


Liahona

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red blouse and gold hoop earrings, stands at a wooden podium. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and she is looking down, appearing to be in prayer or speaking. A microphone is positioned in front of her. The background is softly blurred, showing other people in a church setting.

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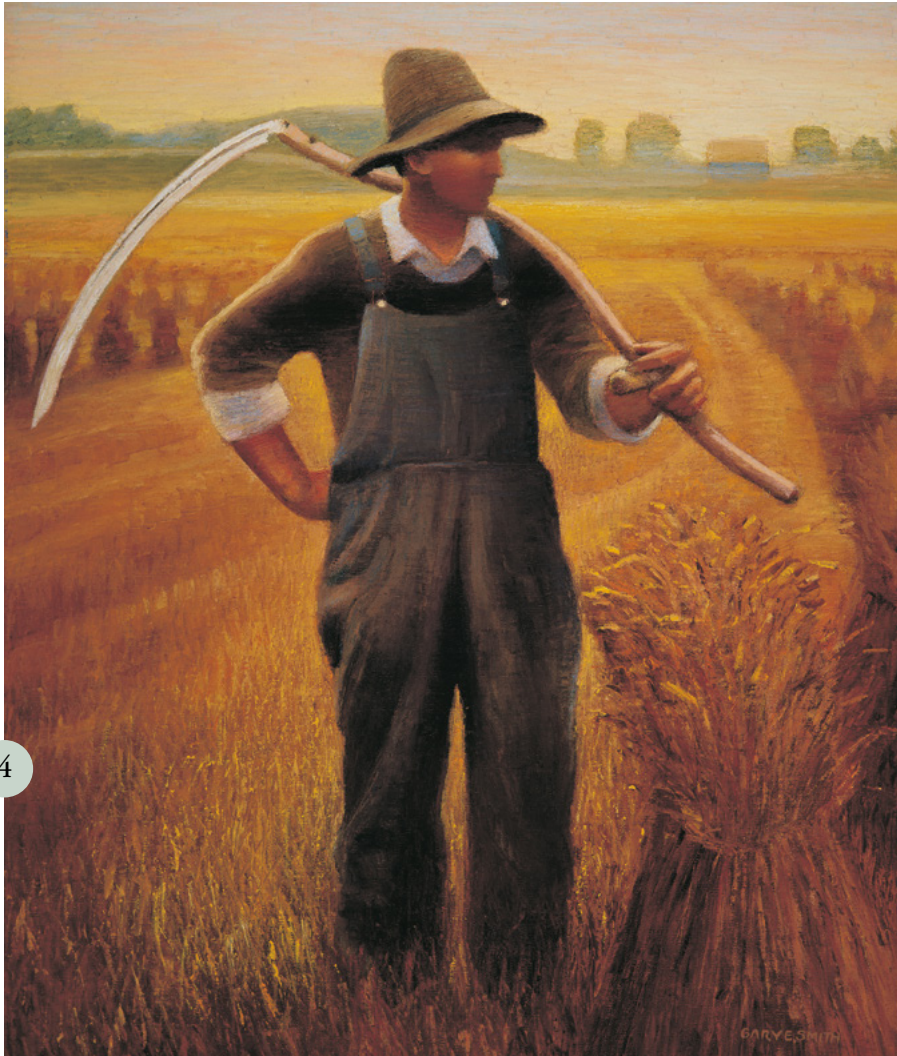
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Lift Where You Stand: The
Power of Example, p. 32



When Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) served as President of the Church from 1973 to 1985, Church membership almost doubled, an LDS edition of the King James Bible was published in English, and the number of temples increased from 15 to 36. In June 1978, President Kimball received the revelation saying that all worthy men could receive the priesthood, regardless of race (see Official Declaration 2).

Photograph courtesy of Church History Library



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Photo illustration by Cody Bell.

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Family Home Evening Ideas

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



“Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning,”

page 42: To illustrate the importance of gaining your own spiritual light, consider this activity. Turn off the lights and ask family members to draw a picture. Have someone with a flashlight or candle use it only for their own picture. After a few minutes, turn the lights back on. Talk about the difference in being able to complete the task and then discuss the principles found in the article.

“Being Like Shiblon,”

page 73: Who are your favorite people in the scriptures? Consider playing “scripture charades” or “scripture pictures.” Act out a scripture story or draw it on a piece of paper without using any words. Have family members guess the scripture story or people involved. You could then read about these people in the scriptures and discuss why you admire them. What characteristics of theirs do you want to develop?

MORE ONLINE

The *Liahona* and other Church materials are available in many languages at languages.lds.org. Visit [facebook.com/liahona.magazine](https://www.facebook.com/liahona.magazine) (available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish) to find inspirational messages, family home evening ideas, and material you can share with your friends and family.

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By President
Thomas S.
Monson

CALLED TO THE WORK

When the Prophet Joseph Smith called Elder Heber C. Kimball (1801–68) to “open the door of salvation” as a missionary to England, Elder Kimball was seized by feelings of inadequacy.

“O, Lord,” he wrote, “I am a man of stammering tongue, and altogether unfit for such a work.”

Elder Kimball accepted the call nevertheless, adding: “These considerations did not deter me from the path of duty; the moment I understood the will of my Heavenly Father, I felt a determination to go at all hazards, believing that He would support me by His almighty power, and endow me with every qualification that I needed.”¹

My young brothers and sisters who are called to full-time missionary service, you are called to the work because you, like Elder Kimball, “have desires to serve God” (D&C 4:3) and because you are ready and worthy.

Senior couples, you are called to the work for the same reasons. You, however, bring not only a desire to serve but also wisdom gained from seasons of sacrifice, love, and experience that your Father in Heaven can use to touch the hearts of His sons and daughters who are looking for the truth. No doubt you have learned that we can never truly love the Lord until we serve Him by serving others.

To your desires to serve as missionaries, you will add faith and fortitude, courage and confidence, resolve and resilience, determination and dedication. Dedicated missionaries can bring about miracles in the mission field.

President John Taylor (1808–87) summed up the essential qualities of missionaries this way: “The kind of men [and women and couples] we want as bearers of this gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom . . . God has confidence. . . . We want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God[,] . . . men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity.”²

The Lord has declared:

“For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

“And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work” (D&C 4:4–5).

Your call has come through inspiration. I testify that whom God calls, God qualifies. You will receive heavenly help as you prayerfully labor in the Lord’s vineyard.

The beautiful promise the Lord gave to the missionaries early in this dispensation, as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, will be yours: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

As you serve, you will build rich eternal memories and friendships. I know of no field which produces a more bounteous harvest of happiness than the mission field.



Now, a word for those elders, sisters, and couples who, for whatever reason, may not be able to finish their assigned time in the mission field: The Lord loves you. He appreciates your sacrifice. He is aware of your disappointment. Know

that He still has a work for you to do. Don't let Satan tell you otherwise. Don't get down; don't become discouraged; don't despair.

As I observed in general conference shortly after I was called to lead the

Church: “Fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith.”³ That promise still holds true for you. So don't lose your faith, because the Lord has not lost faith in you. Keep your covenants and move forward.

The world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless all of His Saints—regardless of where we serve—with a missionary heart. ■

NOTES

1. Heber C. Kimball, in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. (1967), 104.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 73.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 92.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Whether or not we serve as full-time missionaries, each of us has the opportunity to share the gospel and serve those around us. Consider pairing this message with a recent general conference talk on this topic, such as “Sharing the Restored Gospel” by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (*Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 57). You could also discuss the phrase “whom God calls, God qualifies” with those you teach. How have they felt God supporting them in missionary work and in their callings? You could invite those you teach to pray for strength and inspiration to know how to share the gospel with their family, friends, and neighbors.



Get ideas at
lds.org/go/6176.
 #futuremissionary

A Missionary without a Tag

By Kirsti Arave

At school I have a teacher who has the kind of personality that might scare someone from sharing opposing views on a subject. One day we got on the topic of LDS missionaries. I knew I could have answered his questions, but I felt like I shouldn't. So I said just enough to satisfy him for the time being.

For the next few weeks I couldn't stop thinking about our conversation.

A thought came to me that I should give him a Book of Mormon.

Finally, a thought came to me that I should give him a Book of Mormon with a few highlighted phrases about missionary work. The thought scared me, but it persisted. I knew it was a prompting I had to follow.

About two months later, I had the Book of Mormon ready. All day long I felt

like the book was burning a hole in my backpack. The three seconds it took for me to hand it to him as I left for winter break was the scariest moment of my life.

On the first day back, I passed his classroom but was scared to go in. Then I heard him call for me, and he gave me a card. I read it in the hallway. He wrote that he had studied "at length" the passages I had marked, and he was beginning to see some reasons behind my faith.

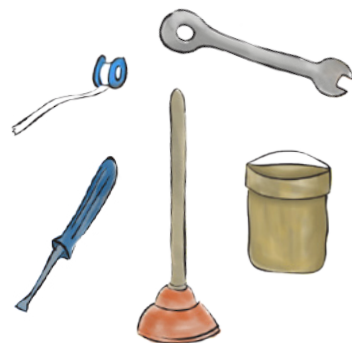
I get excited sharing the gospel now, and I am even more excited to serve my Heavenly Father on a mission soon.

The author lives in Utah, USA.

CHILDREN

Missionary Service

Missionaries are called to teach the gospel and also to serve people. Help the missionaries find these tools hidden in the picture!



Prayerfully study this material and seek for inspiration to know what to share. How will understanding the purpose of Relief Society prepare daughters of God for the blessings of eternal life?

Priesthood Power through Keeping Covenants

“My message to . . . all is that we can live every hour ‘blessed by the strength of priesthood power,’ whatever our circumstance,” said Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

“. . . As you worthily participate in the ordinances of the priesthood, the Lord will give you greater strength, peace, and eternal perspective. Whatever your situation, your home will be ‘blessed by the strength of priesthood power.’”¹

How do we invite priesthood power into our lives? Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminds us that “those who have entered the waters of baptism and subsequently received

their endowment in the house of the Lord are eligible for rich and wonderful blessings. The endowment is literally a gift of power . . . [and] our Father in Heaven is generous with His power.” He reminds us that men and women “are both endowed with the same power” in the temple, “which by definition is priesthood power.”²

Linda K. Burton, Relief Society General President, said: “Since priesthood power is something we all desire to have in our families and homes, what do *we* need to do to invite that power into our lives? Personal righteousness is imperative to having priesthood power.”³

“If we will humbly present ourselves before the Lord

and ask Him to teach us, He will show us how to increase *our* access to *His* power,” said President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁴

Additional Scriptures and Information

1 Nephi 14:14; Doctrine and Covenants 121:36; 132:20; reliefsociety.lds.org

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “Power in the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 92, 95.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Men and Women and Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2014, 32; *Liahona*, Sept. 2014, 36.
3. Linda K. Burton, “Priesthood Power—Available to All,” *Ensign*, June 2014, 39; *Liahona*, June 2014, 21.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “The Price of Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 69.



Faith
Family
Relief



Consider This

How does keeping our covenants bless us with priesthood power?

LIVING THE GOSPEL NOURISHES SACRED FAMILY RELATIONS

We are all children of loving Heavenly Parents who sent us to earth to learn how to return to Them. The family is a central part of the plan of salvation. God gives us families so we can gain bodies, learn correct principles, and prepare for eternal life.

Heavenly Father wants each of His children to be raised in loving environments. The best way to achieve these caring environments is by living and practicing gospel principles. “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹ Homes that are established on gospel principles become places of peace, where the Spirit of the Lord can guide, influence, and uplift all members of the family.

The family is ordained of God and is “the *order* of heaven . . . , an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of

God’s eternal family.”² These familial relationships and their accompanying responsibilities are sacred. We learn in the scriptures that parents have a duty to raise their children in truth, light, and love (see Ephesians 6:4; D&C 68:25). Husbands and wives should love and respect each other (see Ephesians 5:25), and children should honor their parents (see Exodus 20:12).

“Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”³ Following gospel principles strengthens family relationships and increases family members’ individual and collective spiritual strength. These principles will also help us come closer to Christ.

Every family has its challenges. In the spiritual turmoil of these days,

not every family has ideal circumstances. As Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “With millions of members and the diversity we have in the children of the Church, we need to be even more thoughtful and sensitive.”⁴ Some individuals do not have family support in living the gospel. Some challenges are especially difficult, including (but not limited to) divorce, abuse, and addiction.

God is aware of each family’s situation and of individual desires to have love at home. Even if we have imperfect relationships with our families, living the gospel can still bless our lives and our homes. It can strengthen our relationships with our spouse, parents, children, brothers and sisters, and with our Heavenly Father. Some of these blessings will come now, and others not until eternity, but God will not withhold any blessing to those striving for righteousness. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 77.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
4. Neil L. Andersen, “Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 50.



DIVINE AND SACRED

“The family is divine [and] encompasses the most sacred of all relationships.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 167.

How to strengthen family relationships
by living the gospel:



*Being kind, apologizing,
extending forgiveness*



*Participating in
wholesome family
activities and
traditions*



*Worshipping through
family prayer, scripture
study, home evening,
and church and temple
attendance*



*Giving
service*



*Listening and
showing respect*

IN RECORD TIME

By Richard L. Bairrett Jr.

Only with the Lord's help could I get home in time for my daughter's baptism.



My daughter had just turned eight and was excited for me to baptize her. Her grandparents were also coming for the special occasion, which added to her excitement and anticipation. However, as the big day drew close, it looked like I might not be at the baptism.

My job as a military aircraft pilot and squadron assistant operations officer was rarely boring, but the pace became even more intense when my operations (ops) officer left on another assignment. I was dealing

with wave after wave of airlift missions. To produce the required number of flight crews, I was forced to cancel training, suspend some squadron functions, and cancel vacations that had been planned for months.

Aircrews were departing on 21-day flight orders with little chance of returning home early. And when my ops officer and another assistant ops officer returned, it became difficult to justify my staying behind for a family event. How could I hang back when I had required sacrifices of so many others?

I felt torn in half. I always tried to put my family ahead of my career, but I also had a duty to serve my country. My ops officer, while not a member of the Church, understood the importance of this event to my family and allowed me to make the decision myself. After much prayer and family discussion, I did what I felt was right and scheduled myself on the next mission out.

When my crew was alerted for a mission to begin on Monday morning, it didn't look like there was any

chance I'd be back for my daughter's baptism on Saturday. We were to fly to a cargo pickup location, then to a staging base on the East Coast of the United States, where we would be required to enter crew rest before flying again. Later we would fly to Europe and rest, then deliver cargo to a Middle East location, and on the return flight, stop for yet another crew rest, return to Europe, stop for another crew rest, and return to the United States to collect more cargo and cycle back through. It normally took at least seven days to complete this circuit just once, but I knew my family was praying to have me back. Their faith and prayers helped me to have faith, and it quickly became apparent that this wasn't going to be a typical mission.

First, instead of stopping on the East Coast for a day or two, our mission was assigned to air-refuel and continue non-stop to Europe. Then, after the minimum legal crew rest period, we were alerted to fly a different mission out-and-back to the distant cargo delivery location. The equipment off-load and ground-refueling at our destination went uncharacteristically well, and after another bare-minimum crew rest period, we were amazed when we were alerted to return directly to our home base. We were going home for a day or so!

Calling from the plane, I was elated to tell my family I was nearly home. My wife told me the baptismal service had just been moved from 5:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. to accommodate a youth activity. I next called our airlift stage manager and explained my situation. After a pause, he replied that he could delay our alert until 5:00 p.m. on Saturday—the time the baptismal service had originally been scheduled to begin!

As we cleared the mountain range near my home, I saw that I had one more trial of faith remaining: the city lights below were blanketed in fog. This would be the worst visibility I'd ever flown an approach in. We quickly put together a plan to divert to another airfield if necessary, completed our checklists, and flew down to take a look.

As we sped toward the runway at 200 feet (60 m) above ground level, we were completely shrouded in fog. Suddenly, passing 120 feet (37 m), there was a lighted runway in front of us, and a few seconds later we were safely on the ground. Everyone exhaled in relief.

An unprecedented string of seeming coincidences had enabled my crew to make a multi-stage trip to the other side of the world and back in record time, and I was able to be home for a brief window that

coincided with my daughter's baptism. With the Lord's help I was able to fulfill my duty to my country, my squadron, and most of all to my family. While life would have gone on if we needed to reschedule our daughter's baptism, Heavenly Father was letting us know that He loved us and heard our prayers. He gave my daughter the memory of those miraculous events as a witness that He loves her, and my wife and I both gained a stronger witness that "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20). ■

The author lived in California, USA, at the time of this experience.



WATCHED OVER BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

By LaRene Porter Gaunt

Church Magazines

Before Alzheimer's took his mind, my father always had a story or song for his children. I can remember him sitting in his big chair cradling my baby brother on his lap as his mellow voice filled the room with stories from his youth—everything from tending the cows with his cat draped over his shoulder to sliding down the red rock of Escalante, Utah, USA. Then, as my brother's eyes began to droop, the stories stopped, and the same cowboy lullaby began:

Close your sleepy eyes, my little buckaroo,

While your Heavenly Father watches over you.

Don't you know it's time for bed, another day is through.

So go to sleep, my little buckaroo.¹

Now my baby brother is a father, and my dad lies in a hospital bed in San Diego, California, USA. Though he sees palm trees, he thinks he is a boy turning irrigation water down the rows of corn, tomatoes, and green beans. But he is not. He is dying.

Day after day, my mother, brothers, and sister gather around his bed. My mother calls me at my home in the mountains of Utah, USA. She tells me that when she shows my dad old family photos, a smile comes across his sunken face. Other times, his brothers, long since dead, wander in and out of his mind and heart. She tries to get him to eat, but he refuses. He tells her that his brothers have caught some trout and he has to go take care of the horses before dinner.

One by one we have made peace with the knowledge that when he passes from this mortal life, our dad will be “taken home to that God who gave [us] life,” to “paradise, . . . where [he will] rest from all [his] troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:11–12).

I call my mother and she hands the phone to my dad. To my surprise, he begins to sing to me: “Close your sleepy eyes, my little buckaroo, while your Heavenly Father watches over you.”

I wonder if my dad really knows it's me. He probably doesn't, but this song comes as a gift drifting into my heart. I weep in gratitude for this tender mercy from my Heavenly Father and for His plan of salvation. Soon the lullaby is over, and I imagine my dad's eyes beginning to droop. The moment is gone, but I find hope in the knowledge that death is part of God's plan to bring us home to Him. I believe in God's plan and in His love for us as we pass from this life. I whisper, “Goodnight, Daddy. Go to sleep. Our Heavenly Father is watching over you.” ■

NOTE

1. See Jack Scholl and M. K. Jerome, “My Little Buckaroo” (1937).



SOLITARY SERVICE IN SARAJEVO

By Armin Wilhelm

On Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Would other members begin attending meetings too?

As a member of the German military, I spent more than half of 1999 in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. My military assignment came with great challenges and long hours, but I always took time off to attend church in a small chapel used by various denominations in our camp of 750.

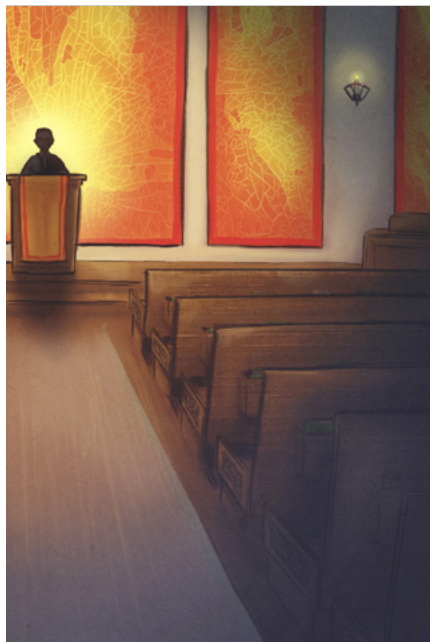
When I arrived at the chapel one Sunday afternoon, I found the doors locked. I learned that the other members of the Church in the camp had been transferred. I was disappointed because I had looked forward to worshipping and partaking of the sacrament. Before coming to Sarajevo, I had been busy serving as a branch president in Germany and was able to partake of the sacrament regularly.

Several weeks later, I was assigned to accompany my general on a visit to an American division. During lunch, an American captain who had seen me talking to other soldiers asked if I was a member of the Church. After I told him I was, he gave my name and contact information to the senior group leader of the Church there.

Soon a Brother Fisher contacted me. Following an interview, he set

me apart as the group leader of the Church in Sarajevo with the assignment to set up a group. (A group is a Church unit in military installations, similar to a branch.)

I began posting meeting times on bulletin boards and sending out invitations, hoping to find other Latter-day Saints in military barracks in Sarajevo. For the first few weeks, no one else attended. So on Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Following Church guidelines for leaders and members in the military, I was



able to bless and partake of the sacrament without a second priesthood holder. This brought me great joy.

I held my solitary meetings in English so I could improve my English language skills. The first talk I gave was about Joseph Smith. No one visible was in the room, but I sensed the presence of others. The Holy Ghost strengthened me and revealed to me how important it was for the work of the Lord to begin anew in this place.

A few weeks after I held my first Sunday meeting, a young American soldier entered the chapel. She had been baptized only a few months before. I was so happy! Two weeks later, another sister arrived. Then two brothers came. With the help of the Lord, the Church began growing in Sarajevo.

Now the Church has a branch in Sarajevo. As I remember my time there, I reflect on the honor the Lord gave me to serve in a special way—to be a little cog in His work and to know that “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). ■

The author lives in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany.



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

Religion's Vital

For more than 30 years, I have been one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. As directed by our First Presidency, we govern our worldwide Church of almost 16 million members in just over 30,000 congregations. We teach and testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of His priesthood and the fulness of His doctrine. Unique to our doctrine is our knowledge that God continues to call prophets and apostles to receive revelation and teach how to apply His commandments in the circumstances of our day.

1. The Importance of Religion Globally

Religious freedom is a lifelong interest of mine. My first publication as a young law professor at the University of Chicago 54 years ago was a book I edited on the relationship between church and state in the United States.¹

Today, much more than then, none of us can ignore the importance of religion globally—in politics, conflict resolution, economic development, humanitarian relief, and more. Eighty-four percent of the world's population identifies with a particular religion,² yet 77 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries with high or very high restrictions on religious freedom.³ Understanding religion and its relationship to global concerns and to governments is essential to seeking to improve the world in which we live.

Although religious freedom is unknown in most of the world and threatened from

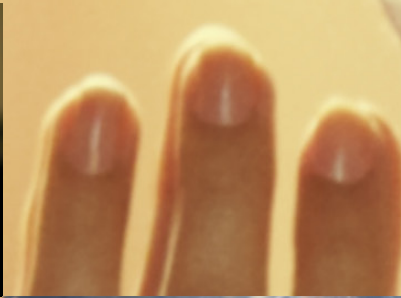
secularism and extremism in the rest, I speak for the ideal in which the freedoms that religion seeks to protect are God-given and inherent but are implemented through mutually complementary relationships with governments that seek the well-being of all their citizens.

Consequently, a government should secure religious freedom for its citizens. As stated in article 18 of the United Nation's influential Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."⁴

The complementary responsibilities of religion, through its adherents, are to observe the laws and respect the culture of the country that secures its freedoms. When religious

Elder Oaks gave this address on June 9, 2016, at Oxford University in England during a symposium on religious freedom.

Global Role



We cannot lose the influence of religion in our public life without seriously jeopardizing all our freedoms.

freedoms are secured, such a response is a debt of gratitude gladly paid.

If there were uniform acceptance and application of these general principles, there would be no need for these discussions on freedom of religion. But as we all know, our

exercise of religious beliefs in the public square. Such attempts of course violate the Universal Declaration's assurance of the right to manifest religion or beliefs "in public or private." The free exercise of religion must also apply when believers act as a community, such as by their efforts in education, medicine, and culture.

2. Social Values of Religion

Religious beliefs and practices are also criticized as irrational and contrary to important government and social goals. I, of course, maintain that religion is uniquely valuable to society. As one atheist admitted in a recent book,



Many of the most significant moral advances in Western civilization have been motivated by religious principles and persuaded to official adoption by pulpit preaching.



Clockwise from top left: Mother Teresa, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, Bishop Desmond Tutu, William Wilberforce.

world is bedeviled with conflicts on these general principles. For example, prominent voices are now challenging the whole idea of unique protections for religion. One such book bears the title *Freedom from Religion* and another, *Why Tolerate Religion?*⁵

Other voices seek to marginalize religion and believers, such as by limiting religious freedom to teaching in churches, synagogues, and mosques, while denying the

"One does not have to be a religious believer to grasp that the core values of Western civilization are grounded in religion, and to be concerned that the erosion of religious observance therefore undermines those values."⁶ One of those "core values" is the concept of inherent human dignity and worth.

Here are seven other examples of the social values of religion:

1. Many of the most significant moral advances in Western civilization have been motivated by religious principles and persuaded to official adoption by pulpit preaching. So it was with the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States, and the Civil Rights movement of the last half-century. These advances were not motivated and moved by secular ethics but were driven primarily by persons who had a clear religious vision of what was morally right.

2. In the United States, our enormous private sector of charitable works—education, hospitals, care for the poor, and countless other charities of great value—originated with and is still sponsored most significantly by religious organizations and religious impulses.

3. Western societies are not held together primarily by the overall enforcement of laws, which would be impractical, but most important by citizens who voluntarily obey the unenforceable because of their internal norms of correct behavior. For many, it is religious belief in right and wrong and an anticipated accountability to a higher power that produces such voluntary self-regulation. In fact, religious values and political realities are so interlinked in the origin and perpetuation of Western nations that we cannot lose the influence of religion in our public life without seriously jeopardizing all our freedoms.

4. Along with their private counterparts, religious organizations serve as mediating institutions to shape and temper the encroaching power of government on individuals and private organizations.

5. Religion inspires many believers to render service to others, which, in total, confers enormous benefit on communities and countries.

6. Religion strengthens the social fabric of society. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has taught: “[Religion] remains the most powerful community builder the world has known. . . . Religion is the best antidote to the individualism of the consumer age. The idea that society can do without it flies in the face of history.”⁷

7. Finally, Clayton M. Christensen, a Latter-day Saint who is hailed as a worldwide “thought leader” on business management and innovation,⁸ has written that “religion is the foundation of democracy and prosperity.”⁹ Much more could be said about the positive role of religion in economic development.

I maintain that religious teachings and the religiously

motivated actions of believers are essential to a free and prosperous society and continue to deserve special legal protections.

3. Complementary Responsibilities of Religion

So far I have spoken only of governments’ responsibilities to religious believers and organizations. I now turn to the complementary responsibilities that religions and believers owe to their governments.

From those who enjoy their protections, governments obviously have a right to expect obedience to laws and respect for culture. Governments have an overriding interest in preserving the security of their national borders and defending the health and safety of their citizens. They obviously have the right to insist that all organizations, including religions, refrain from teaching hate and from actions that could result in violence or other criminal acts toward others. No country need offer sanctuary to organizations that promote terrorism.

Religious freedom is no barrier to government power in any of these circumstances.

Today the complementary functions of religion and government are being severely tested in Europe. The massive inflow of refugees of mostly Muslim religion and culture into countries with a different culture and different religions obviously creates serious political, cultural, social, financial, and religious challenges.

What can religion and religious organizations contribute to help refugees and the countries that have received them—short term and long term? We know that some professionals are skeptical of the role of religious organizations in these matters, some even seeing religion as a disruptive influence. I will try not to contradict opinions based on facts with which I am not familiar. I will only share the policies and experience of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which I believe will illustrate the positive



Refugees cross the border from Syria into Turkey.

influence that religious organizations can and should have, short term and long term.

We who are known as Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, take literally Christ's teaching that we should give food to the hungry and shelter to the stranger (see Matthew 25:35).



these efforts has averaged about U.S. \$40 million per year.

We avoid one of the objections to faith-based organizations by rigorously separating our humanitarian services from our worldwide missionary efforts. Our humanitarian aid is given without regard to religious affiliation because we want our missionary efforts to be received and considered without influence from force or food or other favors.

4. What Can Churches Do?

What can church organizations do in addition to what the United Nations or individual countries can do? Again, I refer to our own Church's experience. While



Religious teachings and the religiously motivated actions of believers are essential to a free and prosperous society and continue to deserve special legal protections.



We are likewise directed by a modern revelation from the same source to “remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple” (D&C 52:40).

Care for the poor and the needy is not optional or incidental in our Church. We do this worldwide. For example, in the year 2015 we had 177 emergency response projects in 56 countries. In addition, we had hundreds of projects that benefited more than a million people in seven other categories of assistance, such as clean water, immunization, and vision care. For more than 30 years, the magnitude of

our membership—half in the United States and half elsewhere—is small in terms of capacity to help, we have three great advantages that magnify our impact.

First, the service traditions of our membership give us a resource of committed and experienced volunteers. To translate that into numbers, in 2015 our volunteers donated over 25 million hours of labor in our welfare, humanitarian, and other Church-sponsored projects,¹⁰ not counting what our members did privately.

Second, through our members' financial contributions to humanitarian causes, we come to the table with our own funding. While we have the ability to operate independent of bureaucratic structures and appropriations, we are also eager to coordinate our efforts with individual governments and with United Nations agencies for the greatest impact. We call upon them to look increasingly to the strengths of religious organizations.

Third, we have a global grassroots organization that can

be mobilized immediately. For example, on the worldwide problem of refugees, in March 2016 our First Presidency and our Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary General Presidents sent messages to members worldwide reminding them of the fundamental Christian principle of helping the poor and the “stranger” in our midst (Matthew 25:35). They invited girls and women of all ages to join in helping refugees in their local communities.¹¹

As a representative example of our members’ responses in Europe, one evening in April 2016, more than 200 Mormon congregants and their friends in Germany volunteered and packed 1,061 “welcome bags” for children living in six refugee centers in Germany in the states of Hessen and Rheinland-Pfalz. The bags contained new clothing, hygiene items, blankets, and art supplies. One of the women leading the effort said, “While I cannot change the tragic circumstances which made [refugees] flee from their homes, I can make a difference in [their] environment and be an active player in [their] lives.”

Here are two examples of our formally organized worldwide humanitarian efforts. In 2015, in full partnership with the British-based AMAR Foundation, LDS Charities constructed primary health care

centers for the Yezidi minority in northern Iraq, who were brutally targeted by ISIS. These health care centers—fully equipped with laboratory, urgent care, pharmacy, and ultrasound—bring relief to a population hurting both physically and spiritually. They employ Yezidi medical professionals and volunteers who aid their own people in culturally sensitive ways.

In 2004 the devastating earthquake and resulting tsunami in Southeast Asia on December 26 killed 230,000 people in 14 countries. Our LDS Charities arrived on site one day later and worked actively for five years. In the heavily affected Banda Aceh region alone, our charities built 900 permanent

houses, 24 village water systems, 15 primary schools, 3 medical centers, and 3 community centers that doubled as mosques. Additionally, we supplied copies of the holy Koran and prayer rugs to help those communities in their worship.

These are only some illustrations of the value of religion in a culture for which we in the religious community do not just advocate but also demand religious freedom, which we

consider to be the first freedom. ■

For the full text and video of this address in English, go to mormonnewsroom.org.



AMAR chair Baroness Emma Nicholson with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in London, England.

NOTES

1. See *The Wall between Church and State*, ed. Dallin H. Oaks (1963).
2. See Pew Research Center, “The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Major Religious Groups as of 2010,” Dec. 2012, 9, 24, pewforum.org.
3. See Pew Research Center, “Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities,” Feb. 26, 2015, 4, pewforum.org.
4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nation’s General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, un.org. This array of protections for religious practice is recognized widely in international and regional human rights documents. See, for example, the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” Dec. 16, 1966, Article 18; “Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,” 1981, Article 1; “European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,” 1950, Article 9; “American Convention on Human Rights” Nov. 22, 1969, Article 12; and “African Charter on Human and People’s Rights,” June 27, 1981, Article 8.
5. Amos N. Guiora, *Freedom from Religion: Rights and National Security* (2009) and Brian Leiter, *Why Tolerate Religion?* (2012).
6. Melanie Phillips, *The World Turned Upside Down: The Global Battle over God, Truth, and Power* (2010), xviii.
7. Jonathan Sacks, “The Moral Animal,” *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 2012, nytimes.com.
8. Jena McGregor, “The World’s Most Influential Management Thinker?” *Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2013, washingtonpost.com.
9. Clayton Christensen, “Religion Is the Foundation of Democracy and Prosperity,” Feb. 8, 2011, mormonperspectives.com.
10. This is a total of over 14 million Church-service hours by missionaries, nearly 8 million by welfare and humanitarian workers, and over 4 million by welfare work in wards.
11. See First Presidency letter, Mar. 26, 2016, and letter by General Presidents of Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary, Mar. 26, 2016.



We found that inviting Nikolai to live gospel principles was more effective than just telling him about them.

Many years ago, while working as a street vendor in a little town in Poland, I met a man named Nikolai Shaveko. We discovered that we both came from Chernigov, Ukraine, and quickly became friends.

Eventually I learned that Nikolai had no place to stay, so my wife and I invited him to stay with us. Our apartment wasn't very warm or comfortable, but we had an extra room. He gratefully agreed and stayed with us for a time. He began to see how we lived.

No Work on Sunday?

Like most vendors selling household goods, we needed to work long and hard to have enough money to live. But unlike most people, my wife and I didn't work Sundays. One day, Nikolai asked why. Why would we skip working and making money for an entire day?

"Sundays do not exist for working or making money," I told him. "They were made for a different purpose."

"But how can you afford to pay for food and rent if you don't work seven days a week?" he asked.

To answer his question, we invited him to come worship with us. That was his first experience hearing about the Church, and he didn't take to it right away. He still thought we were incredibly odd for choosing going to meetings over making money. But from that moment on,

SUNDAYS ARE FOR SOMETHING MORE

By Alexei Chemezov



we frequently talked to him about our beliefs, and little by little, he became more and more interested.

Try It, You Will See

Nikolai saw us living what we knew to be true. He saw the blessings that came into our lives. Yes, it was hard to earn enough money to live, but we knew that it was right to keep the Sabbath day holy. And the Lord blessed us. We always had enough money for the things we needed. That strengthened our testimony of the principle and helped us be better witnesses to Nikolai. We had the conviction to invite him, “Try it, and you will see!”

One week, he did.

Instead of going to work, he came to church with us. He didn’t think it was possible to work only six days a week, but because of the hope and blessings he saw in our lives, he tried it.

That week, when he counted his money, he was surprised. He had made more money that week than he normally made by working seven days a week!

Try Tithing Too

The same thing happened when we talked about tithing. At first, Nikolai couldn’t understand how we could give up 10 percent of our income.

“I will never have enough to do that!” he insisted.

We just shrugged. “If you try it, you will see.”

He was incredulous, but then slowly smiled. “So it’s like not working on Sundays,” he said. “If you pay your tithing, you will have enough money for yourself and what you need.”

That was a big revelation for Nikolai. He learned for himself that if we follow God’s commandments, God will bless us and things will work out for our benefit.

When Nikolai returned home to Chernigov, he invited the missionaries to teach him and his family. Soon he and his family joined the Church. Later, Nikolai served as a branch president, and his daughter served a mission in Russia.

We loved talking to Nikolai about the Church, but in the end, *inviting* him to live the principles of the gospel was more powerful than simply telling him about them. He and his family gained testimonies and changed their lives because they chose to live gospel truths. ■

The author lives in Lviv, Ukraine.



COME AND SEE

“We [invite] you to hear the restored truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ so you can study, ponder, pray, and come to know for yourself if the things we are sharing with you are true.

“ . . . Just as Jesus beckoned two of His disciples to ‘come and see’ (John 1:39), so we urge you to come and see if the restored gospel of Jesus Christ enlarges and enriches that which you already believe to be true.”

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Come and See,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 107.





REGAINING MY Covenants

I learned to hold dear my covenants after experiencing their loss through excommunication.

Name withheld

I was raised in the Church and baptized and confirmed at eight years old. The gospel was a way of life for me and for most of the people around me. The Holy Ghost was a very familiar presence in my life.

When I was excommunicated, I felt an almost tangible feeling leave me. I felt like my thinking process had been disrupted and slowed, and making decisions was confusing and difficult. I was anxious and had a hard time feeling peace.

I never realized how losing my membership would change my life completely. I could no longer wear the temple garment or attend the temple. I could not pay my tithing, serve in any calling, take the sacrament, or bear my testimony or pray in church. I no longer had the gift of the Holy Ghost. Most importantly I was not in a covenant relationship with my Savior through the ordinances of baptism and the temple.

I was devastated and frightened. My three children were then 16, 14, and 12. They were my heritage, and I so badly wanted to leave them with an inheritance of hope. I sat them down and told them that if I should die before I could get rebaptized, I needed them to perform the ordinance again in my behalf as soon as it was allowed. I was frightened that I no longer had the blessings of keeping my baptismal covenants, and I worried that I might not be washed clean again.

My Journey Back

I never had any question that the Church was true and that the gospel was how I wanted to live my life, so I continued going to church. I wanted Heavenly Father to know that I loved Him and that I was so sorry for my actions. I went to church every week even though it was very hard. The ward was uncomfortable with my being there, and only

a few people talked to me. However, one special young woman with Down's syndrome named Holly was particularly loving. Every Sunday as I would walk into the chapel, she would run up to me, throw her arms around me, give me a big hug, and say, "It's so good to see you! I love you!" I felt as if she were acting for the Savior, letting me know that He was happy I was there.

It was particularly difficult to have to let the sacrament pass by without being able to take it because I knew I was not receiving the blessings. Taking the sacrament is such a blessing. It is incredible to have the blessing of being made clean through the power of the Savior and His atoning sacrifice, to be forgiven of our sins and shortcomings week after week, and to recommit with love and faithfulness to the covenant we have made to always remember our Savior and keep His commandments.

Because paying my tithing was so important to me, I set up a bank account and put my tithing in it each month. I needed the Lord to know that even though He couldn't take my tithing now, I still wanted to pay it. I was single at the time and raising my three teenage daughters, and I felt that I needed those blessings of showing the Lord my willingness to pay tithing, even though I couldn't. I have no doubt we were extremely blessed because of it.

Blessings Restored

I was rebaptized a little over a year after my excommunication. What a relief it was to come up out of the water knowing that Jesus was now my advocate, my partner. He had paid for my sins, and I was again in a covenant relationship with Him. I was filled with gratitude!

I received the gift of the Holy Ghost again. I felt once again a tangible presence: my dear friend was back to stay! I wanted to try so hard not to offend Him again so that He wouldn't have to leave me.

I closed out the account with my tithing in it, wrote the check, and excitedly gave it to my bishop.

Five years later I was able to have my temple blessings restored. I felt so relieved and grateful. Once again I was covered in love and protected with the power of the covenants I had made in the temple.

I am now sealed to a man who adores me, and I him, and together we are actively working to establish our sealing as a covenant relationship that will last through the eternities.

The Bondage of Guilt

In the 20 years since, I have sometimes felt a sense of deep guilt wash over me and cause me great unhappiness and worry. I wondered if I had done enough to repent and whether I was truly forgiven. As recently as just a few years ago, my feelings matched those of Alma the Younger, described in Alma 36:12–13:

"I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

"Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments."

One day I knelt down in prayer and asked, "Father, have I done enough? I will do whatever I need to, to have this taken from me." Then I waited and listened with my heart.

The answer came very clearly: "You have done enough." I was overcome with pure joy. I couldn't stop smiling, and happy tears flowed. All that day I found myself giddy with joy. All the shame and guilt was gone for good.

Again I reflected on the experience of Alma the Younger:



“I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:19–20).

My journey to regain my membership in the Church and my covenant relationship with the Savior was heart-wrenching and tender. I came out of this trial knowing that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is most precious. It has taken me almost all of these 20 years to get past the shame and guilt of my excommunication and to find the strength to share my experiences with others. I hope my experience inspires others to find courage to change and to reach out to those who want to change. I can stand and testify without a doubt that the Atonement of Christ is real. His power can change your life not only for the better but for the very best.

I love my membership in the Church dearly. It is a priceless gift and an incredible blessing in my life. I never want to be without it again. ■



THE WAY TO GREATER HAPPINESS

“Wherever you are on the path to inherit the gift of eternal life, you have the opportunity to show many people the way to greater happiness. When you choose whether to make or keep a covenant with God, you choose whether you will leave an inheritance of hope to those who might follow your example.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Priceless Heritage of Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 22.





**By Elder
Richard J. Maynes**
Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

The First Vision

KEY TO TRUTH

Let us not forget or take for granted the many precious truths we have learned from Joseph Smith's First Vision.

The Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days was foreseen and predicted by prophets throughout history. The Restoration, therefore, should not come as a surprise to those who study the scriptures. Dozens of prophetic statements throughout the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon clearly predict and point toward the Restoration of the gospel.¹

In the late 1790s, approximately 2,400 years after King Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream that “the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44), a decades-long series of religious revivals

began in the United States. These revivals are known by historians as part of the Second Great Awakening. It was through these revival meetings’ competing notions of salvation that Joseph Smith and his family navigated their religious commitment.

Joseph was greatly influenced by the teachings and discussions of his father, who searched for but could not find among the revivalist sects any that were organized like the ancient order of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Joseph would listen and ponder during family Bible study. By the age of 12, he began to worry about his sins and the welfare of his immortal soul, which led him to search the scriptures for himself.



naturally they differ in emphasis and detail. Historians expect that when an individual retells an experience in multiple settings to different audiences over many years, each account will emphasize various aspects of the experience and contain unique details. Indeed, differences similar to those in the First Vision accounts exist in the multiple scriptural accounts of Paul's vision on the road to Damascus and the Apostles' experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet despite the differences, a basic consistency remains across all the accounts of the First Vision. Some have mistakenly argued that any variation in the retelling of the story is evidence of fabrication. To the contrary, the rich historical record enables us to learn more about this remarkable event than we could if it were less well documented.”²

1832 Account

First, the 1832 account is the earliest detailed written account of the First Vision. It is part of a six-page autobiography, most of which is in Joseph's hand. This document has been in the Church's possession since it was written. After the pioneers' trek West, it remained packed in a trunk for several years and was generally unknown until it was published in a master's thesis in 1965.³ It has since been published repeatedly, including on LDS.org and in *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

In this document, Joseph relates distress at not knowing where to find the Savior's forgiveness. He testifies, “The Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.”⁴ Some have interpreted this statement to mean that Joseph referred to the appearance of only one divine being, but when read in light of the other documents, this phrase can be

As Joseph Smith searched the scriptures, he decided to “do as James directs, that is, ask of God.”

As he searched, he decided to “do as James directs, that is, ask of God” (Joseph Smith—History 1:13; see also James 1:5). The subsequent appearance of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Joseph ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Four Accounts

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote or dictated four known accounts of his First Vision. Additionally, his contemporaries recorded their memories of what they heard Joseph say about the vision; five such accounts are known. It is a blessing to have these records. They make Joseph's First Vision the best-documented vision in history. I encourage you to visit history.lds.org to learn more about the accounts and see how they work together to paint a more complete picture.

The Gospel Topics essay “First Vision Accounts” states: “The various accounts of the First Vision tell a consistent story, though

understood to mean that God the Father opened the heavens and revealed His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph.

This account beautifully emphasizes the Savior's Atonement and the personal redemption He offered to Joseph. It says, in part: "The Lord . . . spake unto me saying, 'Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life.'" Joseph testified that he experienced joy and love but could find no one who believed. "My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me, but [I] could find none that would believe the heavenly vision. Nevertheless, I pondered these things in my heart."⁵

1835 Account

Next, the 1835 account is Joseph's description of his vision to Robert Matthews, a visitor to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835. It was recorded in Joseph's journal by his scribe. It was not included in early editions of Joseph's history and was first published in *BYU Studies* in the 1960s. In this account, Joseph testifies that God appeared to him first, and then he saw the Savior as well: "I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; it presently rested down upon me and filled me with joy unspeakable. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first. He said unto me, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'" In this account, Joseph also noted, "I saw many angels in this vision."⁶

1838 Account

The 1838 account is the best-known account and comes from Joseph's Manuscript History. The first draft was written after Joseph fled Kirtland early in 1838, and the second draft was prepared shortly after his escape from Missouri in 1839. So it was written in the context of great opposition. It was first published in 1842 in *Times and Seasons*, the Church's newspaper in Nauvoo, Illinois. It was also included in the Pearl of Great Price in 1851, which was originally a pamphlet for British Saints. It was canonized as scripture in 1880.

Multiple drafts of this account have been published in

The Joseph Smith Papers. Like the 1835 account, the central question of this account is which church is right. As a history of the Church, and not just of Joseph, this account "focuses on the vision as the beginning of the 'rise and progress of the Church.'"⁷ Therefore, it doesn't include the information about the personal forgiveness mentioned in the previous two accounts.

1842 Account

And finally, the 1842 account is in response to a request for information from John Wentworth, the editor of the *Chicago Democrat*. Joseph wrote him a letter that included not only the Articles of Faith but also a description of his First Vision. The letter was published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. With Joseph's permission, it was published again in 1844 by historian Israel Daniel Rupp in his book about Christian denominations in the United States.⁸ This account was intended for an audience unfamiliar with Mormon beliefs. It was written during a welcomed lull in the opposition the Prophet faced.

As with other accounts, Joseph noted the confusion he had experienced and the appearance of two personages in answer to his prayer: "I was enwrapped in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages who exactly resembled each other in features, and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon-day. They told me that all religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as his church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to 'go not after them,' at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me."⁹

It is a blessing to have these accounts of Joseph's First Vision. Like the individual New Testament Gospels that together more completely describe Christ's life and ministry, each of the accounts describing Joseph's First Vision adds unique detail and perspective to the total experience. Together they tell Joseph's consistent, harmonious story. They all emphasize that there was confusion and strife among Christian churches; that Joseph desired to know

which, if any, was right; that he searched the scriptures and prayed; that a light descended from heaven; and that divine beings appeared and answered his prayer.

“I Could Not Deny It”

The canonized 1838 version of Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision is the most powerful learning experience anyone on earth could have. This experience changed Joseph’s life, it has changed my life, and I know it has or will change your life as you go to the Lord for confirmation of its reality.

As stated in the document “First Vision Accounts,” found on LDS.org: “Joseph Smith testified repeatedly that he experienced a remarkable vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Neither the truth of the First Vision nor the arguments against it can be proven by historical research alone. Knowing the truth of Joseph Smith’s testimony requires each earnest seeker of truth to study the record and then exercise sufficient faith in Christ to ask God in sincere, humble prayer whether the record is true. If the seeker asks with real intent to act upon the answer revealed by the Holy Ghost, the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s vision will be manifest. In this way, every person can know that Joseph Smith spoke honestly when he declared, ‘I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it’ [Joseph Smith—History 1:25].”

According to President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), “The greatest event that has ever occurred in the world, since the resurrection of the Son of God from the tomb and his ascension on high, was the coming of the Father and of the Son to that boy Joseph Smith.”¹⁰

Truths from the First Vision

It is an amazing and enlightening experience to analyze what we learn from this sacred, awe-inspiring experience. I would like to share a sampling of truths we learn from Joseph Smith’s First Vision regarding the eternal nature of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ; the reality of Satan; the struggle between good and evil; and other important aspects of the great plan of salvation.

We learn that the scriptures are true and can be taken literally and applied in our lives.

We learn that pondering the scriptures brings power and insight.

We learn that knowledge alone isn’t enough; acting on what we know results in God’s blessings.

We learn to put our trust in God and look to Him for answers to life’s most important questions and not to put our trust in man.

We learn that prayers are answered according to our unwavering faith and according to Heavenly Father’s will.

We learn the reality of Satan’s existence and that he has actual power to influence the physical world, including us.

We learn that Satan’s power is limited and superseded by God’s power.

We learn that Satan will stop at nothing to destroy the work of God and that Satan must have known the





WHAT JOSEPH LEARNED

“Joseph Smith learned in those minutes [of the First Vision], however long or brief, more about the nature of God than all of the learned divines of all time had ever learned.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 3.

importance of Joseph Smith in his role as the Prophet of the Restoration.

We learn that we can overcome Satan by calling upon God and putting our complete faith and trust in Him.

We learn that where there is light, darkness must depart.

We learn that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate and distinct beings, resembling each other in features and likeness.

We learn that we are created in God’s image.

We learn that Christ is risen.

We learn that God knows us personally and is aware of our needs and concerns. He called Joseph by name.

We learn of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus defers to His Father, and the Father communicates with mortals here upon the earth through His Son.

We learn that Jesus Christ is beloved of His Father by the Father’s designating Jesus as His Beloved Son.

We learn that the true Church of Jesus Christ as He originally organized it was not found upon the earth at the time of Joseph Smith, confirming the reality of the Great Apostasy foretold by Paul the Apostle.

We learn that when we care enough to desire God’s input in our life, He will reveal a refining course for us. At Joseph’s time all the denominations and sects were wrong.

We learn that every dispensation of time receives the visions, blessings, and glories of God.

We learn insight into how God chooses His prophets.

We learn that God chooses the pure in heart who are righteous and have righteous

desires to do His work, confirming the teaching from the Bible that God looks upon the heart and does not choose based on outward appearance or social status or standing (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

Joseph Smith’s First Vision is the key to unlocking many truths that had been hidden for centuries. Let us not forget or take for granted the many precious truths we have learned from the First Vision. ■

From a worldwide devotional for young adults, “The Truth Restored,” delivered at the Salt Lake Tabernacle on May 1, 2016; for the full text and video, go to lds.org/broadcasts. The full text of the four accounts of the First Vision can be found at history.lds.org/firstvision.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Deuteronomy 4:27–31; Isaiah 60–62; Jeremiah 30–33; Ezekiel 37:15–28; Amos 9:11; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12; Acts 3:19–21; Romans 11:25–27; Ephesians 1:9–10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3; Revelation 14:6; 1 Nephi 13:34–42; 2 Nephi 26:14–17; Jacob 6:1–4; 3 Nephi 21.
2. “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
3. See Paul R. Cheesman, “An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith’s Early Visions” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1965), 126–32, scholarsarchive.byu.edu.
4. Joseph Smith, in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2012), 12–13; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also Dean C. Jessee, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” in John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson, eds., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (2005), 1–34; “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
5. See Joseph Smith, in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, 12–13; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
6. See Joseph Smith, in *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (2008), 88; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized; see also “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
7. “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
8. See I. Daniel Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia: An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (1844), 404–10.
9. *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, 494; see also “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 14.



THE Faithful

HIGH COUNCILOR

*I learned a valuable lesson about “lifting where you stand”
from a faithful high priest in Germany.*

By Donald A. Coe

In October 2008, as I was listening to the broadcast of the priesthood session of general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, began speaking about serving in the Church. He related a story about how he and some other brethren had tried to move a heavy piano. When all efforts failed, one man urged them to simply stand close together and “lift where you stand.”¹

President Uchtdorf went on to talk about serving in the Church wherever you are called to serve. Some people feel they could serve better if only they were called to do something befitting their considerable talents. He said, “No calling is beneath us. Every calling provides an opportunity to serve and to grow.”²

As President Uchtdorf spoke, my mind drifted to a time I met an unassuming member of the Church who was willing to lift wherever he was standing.

In 1985, I was stationed as a U.S. Army officer in a small town in Germany. I had served a mission in Germany 10 years previously. Upon arriving in 1983 as a soldier with my wife, Debra, and two young daughters, we began attending a serviceman’s branch of about 100 members strong. After two years, we decided to immerse ourselves fully into the German culture and began attending the small Bad Kreuznach Branch, which had about 12 members.

About the second week after we began attending, we noticed a new man there. He was in his mid-40s, and we learned that he was the high councilor assigned to our branch. He wasn’t there to conduct stake business, just to visit. We spoke for some time after church, and when we said good-bye, I figured we would next see him again in perhaps six months.

The next week, the high councilor was there again. I learned he lived about an hour away from our small town. During the remainder of his calling as a high councilor, he came to our branch two or three times a month. He was friendly, low-keyed, and encouraging. He always spoke with each member of the branch. And, with a branch that small, he was often asked to speak from the pulpit. Impressed with his dedication, in my mind I nicknamed him “the Faithful High Councilor.”

One Sunday he came to the branch services in the morning and then returned at 6:00 p.m. to attend a baptism. In between, he had gone to another branch. I have to admit that the thought actually crossed my mind, “What did he do to upset the stake president? Why else would he have been assigned to the smallest and most remote branch in the stake?” Maybe he wasn’t really the intelligent, humble, and likeable man I thought him to be. Maybe he didn’t like his home ward and used this assignment to get

away. I couldn't figure it out, so I just accepted it.

Several weeks after this baptism, I returned home after midnight on a Sunday morning. I had been training near the border between East and West Germany, and it had taken me three and a half hours to get home. I was exhausted when I walked in the door. My wife, Debra, was still up. She told me that "the Faithful High Councilor" had called. He wanted to meet with me. I asked, "Before or after church?" Church started at 10:00 a.m. I was hoping it was after church so I could sleep until 8:30.

"Before," she said.

"9:30?"

"No. He has to go somewhere else on stake business. He wants you to meet him at his office in Frankfurt. He said to go to Gate 5."

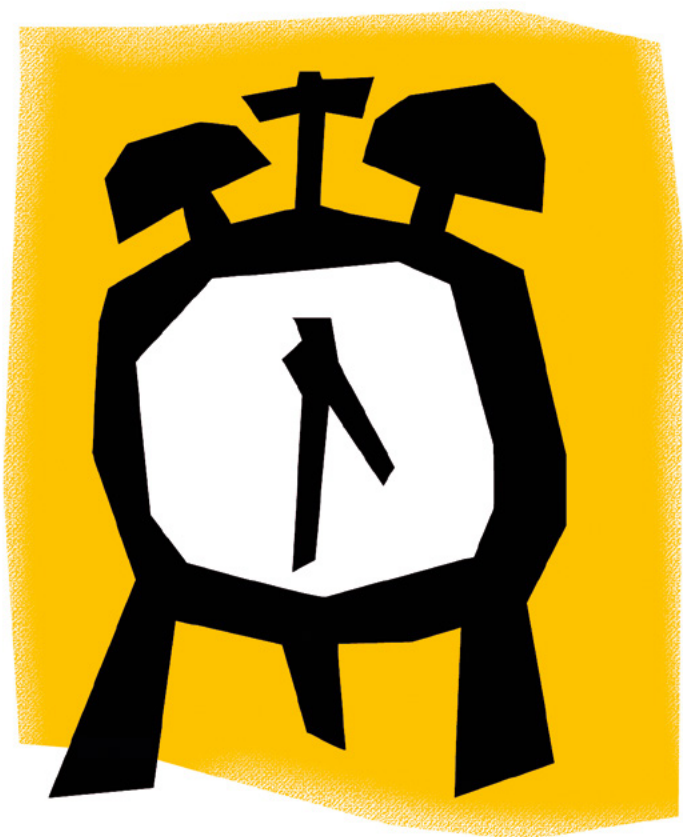
"What time?" I asked.

"Six," she responded.

Now I was upset. It was already 12:30 a.m. In order to make the appointment at 6:00, I would have to get up at 4:30. That meant less than four hours of sleep. What was I going to do? I didn't even have a phone number to call him the next morning to tell him I wouldn't be meeting him. I dropped my clothes next to the bed and lay down without setting the alarm clock. As I lay there, these thoughts went through my mind:

If I didn't meet "the Faithful High Councilor," what would happen? If I didn't show up at his office, I was sure he would make productive use of his time. The next time I spoke to him and explained why I hadn't met him, he would respond, "Of course you made the right decision. I would never have asked you to come if I had known you were getting home so late. We can take care of that business now." And besides, I wasn't *really* a member of the branch. Sure, our records were there and we attended every week, but we were foreigners, spoke some pretty atrocious German, and would be moving in five or six months.

My conscience was almost clear. A few more minutes



I set the alarm for 4:30 a.m. because I truly respected "the Faithful High Councilor."

and I could drift off to sleep. Then I remembered the nickname I had given him and all the times "the Faithful High Councilor" had come to the branch since we had been attending. He came to that baptism late on a Sunday night. He came to a branch activity in the middle of the week. He always spoke to all the members and encouraged and inspired them. He never seemed judgmental or indifferent. He was respectful of the branch president and of his efforts. If he was disappointed in being assigned to this little branch, he certainly never showed it.

I got up and walked over to the dresser where my alarm clock sat. I set the alarm for 4:30 a.m. In deciding to meet "the Faithful High Councilor," I was not concerned about what he would say or think if I did not. After all, I would probably never see or hear of him again after we moved. I decided to get up in less than four hours and drive 50 miles (80 km) to his office because I truly respected him for what he was, "the Faithful High Councilor." I decided to follow his example.

I pulled my car up to Gate 5 at 6:00 a.m. that Sunday morning to be greeted by a security guard with a machine



gun. He eyed my American Armed Forces license plate. He may have wondered if I was lost. Had “the Faithful High Councilor” decided not to show up? Not more than two minutes later, though, his car pulled up next to mine. He said, “Good morning, Don. Let’s go into my office.” The guard opened the gate and let us pass.

After some small talk and showing me around his office building, he came to the point of the meeting. He said he was calling me to serve as the councilor to the branch president. Not the first or second counselor—the only counselor. Before my arrival, there had been only two priesthood holders in the branch, and they had traded off every few years between being branch president and elders quorum president.

I accepted the call and served until I left three months later to attend a two-month training in the United States.

During my absence, my wife and young son both became ill. His medical issues took him to a hospital about 60 miles (97 km) from our base. Being a strong army wife, Debra never complained or asked me to return to Germany. In fact, I didn’t learn of the true nature of *her* illness until after I got home. After one visit to the local clinic, the doctor had driven her home because he didn’t think she was well enough to drive herself. The branch president and Relief Society president both offered to help, but she politely refused. In addition to language and cultural difficulties, Debra didn’t want to put anyone out.

One day “the Faithful High Councilor” called her. He had recently been called to be the stake president. He gently

inquired about her health and refused to take “I’m doing all right” for an answer. Every assurance from Debra was met with a gentle but effective inquiry into the actual condition of the family. Finally he explained, “Debra, you need

to let the branch help you. They really want to help, and it will bring the branch closer together to be able to assist you.” She gratefully accepted their assistance.

Upon my return from the United States, we stayed in the branch for another two months before finally moving to a larger city.

My memories of that time in my life faded as I leaned forward in my seat and refocused my attention on President Uchtdorf’s voice coming over the speaker system. I was truly impressed by the implications of his message. Unlike other times when I’ve wondered about the correlation between a speaker’s words and the speaker’s personal actions (in business, in the military, and, yes, even some talks I have heard in church), I had no doubt about President Uchtdorf’s message. It wasn’t just the fact that President Uchtdorf’s accent reminded me of Germany and my experience with “the Faithful High Councilor.” It was the fact that President Uchtdorf *was* “the Faithful High Councilor.” The industrial complex we met at that early Sunday morning was the Frankfurt International Airport, where he was Chief Pilot for Lufthansa German Airlines.

I can honestly say I have never known a man more humble and more faithful in practicing what he preached. I was grateful to have learned a valuable lesson of what it means to “lift where you stand.” ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 53.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” 56.

Mikael is a physician scientist. His clinical specialty is in neuro-oncology, and he has a PhD in molecular biology. He sees patients with brain tumors at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard University's cancer hospital, and he does research in the development of cancer drugs.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Mikael Rinne

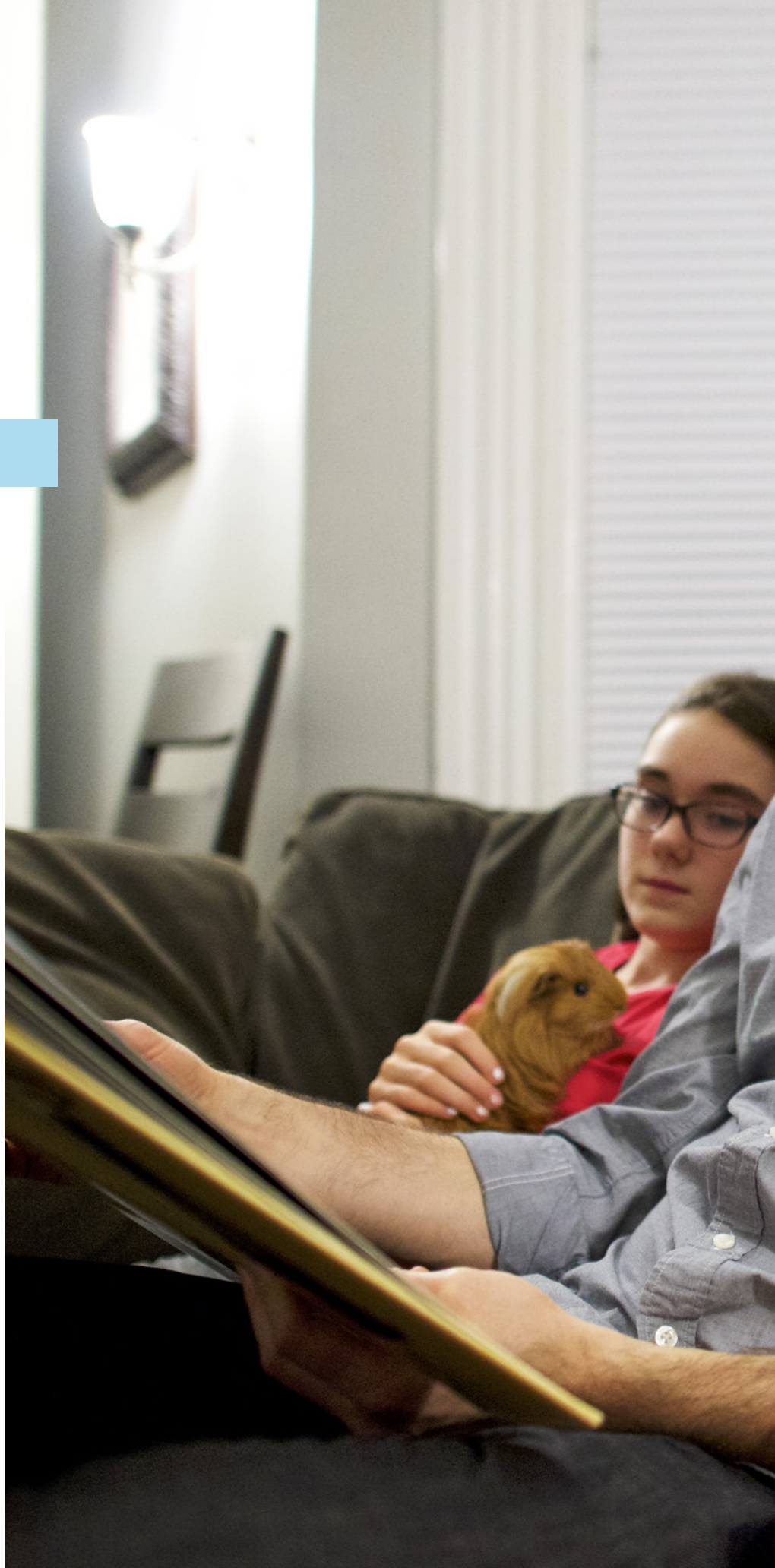
Massachusetts, USA

There's a myth that faith and science are in conflict. We're given the impression that science has all the answers, that we've "figured it all out." But there's far more that we don't know than we do know.

As a bishop, I see members with crises of faith. They come to me and say, "I think more scientifically, so I have a really hard time with faith." It helps some of them who have doubts to know that their bishop is a Harvard scientist who believes in God. That helps them realize, "I can believe but also be intellectual."

Read more of Mikael's story in the *Liahona* online at lds.org/go/61736.

Read "Science and Our Search for Truth" in the July 2016 *Liahona* at lds.org/go/49m.







I couldn't believe my family was helping me with something that meant so much to me.

CHURCH CLEANING AND GOSPEL TEACHING

On a Saturday afternoon, I was getting ready to go to the beach with my family. They had traveled from Amazonas to La Guaira to spend a few days with me. The sun was bright, the ocean breezes were perfect, and I was happy to see my sisters' excitement.

Once we were on the road, I remembered that I was in charge of cleaning the church building that day. I now had a choice to make: Should I fulfill my responsibility or continue to the beach with my family? I decided to talk to my mom and sisters about it. They had never been inside an LDS church and enthusiastically offered to help me clean, as long as we headed right to the beach when we finished.

When we entered the church, I explained what needed to be done and how to do it. What we thought would be a quick cleaning job ended up taking four hours because they

were so interested! I showed my family each room, the paintings, and the baptismal font. An immense joy filled my heart. I couldn't believe my family was helping me with something that meant so much to me. While we were there, my teenage sisters, Thalia and Gineska, learned some hymns and asked me questions about the Church. On Sunday my family attended church for the first time. They were well received in the ward. The young women quickly welcomed my sisters. The sister missionaries met them and set an appointment to meet with them the next day. We held family home evening, and I taught them how to pray. We prayed together often. We also listened to hymns and watched Church videos.

Before my family returned home, I took my sisters to Caracas to see the temple and its grounds. I bore my

testimony of temple blessings and encouraged them to find the Church when they returned to Amazonas.

When they left for home, I contacted the missionaries in their area. The missionaries and members of the ward council visited my family and helped them on their way to conversion. My sisters prayed often for our father to give them permission to be baptized.

With great gratitude and joy, I traveled to Amazonas to baptize Thalia and Gineska. The glow in their eyes reflected their hope and their gratitude to Heavenly Father for leading them to the gospel. Through fulfilling an assignment to clean the church, my family came closer together and was strengthened. I will never forget this experience and I know my sisters will not either. ■

Armando Córcega, La Guaira, Venezuela

CHRISTLIKE MOTHERING

I swept pretzels, cereal, popcorn, and chips into a pile.

“Nope. I didn’t eat any of these things,” I said as I brushed them into a dustpan.

My husband, sitting at the table, said quietly, “It’s the mother’s sacrifice.”

I straightened up. “What?” I asked.

He spoke louder and clearer between bites of breakfast: “It’s what mothers do. They spend their lives cleaning up messes that they had no hand in making—just like the Savior did.”

This observation was profound to me. I should have been pleased to consider that sweeping crumbs was more Christlike than I had thought. But instead, I felt a wave of guilt. I felt uncomfortable with the comparison. How many times had I mentioned to my spouse or simply to myself all the things I had done for my children, hoping for recognition and gratitude?

My husband, sitting at the table, said quietly, “It’s the mother’s sacrifice.”

It didn’t seem wrong to desire that my children be more grateful, but in that moment of clarity, I saw that my desire was more about *me* receiving praise or compensation than it was about them learning gratitude. But the Savior never required praise. He never asked for it or wanted it.

I can recall conversations with my teenage children when they would list all the things they had done for me in an attempt to get out of a work request.

I would usually reply, “Well, if you’d like to compare service lists, we can, but you’d lose, so get to work!”

I then realized my motives were rarely pure enough for the comparison my husband had made. The Savior never keeps a list to compare what He’s done to what I’ve done. I would lose every time.

With the broom still in my hand, I awoke to a new concept of mothering—mothering as *He* would. Not for

praise, recognition, a hug, or even a thank-you. I would sweep up crumbs with love because that is what He would do.

Everything He did was in obedience to His Father. It was never about Him. The Lord always mends the broken and cleans up our messes infinitely with perfect love, for His Father and for us. I will now strive to teach and serve my children with the purest love I can. Only then do I feel like I am truly participating in Christlike mothering. ■

Rachel Hixon,
Arizona, USA





We heard a faint voice calling to us from the compound. We looked over the fence and saw a man lying on the cement.

A BLESSING FOR A STRANGER

Years after my family and I joined the Church, I received a call to serve in the Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission. On a sunny day shortly after I arrived in my first area, my companion and I set out for our usual proselyting and contacting.

As we passed through a populated street, we heard a faint voice calling to us from a low-fenced compound. We looked over the fence and saw a middle-aged man lying flat on his stomach by the gate.

He bade us come in, but there was no way we could enter the compound. The gate was locked and we thought that scaling over the fence would be unethical. I was prompted to check the padlock on the gate again. After a few minutes we managed to remove the padlock from the outside and open the gate. We could see that the man had been sick and unattended to. He explained that he

had been ill and felt intense pain that prevented him from standing up.

After talking with him, we followed him as he crept back into his house. He asked that we pray for him, and we offered to give him a blessing. When we laid our hands upon his head, I felt a lump in my throat and couldn't utter a word. Fear came over me, I began to shake and sweat, and tears flowed down my cheeks. I struggled to pray aloud, so I began to pray in my heart that Heavenly Father would loosen my tongue according to His will.

Suddenly, my tongue gained utterance. I knew I was speaking, but I wasn't in control of the words. I just heard my own voice asking Heavenly Father to heal this suffering man. Before we said amen, the man had fallen asleep. We left him and went to our other appointments but planned to come back on our way to our apartment to check on him.

We returned and to my great astonishment, the man came running toward us, shouting, "It worked! It worked!" We were so overwhelmed with joy I couldn't hold back my tears.

In sacrament meeting the following Sunday, the bishop suddenly paused at the pulpit and looked straight at the chapel door. We looked back and saw the man we had blessed. The bishop knew him and was surprised at his entering a church. From then on, the man attended sacrament meetings and other classes regularly. I was eventually transferred out of the area.

It is amazing to me how God provided a miracle that day, and I am humbled that Heavenly Father found me worthy. I know we were instruments in God's hands. The blessing of healing belonged to that man, but the blessing of testimony and joy belonged to me. ■

Stanley Olaye, Lagos, Nigeria

FASTING FOR HELP AT WORK

After faithfully serving a mission in Mozambique, I returned home and, like many other returned missionaries, quickly turned to my studies and work.

I lived in Brazil in a city that borders Paraguay and found employment importing products for a large supermarket on the Paraguayan side. The blessing of having learned English on my mission helped me gain this position. During this time, I was married and blessed with a daughter.

When a financial crisis in Brazil culminated in the decline of Brazil's currency, my work was directly affected. It caused a decline in the sales of the products I regularly imported. By the end of February the following year, I was left with

practically nothing to do. Losing my job was almost certain, as had been the case with other colleagues. I became worried about supporting my wife and little daughter. I even started looking for another job.

I spoke with my wife about the situation. She suggested that we fast. While we fasted, peace enveloped our hearts and we felt that all would be well, although I could not imagine how.

The following day at work, my manager called me in. I thought that the dreaded moment had come—I was about to lose my job. But to my surprise, my manager told me that he had an idea. Because I had ability with English, he proposed that I translate legal documents that normally were

handed over to lawyers to arrange for translation. He told me if I succeeded in performing the translation, I would be given that task and it would result in a savings for the department. I immediately began translating the documents. When I presented my manager the successful translations, he was thrilled! I was thrilled too because I was able to remain employed.

When I went to receive my check, which could have been my last, I was surprised to see that my salary had increased. My heart was touched, and I was grateful to our Heavenly Father. Through this experience I know that fasting opens the windows of heaven. ■

Carlos Alberto Paim Quadros, Ponta Porã, Brazil

I know that fasting opens the windows of heaven.

Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning

By David B. Marsh

Priesthood and Family Department of
the Church

A kindergarten teacher was once observing her class of children while they drew. As she walked around to see each child's artwork, she asked one little girl, "What are you drawing?" The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." Somewhat surprised, the teacher said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without hesitation, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

Wouldn't it be nice to have such confidence? In actuality, Heavenly Father wants us to become confident in our knowledge of Him. The Lord told Jeremiah that we should not glory in our wisdom or in our might or in our riches. Rather, He said, "let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (see Jeremiah 9:23–24).

The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will

make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him . . . from the least to the greatest."¹

Becoming confident in our knowledge of God does not happen without personal effort. Parents and teachers can help, but we must become self-reliant gospel learners. Just as we learn how to feed ourselves physically to sustain our bodies, we must learn how to feed ourselves spiritually to sustain our spirits.

Years ago the seagulls in St. Augustine, Florida, USA, were starving. For generations the gulls had learned to depend on the shrimp fleets to feed them scraps from their nets. The shrimpers eventually moved from the area. The seagulls had not



**When we
become self-reliant
gospel learners, we
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and strengthen
our relationship
with God.**





learned how to fish for themselves; nor did they teach their young how to fish. Consequently, the big, beautiful birds were dying even while there was plenty of fish all around them in the water.²

We cannot afford to become like the seagulls; nor can we let our children go through life dependent on us, or others, for their knowledge of the Lord. “Our efforts,” said President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, “must always be directed toward making able-bodied people self-reliant.”³ When we become self-reliant gospel learners, we know how to feed ourselves spiritually and strengthen our relationship with God.

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught, “Spiritual

self-reliance is the sustaining power in the Church. If we rob you of that, how can you get the revelation that there is a prophet of God? How can you get answers to prayer? How can you get answers to prayer? How can you answer all your questions and provide so many ways to solve all of your problems, we may end up weakening you, not strengthening you.”⁴

While we enjoy learning and receiving inspiration at church, we cannot rely solely on that for our spiritual nourishment. President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) explained, “I fear that as members of the Church we depend too much upon the auxiliary organizations, and upon the advice and counsel of those outside our own households. We have already heard of many of the blessings that the Lord has given to us in the sacred

records that have been kept until our day, and that contain the advice and counsel of an all-wise Father. It seems strange that so many of our people . . . lack familiarity with the contents of these sacred records.”⁵

I enjoy learning the gospel at church, but I get more excited about the gospel when I discover inspired insights during my personal study. There is nothing more thrilling to me than finding a small treasure of truth in the scriptures that enlightens my understanding and fills me with the Spirit of the Lord.

Learn How to Learn

When I returned from my mission, I found it necessary to go to firesides and devotionals almost weekly to maintain my spirituality. The speakers fed me with their gospel insights, and I appreciated the way those insights made me feel. I had studied and taught the gospel for two years, but I didn’t seem to have the necessary skills to feed myself on a regular basis. I was just reading the scriptures and not really searching them diligently.

Gospel study is much like learning to paint. It is not intuitive or natural for everyone. We would not think of giving someone a paint palette and expect that person to become an artist immediately. Becoming a self-reliant gospel learner is the same. We can’t expect to discover great insights on a regular basis if we haven’t learned

some basic gospel-study skills. President Packer explained that the scriptures “contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel, an eternity of knowledge. But one must learn to use them or the search will be discouraging.”⁶

That’s how it was for me—discouraging—when I first tried to find meaning and guidance from my scripture study. So I began to analyze how the speakers got their insights. It took a while, but I eventually saw how they extracted specific statements of doctrine from the scriptures; how they mined meaningful teachings about the Savior from the verses; how they formulated life-guiding principles from scriptural phrases; how they interpreted symbols; and how they connected the teachings of prophets and apostles to specific verses of scripture.

As I continued my study of the scriptures and the teachings of prophets and apostles, I found myself asking questions:

- What doctrine is being taught in these verses, and what do I learn about that doctrine?
- Where and when have I seen this gospel principle effectively applied?
- What do I learn about Heavenly Father and His plan for my happiness?
- What do I learn about Jesus Christ and His Atonement?





- What does the Lord want me to learn from this?
- What inspired thoughts and feelings am I receiving as I read?
- Is there something here that helps me with a current challenge in my life?
- What do I learn that will help me live from day to day?

Powerful, Persuasive Teachers

As my scripture study changed, so did my teaching. I became more interested in helping people discover gospel truths that would guide them than I was in telling them what the scriptures meant to me.⁷ It thrilled me to see the joy others felt when they discovered something new. It was, and is, one of the most gratifying experiences of my teaching experience.

I also found that when I helped those I taught consistently use the

skills and questions above, their ability to become self-reliant gospel learners accelerated. They didn't have to go through the long process I went through.

Learning comes before teaching, and good learners make more spiritually inspiring teachers. "Seek not to declare my word," said the Lord, "but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21). Who wouldn't want that magnificent blessing!

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has emphasized the growing need for us to become self-reliant gospel learners:

"I suspect we emphasize and know much more about a teacher teaching by the Spirit than we do

about a learner learning by faith. Clearly, the principles and processes of both teaching and learning are spiritually essential. However, as we look to the future and anticipate the ever more confused and turbulent world in which we will live, I believe it will be essential for all of us to increase our capacity to seek learning by faith. . . .

"Ultimately, the responsibility to learn by faith and apply spiritual truth rests upon each of us individually. This is an increasingly serious and important responsibility in the world in which we do now and will yet live. What, how, and when we learn is supported by—but is not dependent upon—an instructor, a method of presentation, or a specific topic or lesson format."⁸

Blessings of Self-reliant Learning

We are certainly blessed by the inspired teachings of parents and Church teachers, but perhaps more important is learning to inspire ourselves. When we become self-reliant gospel learners, we are better able to invite personal revelation. Self-reliant gospel learners don't need incentives to study regularly beyond knowing that the next time they study they will be edified rather than bored. Self-reliant gospel learners are also better equipped to survive the onslaught of sophistry that is so prevalent in our 21st-century society.

At least one of the Lord's promises seems largely meant for self-reliant gospel learners: "Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37).

President Thomas S. Monson has promised, "If you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased."⁹

Self-reliant gospel learners experience the Savior's promise:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37–38).

I still have a lot to understand, but becoming a self-reliant gospel learner is one of the best things I've done. It has blessed every aspect of my life. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 268.
2. See "Fable of the Gullible Gull," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1950, 32.
3. Marion G. Romney, "The Celestial Nature of Self-reliance," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 91.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Aug. 1975, 87.
5. George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 30; see also *The Teachings of George Albert Smith*, eds. Robert and Susan McIntosh (1996), 53.
6. Boyd K. Packer, "Agency and Control," *Ensign*, May 1983, 67.
7. President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) taught, "The aim of the Church is to the help people to help themselves" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 3).
8. David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61, 65; *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 17, 21.
9. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 68.



SOLDIER FOR THE LORD

By Enoc R. Verde Reyes

Many years ago I served as a full-time missionary in the Mexico Monterrey North Mission. I felt it a great privilege to give missionary service.

When I began my mission, I left one matter unresolved. I had not yet received the paper relating to my discharge from military service. This document is extremely important. It means that a young man has completed his mandatory military service and has the right to work and study. He is recognized as a citizen of Mexico.

As the date for the issue of this document approached, I began to worry. I wrote to my parents and asked them to see if it was possible for them to pick up my military service book. When I received their next letter, I worried even more. They told me that they had already been informed that it could be released only to the person to whom it belonged.

I felt an urgent need to pray to the Lord and ask Him what to do. The

answer, which did not come immediately, was that I should explain my problem to my mission president. During my conversation with him, two alternatives were discussed. One was that I could simply “trust in the Lord.” The second was that I could go in person to pick it up. The decision was mine.

I was unsure about what to do. I confided my concerns to my companion, and we were strengthened as we read this scripture: “Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?” (Mormon 5:23). This scripture dissolved my cloud of confusion. From that moment I read it, I knew that it was my duty to give my complete efforts to my missionary labors. My problem was in the hands of the Lord.

A little while later, I received another letter from my parents. My father wrote the following:

I had to choose to either take care of the matter myself or leave it in the Lord's hands and focus on my missionary service.

“Son, I went back to the National Defense offices one more time, to try to find a person who could help us solve your problem. After speaking with a great many people, I was directed to a certain place. I arrived feeling quite discouraged and desperate. The first thing I saw was a huge door, which was opened wide and guarded by very imposing two soldiers. I gathered my courage and passed through, and found the office



to which I had been directed. As I knocked, I felt nervous but also that I was being guided by the Spirit of the Lord.

“When I went in, I saw an officer seated behind a desk. On his chest were a great number of medals, and the walls of his office were covered with colorful certificates. He shook my hand firmly and solemnly, and asked, ‘What is the purpose of your visit?’

“I have a son who is serving a

mission,’ I replied. ‘Because of this, he could not come to pick up his military service book. I have come to see if I can pick it up in his place.’

“No, you cannot. It can be released only to the individual to whom it belongs,’ stated the officer.

“At that moment, the Lord enlightened me with His Spirit, and I said, ‘Sir, you have many soldiers under your charge who are responsible to you for the fulfillment of their

duties. In the same way, my son is fulfilling his duty to preach the gospel of the Lord at this time. At this very moment, he is a soldier for the Lord.’

“At this, the officer arose from his seat and said, ‘Do you have any identification? What is the name of your son?’

“After I had answered his questions, he called a secretary and said, ‘Bring me the papers for this young missionary.’

“He signed them, sealed them, and turned them over to me. Nothing else was required. I shook his hand firmly and gratefully. My son, your papers are now in order and you must show your gratitude to the Lord by serving Him as a true soldier.”

After receiving this letter, I thanked the Lord for using His great power to intercede on my behalf, for the answer He had sent in response to my prayers, and for enlightening my father. I pray that we may all place our full confidence in the Lord, and never forget His promise: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (3 Nephi 14:7–8). ■

The author lives in Mexico City, Mexico.

Finding and Being **TRUE FRIENDS**

*Youth from Oxford, England, share their thoughts
about true friendship.*



From the best friend you've had since you were five to the new student you met in your math class, it's important to have good friends. And as it says in *For the Strength of Youth*: "Everyone needs good and true friends. They will be a great strength and blessing to you" ([2011], 16). But how do you find and keep good friends?

We asked youth in England about what true friendship means to them. Check out some of their stories about their true friends and how those friends have strengthened them. You might find that your own friends are a great strength to you too.

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FRIEND?

Aaron M.: I think you should be excited to see your friends. You should care about them and you should know that they care about you. You can feel comfortable around them. You don't feel like you have to act like someone else when you're around them.

Leighton H.: Someone who supports you and comforts you.

Maddy H.: Someone that you trust.

Rachel P.: I think that a lot of what makes a good friend is having someone who is there for you, who supports you.

Emma F.: My best friend has always been there for me and reached out to me. When I left high school to attend homeschool, she started texting me. She's like, "Hey, what are you up to? We should hang out." And I didn't really have that many friends at the time, and so we just ended up being best friends. She always knows when I'm feeling sad. Somehow, I don't know how, but she just always knows.

"Be excited to see your friends."



WHAT MAKES TRUE FRIENDSHIP DIFFERENT FROM POPULARITY?

Seth H.: Friendship is personal, popularity is impersonal. At our school we tend to group people into "popular people," based on their sports ability or maybe, for guys, how many girlfriends they've had. But I think you can have many really good friendships. So if you're nice, you're likely popular too. I think the people that stay popular the longest are the ones that are good friends.

Emma B.: I think it's the way you treat other people, because I've known a lot of popular people that were really rude, and they weren't very good friends with very many people. But then I've also known some really popular people who were nice to everybody. I think that's a big difference. I think it's just the attitude you have. You can't think of people as less than you—because they're not.

Isaac P.: I think if you have good friends, they're going to be friends with you no matter what others think about you. That's what you do when you're friends.

Grace S.: Friends stick together and are trustworthy.

HOW DO YOUR FRIENDS SUPPORT YOU?

Hannah P.: I've had friends come to my performances for my show choir when I was in it.

Andrew S.: My friend helped me incredibly with football.

Bella F.: For a religious studies class we went on a trip to a Church meetinghouse, and all the missionaries were there. It was fun. I also thought it was a really good way to choose who my good friends were going to be because you could tell who really respected other people's religions. They'd say things like, "Oh, so you don't swear?" And they'd say, "OK, great, I won't swear around you" and stuff like that. We talked about how we don't drink coffee and stuff, and they said, "OK, we don't have to go to coffee shops." They were just all really respectful.

Emma B.: My friends have just been so open to talking about my religion and saying things like, "You know what, I don't necessarily believe what you believe, but I'm totally open to understand so I can know what you know and what you believe in so I can help you stay strong."

Calvin B.: Since I moved, I haven't really met anyone at school. So all I know are people at church. When we're all at a youth activity, they're nice to me.

Emma F.: When I first moved here, I didn't have very many LDS friends because there weren't that many young women in our ward. I ended up making one friend at an LDS youth convention, and that made all the difference for me in coming to activities. And so she introduced me to her friends, and eventually I had LDS friends, which is helpful.

"They are respectful of other people's religions."



"The end of the first day, everyone already knew my name."



FIND FRIENDS WHO VALUE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST

"Essential to your success and happiness is the advice

'Choose your friends with caution.' We tend to become like those whom we admire, and they are usually our friends. We should associate with those who, like us, are planning not for temporary convenience, shallow goals, or narrow ambition—but rather with those who value the things that matter most, even eternal objectives."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be Thou an Example," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 113.

HOW DO YOU CREATE FRIENDSHIPS?

William S.: When one person says hi, and you end up talking, eventually you become friends.

James P.: For me, it's making friends through activities. Like when I went to America on a holiday, I went to the Brigham Young University soccer camp, and I didn't know anyone there. And then at the end of the first day, everyone already knew my name. So just doing activities and going to lunch or helping each other.

Seth H.: Mutual interest—you're interested in the same things as someone else. Doing practical things together is how you start friendships.

A TRUE FRIEND . . .

Grace S.: A true friend is someone who knows about you.

Andrew S.: A true friend is someone who you can always rely on.

James P.: I think that they are understanding.

Leighton H.: You can be confident in yourself around them.

Calvin B.: A true friend is supportive.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM TRUE FRIENDS?

Aaron M.: Be true to yourself. You're not going to get real friends when you're not being yourself. If they don't like your standards, then they're not really your friend and not really there for you.

Isaac P.: Listen to what they say. If they're talking, don't ignore what they're saying. Just really focus on them and be there for them.

Emma B.: Something that a good friend does is invite you to things. Even just asking how you're doing. Just asking little questions, as well. The little things are the things that matter.

James P.: You also could be a bit more open, inviting people in your friend group and then meeting other friends. You can still be a good friend. ■



REAL CONNECTION

A real-life smile to a friend really counts.





MY FIRST TIME at the TEMPLE

I wanted to personally attend the temple, not just hear about other people's experiences with it.

By Matias Pedraza

When I was 16, the stake presidency announced that our stake would visit the temple in Buenos Aires, and I was invited to go. I saved money and worked hard to be worthy to obtain a temple recommend.

After I received the recommend, temptations attacked me from every side, all trying to make me lose that worthiness. But I had a desire to attend the temple. I didn't want to just hear the experience and testimony of others; I wanted to have my own experience and testimony.

The night to travel came. Even before getting on the bus, I had thoughts about not going, but I didn't

give in. During the 10-hour trip, I sat by a member of the Church who was very friendly to me. He was around 60 years old. He told me about his life and how happy he was to have gone through the trials he had.

I began to tell him about my life and how I felt very alone because many people had distanced themselves from me because I was following God. He told me, "God will give you a great friend, and that friend will always be there for you. Don't forget it." When he finished saying these words, I felt calm and peaceful because I felt that what he told me was true.

When I entered the temple, the

heaviness I was carrying disappeared. It felt like there was a spiritual embrace telling me, "Welcome, my son. I have been waiting for you."

I felt that the temple really was the house of God, not just a beautiful structure. After doing some baptisms and confirmations, I went outside. I felt the burdens return, but now I felt like I had the strength to overcome them.

I know that preparing ourselves and leaving everything in the hands of God and giving the best of ourselves to enter the temple is what is expected of us. Then God blesses us abundantly. ■

The author lives in Córdoba, Argentina.





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

The RESTORATION *of* PRIESTHOOD KEYS

The Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time.

Many years ago I spoke in an ancient theater in Ephesus. Bright sunlight flooded the ground where the Apostle Paul had stood to preach. My topic was Paul, the Apostle called of God.

The audience was hundreds of Latter-day Saints. They were arranged on the rows of stone benches the Ephesians had sat upon more than a millennium before. Among them were two living Apostles, Elder Mark E. Petersen and Elder James E. Faust.

As you can imagine, I had prepared carefully. I had read the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles, both those of Paul and his fellow Apostles. I had read and pondered Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

I tried my best to honor Paul and his office. After the talk a number of people said kind things. Both of the living Apostles were generous in their comments. But later Elder Faust took me aside and, with a smile and with softness in his voice, said, "That was a good talk. But you left out the most important thing you could have said."

I asked him what that was. Weeks later he consented to tell me. His answer has been teaching me ever since.

He said that I could have told the people that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth.

That sent me back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I could see that Paul wanted



the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord’s Church. Paul was trying to build a testimony of those keys.

Paul testified to the Ephesians that Christ was at the head of His Church. And he taught that the Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets, who hold all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time (see Ephesians 2:19–20).

The Priesthood Has Been Restored

Despite the clarity and the power of his teaching and his example, Paul knew that an apostasy would come

(see Acts 20:29–30; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3). He knew that apostles and prophets would be taken from the earth. And he knew that they would, in some great, future day, be restored. He wrote of that time to the Ephesians, speaking of what the Lord would do: “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10).

Paul looked forward to the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the heavens would be opened again. It happened. John the Baptist came and conferred on mortals the Priesthood of Aaron and the keys of the ministering of angels and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (see D&C 13).

Ancient apostles and prophets returned and conferred upon Joseph the keys they held in mortality (see D&C 110). Mortal men were ordained to the holy apostleship in February of 1835. Priesthood keys were given to the Twelve Apostles in the latter part of March 1844.

Every prophet who followed Joseph, from Brigham Young to President Monson, has held and exercised those keys and has held the sacred apostleship.

Faith and Priesthood Keys

But just as in the time of Paul, the power of those priesthood keys for us requires our faith. We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.

And that depends upon our testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and leads His Church. We must also know for ourselves that the Lord restored His Church and the priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And we must have an assurance through the Holy Ghost, refreshed often, that those keys have been passed without interruption to the living prophet and that the Lord blesses and directs His people through the line of priesthood keys which reaches down through presidents of stakes and of districts and through bishops and branch presidents to us, wherever we are and no matter how far from the prophet and the apostles.

Trust the Lord's Chosen Servants

To keep ourselves grounded in the Lord's Church, we can and must train our eyes to recognize the power of the Lord in the service of those He has called. We must be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And we need to pray for the Holy Ghost to help us know that men who lead us hold this power. For me, such prayers are most often answered when I am fully engaged in the Lord's service myself.

We can act to qualify for the revelation that allows us to know that the keys are being passed by God from one person to another. We can seek to have that experience again and again. And we must, in order to receive the blessings God has for us and wants us to offer to others.

The answer to your prayer is not likely to be as dramatic as it was when some saw Brigham Young, as he spoke, take on the appearance of the martyred Prophet Joseph.¹ But it can be as sure. And with that spiritual assurance will come peace and power. You will know again that this is the Lord's true and living Church, that He leads it through His ordained servants, and that He cares about us.

If enough of us exercise that faith and receive those assurances, God will lift up those who lead us and so bless

our lives and our families. We will become what Paul so wanted for those he served: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). ■

From an October 2004 general conference address.

NOTE

1. See *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Seminary Student Study Guide* (2001), 158.



“My friend says she doesn’t believe in God. How can I share the gospel with her?”

There are many ways to share the gospel with her. Your own life is one of the best ways. You are “an example of the believers” in how you act, dress, speak, and treat others (see 1 Timothy 4:12). Keep in mind the following ideas:

- Try to help your friend out of love and respect, not with any hidden motives or expectations.
- Be honest and genuine in your actions.
- Respect her agency.

How you share the gospel with her depends on why she doesn’t believe in God. Some people have had a non-religious upbringing. Others are open to believing, and they will develop faith as they learn how to pray and study the scriptures. And others may have believed in God at one time but then had trials in their lives that made it difficult for them to believe. Try to understand where your friend is coming from. Pray to know how to help her.

You can get a sense for her beliefs by talking about what inspires her and what really matters to her. Build on common ground. For instance, if she believes service is a good idea, you could invite her to a ward service project.

Even though your friend does not believe right now, she is still a good person. As long as she is a good influence on you, continue to be her friend. As you follow the Spirit, continue to invite her to church and to learn more about why God is important in your life because one day she will be open to believing.

Pray for Your Friend

During my mission preparation, I have had many friends say they do not believe in God. When I hear them say this, I find myself praying for them. They may not believe in God while we are saying a prayer, but if we really believe in God, our love for Him will be demonstrated to others. Our example helps others understand that God really blesses us, that He exists, and that He loves us.

Emanuel L., age 18, State of Mexico, Mexico



Be an Example

When I was younger, I was under the impression that the only way to teach the gospel was to full-out preach it, but I was dead wrong because there are countless ways to share the gospel. But through experience I’ve found that if you’ll just be an example of Christ in all the things that you do, then you’ll be surprised by how many people look up to you and believe you. In many circumstances, actions do truly speak louder than any other word could. Lead and teach by example.

Ammon W., age 18, Arizona, USA



Talk about Nature

If your friend does not believe in God, you can talk about nature because everything testifies that there is a God (see Alma 30:44). You can also pray for her and study the scriptures with her—for

example, Psalm 19:1. I know that the Holy Ghost will help her receive a testimony of our Heavenly Father.

Sophie K., age 17, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Start a Gospel Conversation

You can share the gospel in many ways. First, just pray and fast for them so that their heart may open up to the gospel. Then the next time you meet them, open up topics and subjects that lead to a conversation about the gospel. Be sure to invite them to church or activities, and most of all, be friendly. Who knows—maybe someday they'll be baptized along with their family.

Valerie K., age 14, Nevada, USA

Share Your Testimony

The gospel changes people's lives. One way you can share it with your friend is by saying how you feel that God exists, for example, in the miracles that you have experienced and that you now experience by the simple fact of waking up every day. Your example to her will be a great testimony of your happiness in knowing the love of God and living the gospel.

Victoria S., age 18, Piauí, Brazil

Why Share?

Remember why you want her to believe in God. We don't just share this with people because we want them to be members of the Church.

We do so because they are literally our brothers and sisters. Why do you want your friend to believe in God? Keep that question in mind, pray for strength and charity, be sincere, and if they still say no, then be willing to respect their agency. There's also the chance that they aren't ready yet. But I promise you that if you sincerely want them to know about God, because you are their friend, they will listen. After that, the choice is up to them, and we can't judge them for the choice they make.

Elder Eliot, age 20, Japan Sapporo Mission

Share Your Light

Be an example to her. Help her become closer to God through your experiences and testimony. Be the angel she is looking for through your light and influence. Help her see the love of our Heavenly Father has for her, but don't force it on her.

Mason E., age 16, Arizona, USA



HOW TO GAIN A TESTIMONY

"How does one gain what we call a testimony?"

"The first step in gaining any kind of knowledge is to really desire to know. In the case of spiritual knowledge, the next step is to ask God in sincere prayer. . .

"As we desire and seek, we should remember that acquiring a testimony is not a passive thing but a process in which we are expected to *do* something. Jesus taught, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17)."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Testimony," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 27.

UPCOMING QUESTION

"I constantly compare myself to others, especially those who seem to have perfect lives. How do I feel more confident?"

Submit your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph by July 15, 2017, at liahona.lds.org (click "Submit an Article") or by email to liahona@ldschurch.org.

Please include the following information: (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 (email is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.

Responses may be edited for length or clarity.



YOUR OWN LIAHONA

Wouldn't it be great if you could have a spiritual GPS to guide you? With your patriarchal blessing, you can.

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

Sometimes it can seem hard to get through life. There are so many major things coming your way in the next few years: preparing for the temple, sharing the gospel, choosing a school and a career. And you're only a teenager! Wouldn't it be great if, like Lehi, you could find a Liahona outside your door, an instrument guaranteed to keep you on course if you just pay attention to it?

Actually, there are already many sources of guidance in your life: prayer, scriptures, counsel from parents and leaders, promptings from the Holy Ghost, general conference, and the list goes on. But here's another source to add to your list—a personal Liahona known as your patriarchal blessing. It's personal revelation for you, about you, from your Heavenly Father, who has known you since, well, forever.

Think of your patriarchal blessing as a sort of spiritual GPS, and then some. It not only allows you to know *who* you are and *where* you are; it can also help you to

understand *why* you're here and *where* you should be headed. But remember, guidance from your patriarchal blessing requires use of the same principles that made Lehi's Liahona work: heed and diligence (see 1 Nephi 16:28; Mosiah 1:16).

Heed and Diligence

What are heed and diligence? To *heed* means not only to hear what is said but to also pay attention to it. A related word is *hearken*, which means to hear *and* obey. So for your patriarchal blessing to serve as a Liahona in your life, you must not only read it, but you must also follow it.

"Scriptures recorded in all dispensations teach that we show our *love* of God as we *hearken* to His commandments and *obey* them," said President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "These actions are closely connected. In fact, the Hebrew language of the Old Testament in most instances uses the same term for both *hearkening* (to the Lord) and *obedience* (to His word)."¹

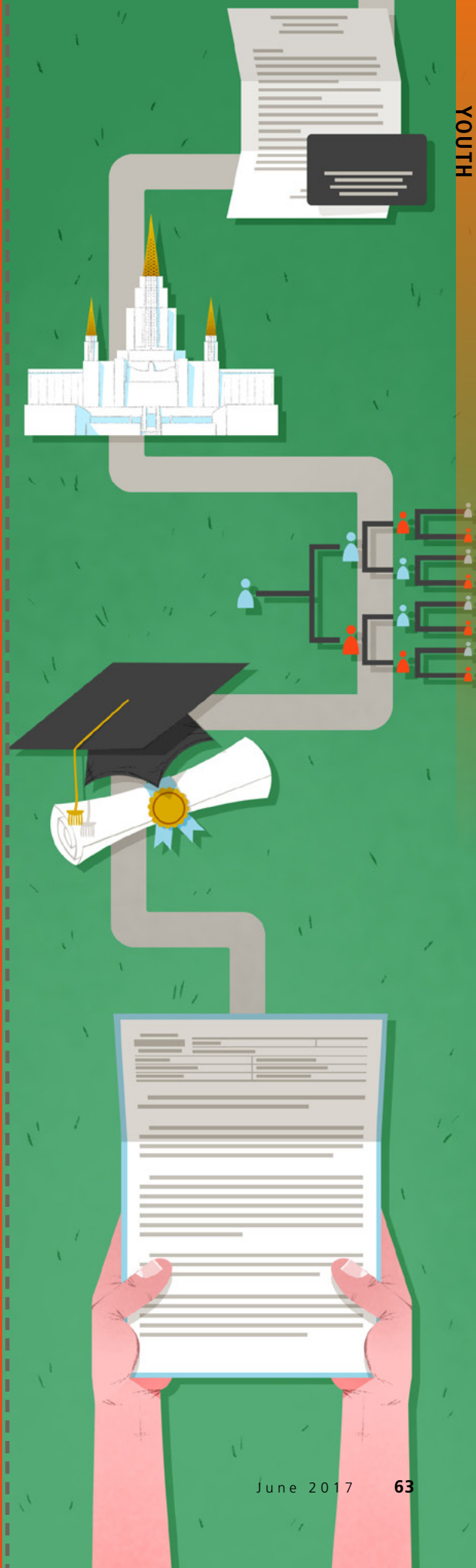
Diligence is another key to learning from your patriarchal blessing. Diligence means being conscientious, attentive, and persistent. It means determined, unfailing effort. "It is to learn what the Lord expects of you, make a plan to do it, [and] act on your plan," said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.²

If you want your patriarchal blessing to be helpful to you, study it with earnest, energetic effort; make plans to act upon it; and carry out those plans.

An Example to Follow

Alma the Younger, counseling his son Helaman, said the Liahona is a "type," or example, for us to follow in our own lives. In Alma 37:38–45 he says:

1. It was prepared by the Lord to show, like a compass, which way to travel.
2. It worked according to faith in God, which allowed "miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day."



3. It used “small means” to accomplish “marvelous works.”
4. If Lehi and his family forgot to exercise faith and diligence, then “marvelous works ceased” and “they did not progress in their journey.”
5. When they became distracted, they did not travel a direct course.
6. It is easy to give heed to the words of Christ, which point in a straight course.

These same principles hold true for your patriarchal blessing. “The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever” (Alma 37:46). ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” Apr. 1991 general conference.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Act in All Diligence,” Apr. 2010 general conference.



TO GUIDE YOUR WAY

“Your patriarchal blessing is to you a personal Liahona to chart your course and guide your way.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “On Being Spiritually Prepared,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Feb. 2010, 5; see also “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 65.

PATRIARCHAL PERSPECTIVE

We asked four patriarchs to answer questions about patriarchal blessings. Here are some of their responses.



Why is it important to receive a patriarchal blessing?

“As we attend meetings, classes, and seminary, we are taught doctrines, principles, and expectations that are in common to all members of the Church. But when we receive a patriarchal blessing, it is not common to all—it is specific to one. It is not about what we should do but about what you can do, blessed by attributes or gifts that are divine in origin. A patriarchal blessing is tangible evidence that you have a unique personal relationship with a Heavenly Father who loves you and desires that you return to His presence.”

—Clayne A. Steed, *Raymond Alberta Stake*, Canada

Is it all right to share my blessing with others or to compare my blessing to theirs?

“Patriarchal blessings are sacred and personal. They may be shared with immediate family but not shared with or interpreted by others. There may be a time in your life that as you are speaking with someone, a thought or phrase from your blessing comes into your mind. It may be appropriate to share it, not in a boastful or prideful way but as a message that offers hope and encouragement.”

—Keith L. Stapleton, Cartersville Georgia Stake, USA

Why is it important to know what your lineage is?

“It helps you to understand that the stories written in the Bible are not just stories about some people and when they lived. Their history becomes part of the history of all people—of people who lived and who will still live. We can better understand their role and our role as we come to know our heritage. The Lord wants His people to know who they are.”

—Vyacheslav V. Protopopov, Moscow Russia Stake

How can I prepare to receive it?

“The Savior provides the perfect example of preparation. Begin with things He taught us: first, prayer and fasting (see Matthew 14:23); second, studying the scriptures prepares us to receive and understand personal revelation.”

—Emile E. Bailly, Paris France South Stake

How do I know if it is time for me to receive it?

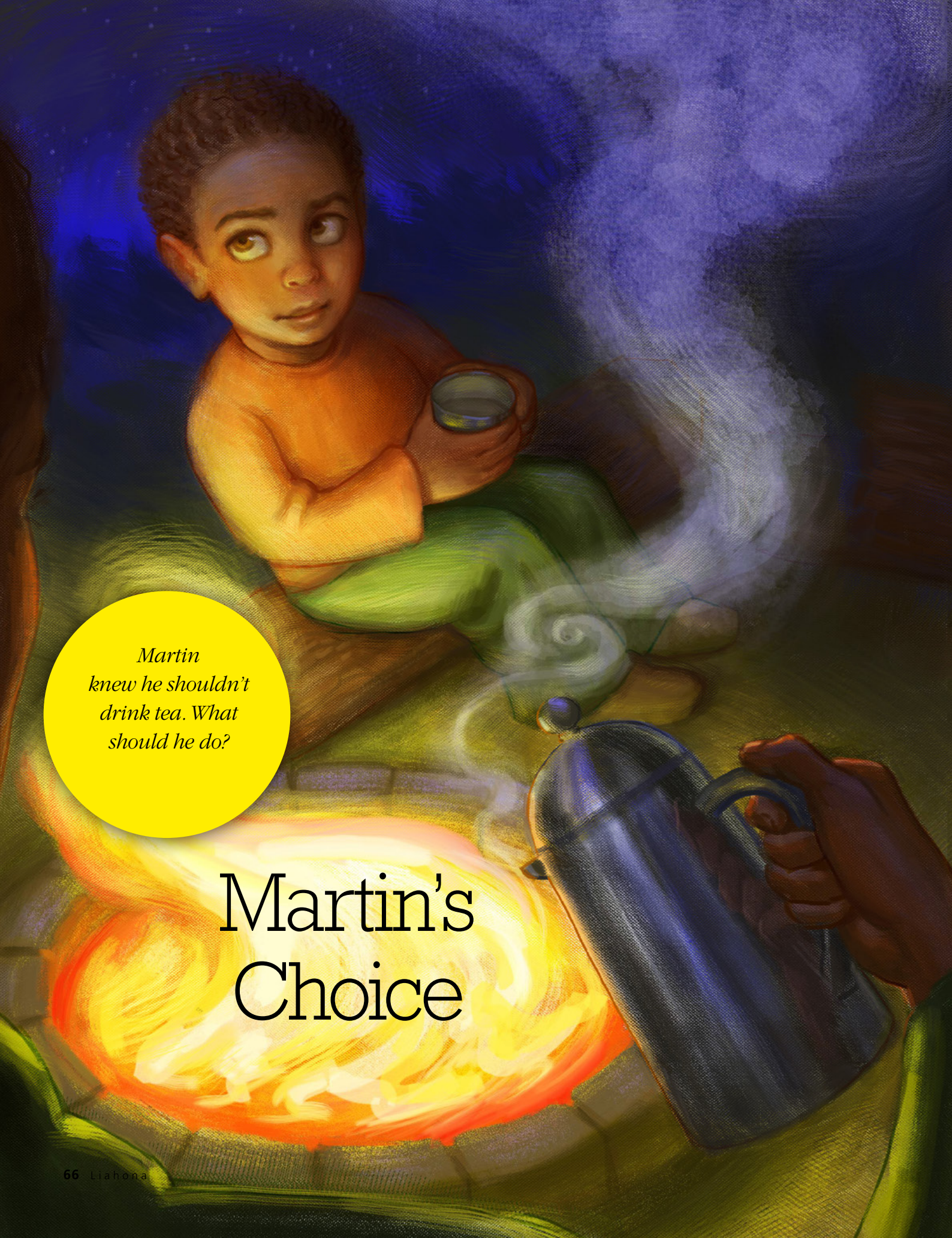
“I met with a young lady recently. She described how she had been thinking about meeting with her bishop [to talk about her patriarchal blessing recommend] for some time. She had discussed her desire with her parents and fasted and prayed to know when she was ready. She told me when we started our discussion that she was still a little nervous, wondering if she was prepared, but said that recently she had felt at peace as she thought about her appointment with me. I told her, ‘That’s your answer. The Spirit brought that peace to your heart.’”

—Keith L. Stapleton, Cartersville Georgia Stake, USA

How does inspiration help patriarchs?

“I remember the first time I gave a patriarchal blessing. Of course I had pondered, studied, and prepared spiritually. I was nervous, but when the moment came, the Spirit filled the room and removed any fear or restraint. The Spirit helped me to hear the words which came into my heart.”

—Vyacheslav V. Protopopov, Moscow Russia Stake

A young boy with dark skin and curly hair is sitting on a log. He is wearing a green wrap around his waist and is holding a small cup of tea. He has a thoughtful expression on his face. In the foreground, a hand is pouring water from a silver kettle into a cup on a small fire. The background is a dark, textured blue and purple, suggesting a night scene or a cave.

*Martin
knew he shouldn't
drink tea. What
should he do?*

Martin's Choice

By Lindsay Tanner and Bethany Bartholomew

Based on a true story

“Be true, be true, and stand for the right” (Children’s Songbook, 159).

Martin woke up slowly. His mom was shaking his shoulder.

“Martin,” she said, “it’s time to wake up.”

Martin rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. The sky was still dark, but he knew what time it was. His family woke up at 5:30 every morning to read the Book of Mormon together. It wasn’t always easy to get up so early.

Martin rolled out of bed and walked slowly to the front room. He stretched and yawned really wide. His brothers and sisters looked sleepy too, but they were all there.

Each person read for five minutes. At first Martin wanted to go back to bed. But he kept listening. Each verse seemed to make him feel better and better. By the time they were done reading, Martin felt spiritually strong.

And spiritual strength was something Martin needed every day. In Kenya, there were only a few Church members Martin’s age, and they all lived far away. After school Martin went to a boys’ club run by a Catholic church. One week the club went on a camping trip together.

Martin had a lot of fun. He sang camping songs. He chopped logs. He even helped build a campfire.

But on the second day, one of the leaders brought out a teapot. “We’re going to have tea now,” he said.

The other boys were excited. They drank tea at home for special occasions. They all grabbed their cups and waited for the leader to fill them.

Martin felt a little nervous. He knew that he shouldn’t drink tea. But he didn’t want to offend his friends.


Then he remembered how he felt when he kept the commandments. When his family followed the prophet and read the Book of Mormon together, he felt happy. When they didn’t, he didn’t feel as happy.

Martin knew what he had to do.

“No, thank you,” he told the leader when he came to fill Martin’s cup. “I don’t want to drink tea.”

The leader looked surprised, but he let Martin drink water while the rest of the boys drank tea. Some of the boys wanted to know why Martin didn’t drink tea, but none of them made fun of him. Martin felt happy. He knew the Word of Wisdom would make his body strong. And he was glad that he had been strong enough to do the right thing. ■

The authors live in Utah, USA.



CHALLENGE

“I will keep my mind and body sacred and pure, and I will not partake of things that are harmful to me” (My Gospel Standards).

Read the Word of Wisdom in Doctrine and Covenants 89 and find what it says is good for you.

Make a list of harmful things you won’t eat or drink.

Ask your parents or leaders how they keep their minds sacred and pure.

I challenge myself to . . .





Making Dolls, Making Friends

By Jordan Wright, Utah, USA

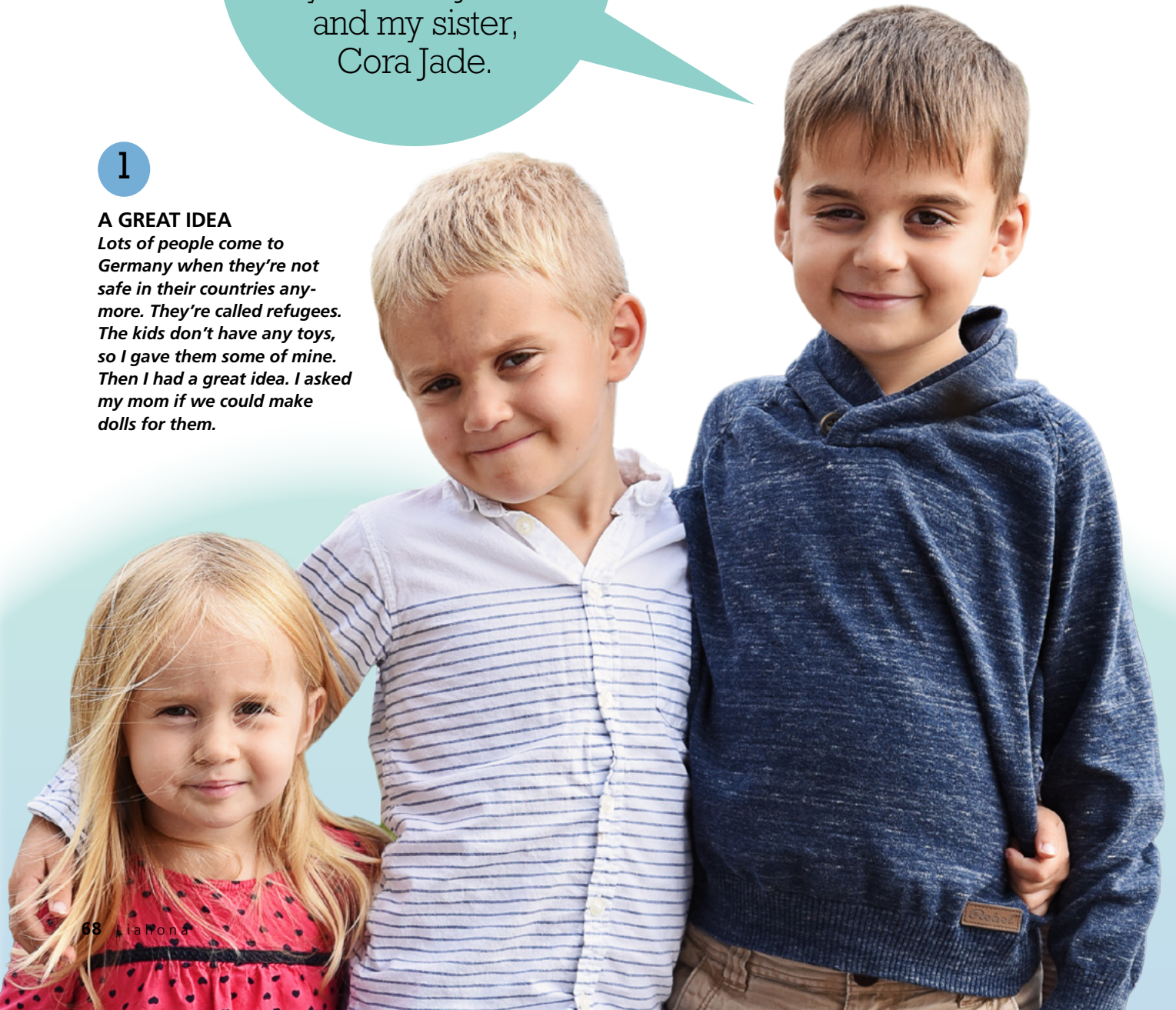
HI!

I'm Jackson, from Germany, and this is my brother, Josiah, and my sister, Cora Jade.

1

A GREAT IDEA

Lots of people come to Germany when they're not safe in their countries anymore. They're called refugees. The kids don't have any toys, so I gave them some of mine. Then I had a great idea. I asked my mom if we could make dolls for them.





2

SEWING WITH MOM
I love to sew with my mom. I pushed the pedal on the sewing machine and put the stuffing in the dolls.



3

HAPPY NOTES
My family collected some clothes and toys to give to the refugees here. We drew pictures for them of things that make us happy.



6

JESUS LOVES US
The kids we met are like us in lots of ways. All of us like to sing and get toys and play outside. I know Jesus loves them, and He loves me.



4

NEW FRIENDS
We took the dolls to the refugee camps and gave them to kids there. I like making new friends!

JACKSON'S IDEAS

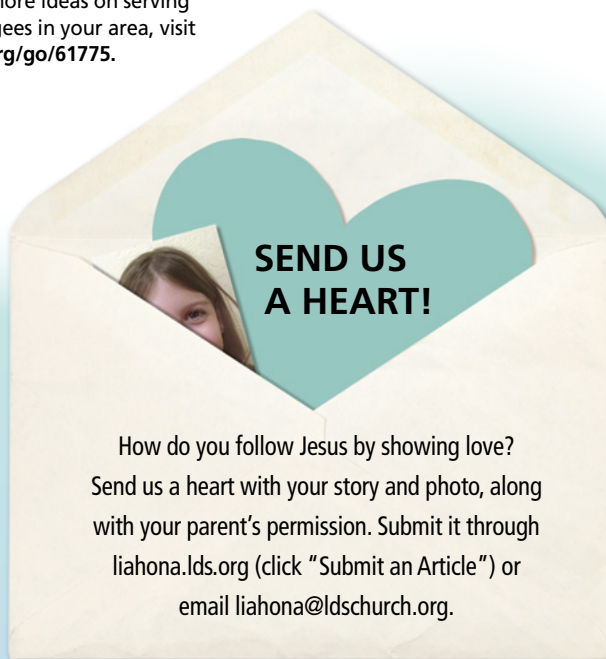
- Always look for people you can help.
- Pretend you are a kindness elf and do secret service.
- Make dolls for kids who don't have any toys.

For more ideas on serving refugees in your area, visit lds.org/go/61775.



5

I AM A CHILD OF GOD
They sang songs for us, and we played our instruments for them. Some people who were sad smiled when we played "I Am a Child of God." It felt really, really, really good.



How do you follow Jesus by showing love? Send us a heart with your story and photo, along with your parent's permission. Submit it through liahona.lds.org (click "Submit an Article") or email liahona@ldschurch.org.

The Book of Commandments

Cut out these figures to share Church history stories!



Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins

The words Jesus Christ spoke to Joseph Smith are called revelations. Some of these revelations were published in the Book of Commandments. While this book was being printed, people became angry with the Church members who had moved to their town. They threw the printing press into the street. Two sisters named Mary Elizabeth and Caroline Rollins gathered as many pages of the Book of Commandments as they could. They ran into a cornfield to hide from the angry men, and Heavenly Father kept them safe. The revelations in the Book of Commandments later became part of the Doctrine and Covenants. ■

Find more Church history figures at liahona.lds.org.

OUR PAGE



Jesus es mi luz



"Jesus Is My Light," by Vianca V., age 6, Tundama Province, Colombia



These Primary children in Galicia, Spain, held a Primary activity based on the theme "I Know the Scriptures Are True." They played games relating to the scriptures while learning and memorizing gospel truths. The children put on armor to learn about the armor of God. They also "fished" for Articles of Faith and acted out Lehi's dream.



When I was going to be baptized, I was a little nervous. But when I entered the water, I felt very happy.

Thomas B., age 8, Montevideo, Uruguay



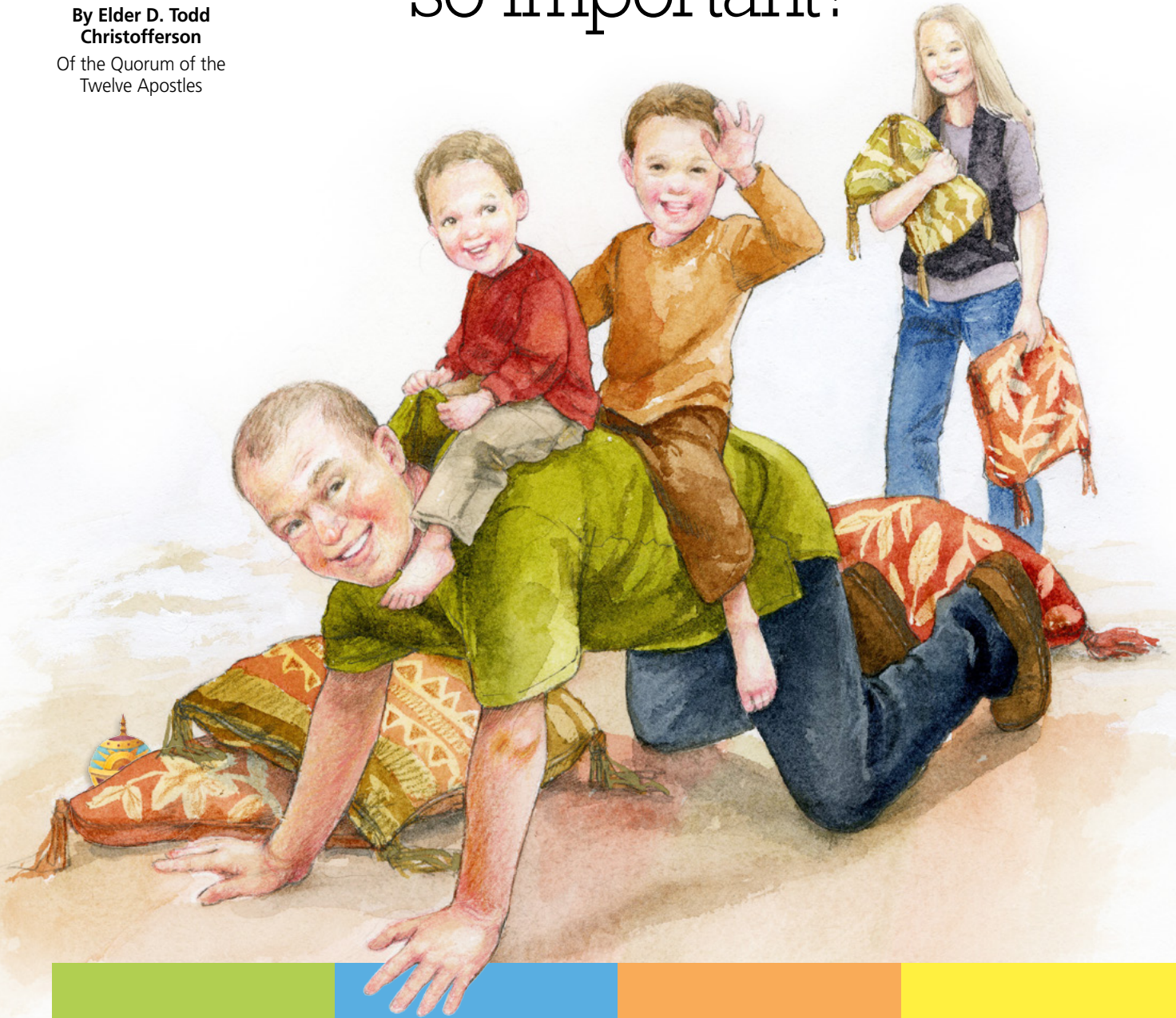
The Sapporo Japan Temple, by Harada K., age 8, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Why are fathers so important?



Heavenly Father is our Father. He loves us perfectly, and He works to help us be happy and return to Him.

He planned for fathers to love, protect, and take care of their families. Fathers and mothers are equal partners.

Fathers' most important work is to teach their children to love and be loyal to Heavenly Father.

If you don't have a father living with you, you are not any less important or valued. Heavenly Father can help you become a righteous father or mother someday.



By Elder
Michael T.
Ringwood
Of the Seventy

Being Like Shiblon

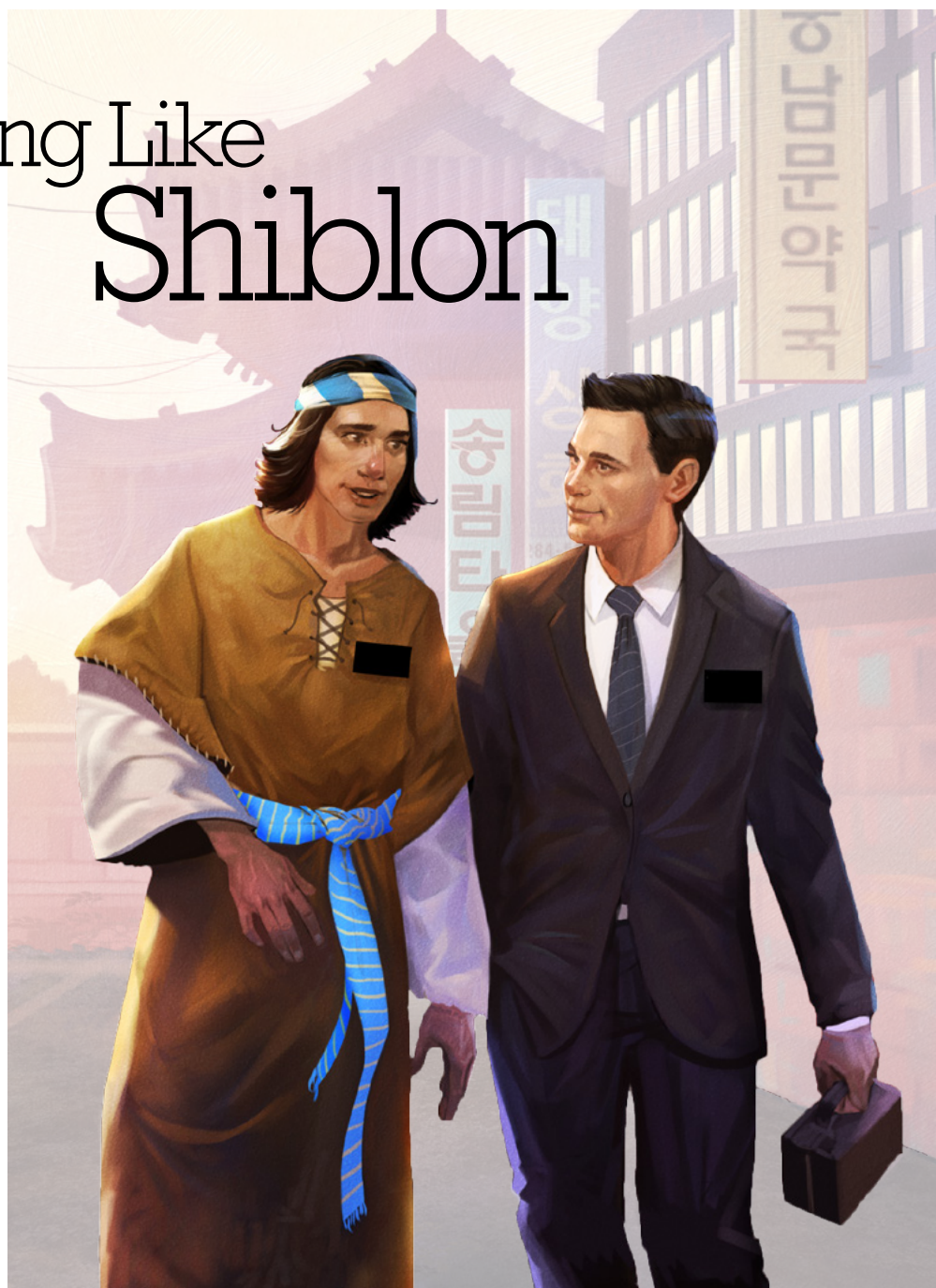
“I say unto you, my son, that I have had great joy in thee already, because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence” (Alma 38:3).

My Book of Mormon hero is Shiblon. He was truly good. He didn’t worry about what other people thought about him. He only cared about obeying Heavenly Father. His dad, Alma the Younger, trusted him. Alma was so glad that Shiblon had kept the commandments since he was young (see Alma 38:2).

And Shiblon kept choosing the right. He helped others because he loved them and because he loved God.

He did what was right because he knew it was right. He wasn’t trying to get a reward.

On my mission in Korea, I worked with a missionary who was a lot like Shiblon. He was faithful and obedient to Heavenly Father. But other missionaries didn’t think he was a very good missionary. I wanted them to know they were wrong about him! But my mission president said, “Heavenly Father knows that he is a good



missionary, and so do I. And now you know too, so who else really matters?”

We might think it’s too hard to be like Shiblon and do what is right just because it’s right. But the gospel can help us! When we are baptized, we start to become better people. When we take the sacrament, we renew our covenants. We can become like Heavenly Father wants us to be. ■

Praying

By Sherrie Gavin

Based on a true story

One hot summer day, Reese and Cheyenne invited Zara over to play. Mum made a snack. The girls sat at the table to eat.

Mum sliced mangoes from their mango tree. She put apple slices and grapes on a plate. Reese looked at the delicious food. She remembered to say a prayer before eating her snack. She asked Zara, "Do you pray at your house?"

"What's that?" Zara asked.

"Like this," said Cheyenne. She folded her arms and bowed her head. She asked a blessing on the food. When she was done, she said, "See? Like that. Easy!"

"We don't do that at our house. We just eat," said Zara.

Reese had never thought about *not* praying. "Mum," she said, "can we stop saying prayers?"



with Zara

Mum smiled as she carried cups of ice water to the table. “We like thanking Heavenly Father for what He has given us. We’re going to keep saying prayers. But it’s OK if other people don’t.”

Reesey knew Mum was right. She *was* happy when her family prayed. Maybe praying would make Zara happy too. “You could try it,” she said to Zara. “Prayers are good.”

“I like it when we pray,” said Cheyenne. “It makes me feel like a smile all over me inside.”

Zara smiled. “Maybe I will,” she said and ate a slice of mango.

Reesey and Cheyenne were happy they could tell their friend about praying. They all finished their snacks and ran back outside to play. ■

The author lives in Queensland, Australia.



Jesus Healed People

By Kim Webb Reid

One day a man named Jairus asked Jesus to come to his house. His daughter was sick and needed a blessing.



As Jesus was on his way to Jairus's house, a woman who had been sick for 12 years saw Jesus. She believed Jesus could heal her. She reached out and touched the edge of Jesus's robe.



The woman was healed!
Jesus said she was healed
because of her faith.

Then someone came
with terrible news. Jairus's
daughter had died. Was
it too late for Jesus to
bless her?

Jesus told Jairus not to
be afraid but to believe.
When Jesus got to Jairus's
house, He told Jairus's
daughter to arise. She
opened her eyes. She was
alive again! Her parents
were amazed.





We can have faith in Jesus too. His healing power is still on earth today, and we can ask for a priesthood blessing whenever we need one. ■

From Mark 5:22–43.

I Love My Family





**By Elder
Robert D. Hales**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

THE PRIESTHOOD IS HERE TODAY

*What a dark world this would be without
priesthood blessings for you and me.*

Can you imagine how dark and empty mortality would be if there were no priesthood? If the power of the priesthood were not upon the earth, the adversary would have freedom to roam and reign without restraint. There would be no gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and enlighten us; no prophets to speak in the name of the Lord; no temples where we could make sacred, eternal covenants; no authority to bless or baptize, to heal or comfort. Without the power of the priesthood, “the whole earth would be utterly wasted” (see D&C 2:1–3). There would be no light, no hope—only darkness. . . .

. . . [However,] the priesthood of God gives light to [Heavenly Father’s] children in this dark and troubled world. Through priesthood power



we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to lead us to truth, testimony, and revelation. This gift is available on an equal basis to men, women, and children. . . .

. . . The glorious priesthood of God, together with a fulness of its blessings, has been restored to the earth in our own time. The restoration of the priesthood and its blessings began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, a young boy prophet, beheld and spoke with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a sacred grove of trees.

Later, additional heavenly messengers—John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah; and

others—brought to the Prophet Joseph Smith the power, authority, and keys necessary for the salvation and exaltation of mankind. . . . The Church of Jesus Christ was restored upon the earth, complete with the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods of old. Now, as God covenanted with Abraham, all the individuals and families of the earth may be blessed.

Think of it, brothers and sisters—the priesthood has been restored. It is here on the earth today. . . . Under the direction of . . . prophets, seers, and revelators, who hold the keys in this dispensation, priesthood holders in the Church today have the legitimate right to act in the name of God. . . .

. . . All of the magnificent, eternal blessings that God makes available to men and women and families upon this earth can be ours through the power of the priesthood. ■

From an October 1995 general conference address.



GOLDEN, BY DANIEL F. GERHARTZ

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Self-Reliance and Gospel Learning

As you become a self-reliant student of the gospel, you strengthen your relationship with God.



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FOR YOUTH

p. 50



Finding and Being **TRUE FRIENDS**

What makes a good friend? How is friendship different from popularity? Youth share their thoughts.

FOR CHILDREN

Martin's Choice

Martin didn't want to offend his friends by not drinking tea. Did he have the strength to say no?



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