **Pioneers in the Philippines**

There is also cause for celebration in the Philippines. In the month of July members of the Church in the Philippines should pause to reflect on the journey taken by about 70,000 Mormon pioneers who crossed the great plains and mountainous territory to relocate to the Salt Lake Valley where the Church would grow and prosper. It is a great heritage of faith and sacrifice that now blesses all members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The members of the Church in the Philippines should also remember and celebrate "pioneers" who have worked to establish the restored gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Philippines.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines a pioneer as "one who ventures into unknown territory", a "trailblazer" and a "foot soldier sent to clear the way." This definition of







a “pioneer” should remind us all that we should be grateful for the many missionaries that have left their homes and “ventured” into numerous parts of the Philippines to share the gospel. We should also celebrate those “trailblazers” who were the first members of their families to join the Church. They are the “foot soldiers” that have cleared the way for their posterity to be blessed by knowing the truth of the restored gospel. These are “pioneers” of a different sort, but they should also be remembered and celebrated for their service and sacrifice in this great country.

We should make the effort to capture their history as modern-day pioneers who have strengthened The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Philippines. The booklet entitled: “My Family – Stories That Bring Us Together” is an excellent way of not only recording the history of their faith

and sacrifice, but it can also lead to saving ordinances performed in the temples.

### **Gospel Will Continue to Roll Forth**

Let us all remember and witness that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is rolling forth and is filling the whole earth. As the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote on March 1, 1842: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear; till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.” Each of us should step forward to share in this “hastening” of the work of salvation. ■

# Local LDS Voices

## How Do You Teach Your Children To Liken The Scriptures To Themselves?

**W**henever we read the scriptures, we point out the values that can be found in each story. For example, we tell them how much Heavenly Father loves them through the story of the creation; they feel how much Jesus Christ loves everyone because He saved us from our sins. They also learn from the accounts of the prophets like Nephi who was faithful in getting the brass plates; lessons of courage and faith like the story of David when He defeated Goliath and learning to listen to the promptings of the Spirit like the boy Samuel.



**Janice Mae Canlas**  
*Quezon City South Stake*

**M**y husband and I regularly read the scriptures with them, mostly during bedtime. We take turns in reading verses, and then we ask them questions about what we



have read. We teach them by introducing the characters and how they became the prophets and the “hero” of the story. My son, Isaac, loves the story of the 2000 stripling warriors. Hailey, my daughter, is looking forward on serving a mission someday because of Ammon’s example.

**Regina Villanueva**  
*Quezon City South Stake*

**W**e teach them to liken the scriptures by explaining the principles and applying the teachings in their day-to-day activities. One time, we had a scripture study about Esther and her faithful prayer and fasting. After telling them the story, we told them that they can always pray to Heavenly Father if we need anything, like when we are sad and sick or we need a blessing during an exam.



**Christopher Macariola**  
*Quezon City South Stake*

## Philippine Area Goals – Feast upon the Words

# BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL SCRIPTURE STUDY

**W**e have been regularly holding daily scripture reading, family prayer and weekly home evening for the past six years or so. At first it was difficult to establish the habit because the children have different schedules in school and work. We discussed this during family council one home evening and we came up with the consensus of a regular 9:00 p.m. Monday schedule for family home evening and 9:00 p.m. schedule for daily scripture study followed by family prayer. Since all were part of the decision-making, all are committed now to drop everything they're doing if the clock strikes 9:00 p.m.

It gets discouraging at first if there's resistance especially from older children who try to live lives of their own, but talking and reasoning out with them works and once we get the ball rolling, everyone wants to get in on the action and would actually be looking forward to it.

Once we overcame the initial challenges and were



PHOTO BY JAYMEE ALBOS

able to regularly practice the family programs of the Church, we enjoyed closer family bonds between my wife and I, between us parents and the children, and among the children. There is more openness in communication, less squabbles among siblings and less raised voices heard in the home. There's more laughter and smiles than sad faces.

This whole experience taught me that if we do our part as parents and we are mindful of our stewardship, the Lord will help us and

will provide a way for our families to hold these activities regularly. Like President Spencer W. Kimball admonished, we should just “Do it! Do it right! And do it right now!”

**Teodore L. Maroket**  
*Quezon City Philippines Stake*

### Family Scripture Fun

By Jaymee Rose Albos

**W**e know that the family is central to Heavenly Father's plan. And because of that, we are aware that the opposition is doing everything it could so that the family will be destroyed. One of the ways we can strengthen our family is through studying the scriptures regularly. During the past 3 years, the verse from 2 Nephi 32:3 remains the central message of the Philippines Area Goals: “Feast upon the words of Christ, for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”





PHOTO BY JAYMEE ALBOS

Sister Jessie Ann Villanueva, a mother of 4, shares ways on how to successfully hold regular family scripture study. “When my children were little, we used to hold games before we begin studying the scriptures. The Gospel Art Book really helped me and my husband in introducing the principles behind every account in the scripture. And now that they are all grown up, we still play the scriptural charades—this time, they act and we guess the situation and the principle.” She said that it is important to make the experience interactive, especially for little children.

Aside from playing games, they would role play scenes from the scriptures then discuss the principles afterwards. She also think that illustrations are equally as important as the text: “I

have a 4-year old daughter who still cannot comprehend Old English as found in the scriptures, so I make sure that I have resources like the Book of Mormon Stories and church magazines like The Friend which contains pictures of the story. Illustrations make the experience more memorable especially for little children.” she added.

She also believes that it is not enough to just read a chapter and close the book without any understanding. “We take turns in reading verses and we stop at a point where we feel that there’s a principle being taught. First, we ask them if they learned something and then we teach them the doctrine. Afterwards, we let them ask questions.” She and her husband sometimes feel overwhelmed because a child will ask one

question and it will lead to another question and suddenly they find themselves in a new doctrine. “It is wonderful to know that they are interested and are willing to participate in the matters of the gospel.” she shared.

Another secret to successful scripture reading is to explore other materials. “We are trying out a new technique to better improve our family scripture study. We study the scripture blocks from the Preach My Gospel handbook and we point out the missionary application of each scripture and each lesson.” Sister Jessie adds.

According to her, the temporal circumstances also affect the quality of the scripture study. “We don’t really have a scheduled time for scripture study because of our different schedules.

But when everyone is already home, their father always initiates the study. And then they all obey. We make sure that we'll never let a day pass by without reading the scriptures individually and as families. We just feel that a day would not be fruitful if a family is not gathered together feasting upon the words of Christ."

## A Family That Reads Together

By Gelene Tobias-Domagsang

"While modern technological advancements can enhance the work of the Lord and bless us and our families, we must be careful not to fall to their destructive side. We must not only avoid the base and degrading content some sources contain, but we must also recognize when electronic distractions keep us from quieter, more significant uses of our time. We must guard against becoming so attached to digital devices that we become detached from God. Sometimes the most productive point and click application is that of pointing our finger at the power button and clicking our digital devices off." —Elder Scott D. Whiting

Family scripture study has been one of the goals of the Marila family of Bayto Branch, Sta. Cruz Philippines District, ever since they were baptized in 1997. The family admits that there are lots of challenges in achieving this goal, such as schoolwork and household chores. However, they acknowledge that the use of gadgets and electronic devices seem to be one of the biggest challenges that prevent them from holding their family scripture study.

As a father of six children, Samuel Marila, a barangay captain and branch president, recounts a time when he needed to destroy his son's cellphone so they can hold their family scripture study. Although Brother Marila is not suggesting that others do the same, his son, Ammon, seemed to have learned his lesson and straighten out his priorities.

Indeed, cellphones, television and other gadgets are among the greatest distractions that many families face today. But with the right attitude and focus, families can be successful in making family scripture study a habit.

"Family scripture reading is one of the most challenging family activities.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARILA FAMILY

It requires commitment, perseverance, patience and love to be able to accomplish it in a regular basis.

Our family becomes closer to each other every time we read and study the scriptures together. Kindness, love, respect and harmonious relationship gradually develop. Negative feelings disappear. Through scripture reading, our relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is enhanced and becomes our priority," Brother Marila expressed.

This year, the Marila family renewed their commitment in making family scripture study a priority. They set a specific time of the day—7:00 a.m.—as their scripture study hour. Although their family is not perfect in achieving this goal, Brother Marila strives to remind his family the "doctrine" why scripture study is important. Veal, his youngest daughter who's still in the primary organization, also initiates scripture study every time Brother Marila is not around. She always has her scriptures beside her bed and asks for every one's



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARILA FAMILY

participation as they gather together to read.

Meanwhile, Aleli, Brother Marila's oldest daughter who served in the Philippines Laoag Mission a few years ago, said that once we understand that scripture study is a commandment of God, it will be easier to make it a habit.

"One of our brothers died. It was hard to accept it at first but I know that as we follow God's commandments as a family, we can see him again and be together forever. Family scripture study is one of the commandments that we must follow to be with my brother again," she said.

The Marila family already had a lot of spiritual experiences during their scripture study hour. They would usually start with 1 Nephi 1 and read chapter by chapter. There was even a time when all of them were in tears as they read together. One of the spiritual experiences that they've had was when they were reading verses from the Book of Mormon about the struggles of Lehi's family and how Lehi's children

reacted. They could really relate and "liken" these verses to their lives.

"Family scripture study motivated me to find families when I was in the mission field. I am sure that my sister, Laarni, who is currently a full-time missionary in Legazpi Mission, was also inspired to serve because of family scripture study. Scripture study brings happiness to our family. There is less contention and we are more directed by the Spirit despite many trials."

Today, the Marila family still faces challenges in making family scripture study a consistent activity. But so far, they are doing well. It is not really about the method. For them, there isn't really a specific way to make family scripture study consistent and successful. Each family may have different styles and ways that are effective for them. What matters most are the right attitude, motivation and focus to give up whatever distraction that we have—may it be a television or cellphone—and look forward to sitting down together for family scripture study time. ■

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