

Liahona



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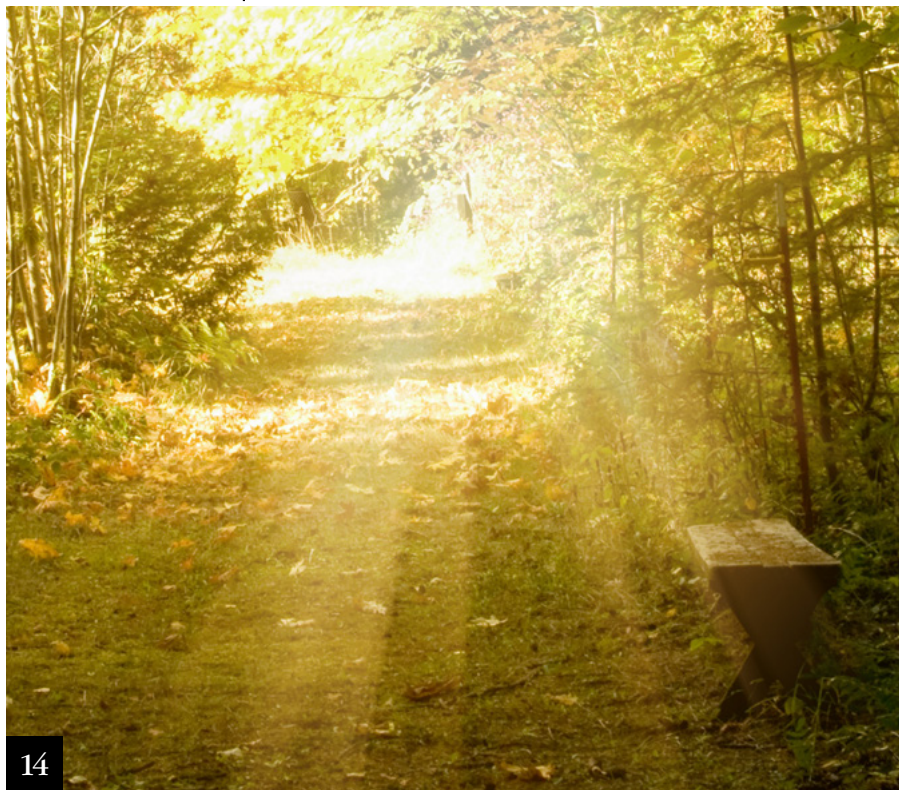
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NO. 16.

This peaceful scene shows the Hill Cumorah in the distance. In ancient America, a Nephite prophet named Moroni hid his people's records in the hill. About 1,400 years later, Moroni returned to the vicinity as an angel and revealed the records' location to young Joseph Smith. Joseph unearthed and translated the records, which became known as the Book of Mormon.

Photograph by George Edward Anderson,
courtesy of Church History Library and Archives



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ICONS FROM GETTY IMAGES

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By President
Thomas S.
Monson

PROPHETS TO GUIDE US

A few years ago, I was sitting in the room of the Salt Lake Temple where the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles meet once a week. I gazed up at the wall which faces the First Presidency, and there I observed portraits of each of the Presidents of the Church.

As I gazed at them, my predecessors—from the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) to President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)—I thought, “How grateful I am for the guidance of each one.”

These are great men who never wavered, never faltered, and never failed. These are men of God. As I think of the modern-day prophets I have known and loved, I recall their lives, their attributes, and their inspired teachings.

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) was President of the Church when I was born. As I contemplate his life and teachings, I believe a trait President Grant always exemplified was that of persistence—persistence in those things which are good and noble.

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951) was President of the Church during the time I served as bishop of my ward in Salt Lake City. He observed that there is a great tug-of-war going on between the Lord and the adversary. “If you will stay on the Lord’s side of the line,” he taught, “you will be under his influence and will have no desire to do wrong.”¹

I was called to serve as a member of the Quorum of the

Twelve in 1963 by President David O. McKay (1873–1970). He taught consideration for others by the way he lived his life. “True Christianity,” he said, “is love in action.”²

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), one of the Church’s most prolific writers, had as a guiding principle in his life gospel scholarship. He read the scriptures unceasingly and was as familiar with the teachings and doctrines found within their pages as anyone I have ever known.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) served as my stake president when I was a boy. A favorite quotation of his was “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”³ He encouraged the Saints to be in tune with, and responsive to, the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

I believe a guiding principle in the life of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) would be dedication. He was completely, unequivocally dedicated to the Lord. He was also dedicated to living the gospel.

When President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) became President of the Church, he called me to serve as his Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Love was his guiding principle, which is embodied in his favorite quotation, spoken by the Savior: “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”⁴

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) was one who always looked for the best in others. Ever was he courteous; ever was he humble. It was my privilege to serve as his Second Counselor.



President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us to do our best. He bore powerful testimony of the Savior and His mission. He taught us with love. Serving as his First Counselor was an honor and a blessing for me.

The Savior sends prophets because He loves us. During general

conference this October, the General Authorities of the Church will again have the privilege of sharing His word. We approach this responsibility with great solemnity and humility.

How blessed we are that the restored Church of Jesus Christ is upon the earth and that the Church is

founded upon the rock of revelation. Continuous revelation is the very lifeblood of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May we prepare to receive the personal revelation that comes in abundance during general conference. May our hearts be filled with deep determination as we raise our hands to sustain living prophets and apostles. May we be enlightened, uplifted, comforted, and strengthened as we listen to their messages. And may we be ready to recommit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ—His gospel and His work—and to live with renewed resolve in keeping His commandments and carrying out His will. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 191.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 181.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
4. 3 Nephi 27:27.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Monson shares powerful lessons he learned from prophets before him. He also reminds us that “the Savior sends prophets because He loves us.” In ministering to those you teach, you might discuss how prophets and apostles are signs of God’s love for us.

Consider sharing counsel from one of President Monson’s past general conference addresses. Invite those you teach to prepare for general conference by reviewing talks that have particularly inspired them and helped them feel the Savior’s love.



YOUTH



You can download the music to “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” at lds.org/go/9176.

We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet

How has our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, influenced you? What will you remember most about him? Consider writing in your journal about President Monson and his life—much as he describes in

this message the influence of each prophet *he* remembers.

You might also want to choose a favorite quote from him and write it where you’ll see it often, like on a school binder or a note in your room.

You could even make a picture quote out of it and make it your phone’s background! Each time you see the quote, you could reflect on the importance of a living prophet and remember that he is here to love and guide us today.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PEGGY MARE FLORES

CHILDREN

Prophets Guide Us to Christ

The Savior gives us prophets because He loves us. Following the prophets helps us choose the right. Which path should the children take to follow the prophet?

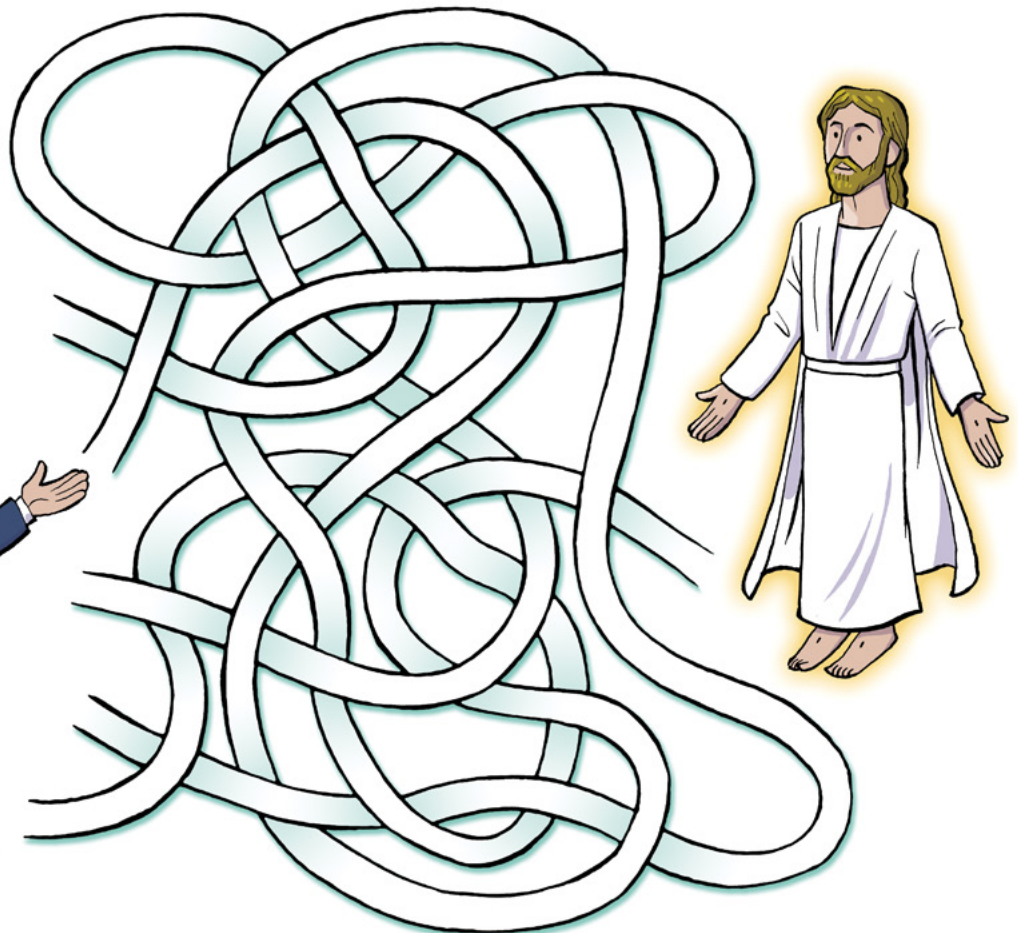


ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM KOPORD

Of One Heart

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?

“And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). How can we become one?

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “At the heart of the English word *atonement* is the word *one*. If all mankind understood this, there would never be anyone with whom we would not be concerned, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or social or economic standing. We would strive to emulate the Savior and would never be unkind, indifferent, disrespectful, or insensitive to others.”¹

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “Where people have [the] Spirit with them, [they] may expect harmony. . . . The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). . . . It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others.”²



Faith
Family
Relief

Speaking of family challenges, Carole M. Stephens, who served as First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, said: “I’ve never had to live through divorce, the pain and insecurity that comes from abandonment, or the responsibility associated with being a single mother. I haven’t experienced the death of a child, infertility, or same-gender attraction. I haven’t had to endure abuse, chronic illness, or addiction. These have not been my stretching opportunities.

“ . . . But through *my* personal tests and trials . . . I have become well acquainted with the One who does understand. . . . And in addition, I have experienced all of the mortal tests that I just

mentioned through the lens of a daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend.

“Our opportunity as covenant-keeping daughters of God is not just to learn from our own challenges; it is to unite in empathy and compassion as we support other members of the family of God in their struggles.”³

Additional Scriptures and Information

John 17:20–23; Ephesians 4:15; Mosiah 18:21–22; 4 Nephi 1:15
reliefsociety.lds.org

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Atonement and the Value of One Soul,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 86.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 67.
3. Carole M. Stephens, “The Family Is of God,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 11–12.



Consider This

How does unity with one another help us become one with God?

APRIL 2017 CONFERENCE NOTEBOOK

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

As you review the April 2017 general conference, you can use these pages to help you study and apply the recent teachings of the living prophets and apostles and other Church leaders.



DOCTRINAL HIGHLIGHT

The Godhead

Because we have the truth about the Godhead and our relationship to Them, the purpose of life, and the nature of our eternal destiny, we have the ultimate road map and assurance for our journey through mortality. We know whom we worship and why we worship. We know who we are and what we can become (see D&C 93:19). We know who makes it all possible, and we know what we must do to enjoy the ultimate blessings that come through God’s plan of salvation. How do we know all of this? We know by the revelations of God to His prophets and to each of us individually.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 103.

PROPHETIC PROMISE



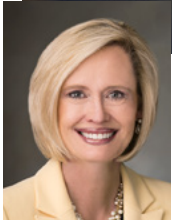
CALLING DOWN THE POWERS OF HEAVEN

“The scriptures teach us that the righteous exercise of the priesthood is dependent upon our living the principles of kindness, charity, and love. . . .

“. . . Let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior’s example by being kind, loving, and charitable. And as we do so, we will be in a better position to call down the powers of heaven for ourselves, for our families, and for our fellow travelers in this sometimes difficult journey back to our heavenly home.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Kindness, Charity, and Love,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 66, 67.

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



CENTERED ON CHRIST

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding’ [Proverbs 3:5]. . . .

“ . . . In English the word *lean* has a connotation of physically listing or moving to one side. When we *physically* lean toward one side or another, we

move off center, we are out of balance, and we tip. When we *spiritually* lean to our own understanding, we lean away from our Savior. . . .

“ . . . Each of us can trust in the Lord and lean *not*. We can center our lives on the Savior by coming to know Him, and He will direct our paths.”

Bonnie H. Cordon, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, “Trust in the Lord and Lean Not,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 6, 9.

DRAWING PARALLELS

True Discipleship

Multiple speakers sometimes address the same gospel topic. Here is what three speakers said about being a true disciple of Christ. Use the May 2017 issue or visit conference.lds.org to read more of what they said.

- “True disciples of Jesus Christ are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world. They are undaunted, devoted, and courageous.” —Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” 39.
- “Genuine discipleship is a state of being. . . . Disciples live so that the characteristics of Christ are woven into the fiber of their beings, as into a spiritual tapestry.” —Robert D. Hales, “Becoming a Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” 46.
- “Our love for the Sabbath day does not end when the chapel doors close behind us but instead opens the doors to a beautiful day of resting from routine tasks, studying, praying, and reaching out to family and others who need our attention.” —Neil L. Andersen, “Overcoming the World,” 58.

WHO SAID THIS?

1. “A repenting sinner draws closer to God than does the self-righteous person who condemns that sinner.” _____
2. “The motivation for raising the warning voice is love—love of God and love of fellowman. To warn is to care.” _____
3. “If love of God is the melody of our shared song, surely our common quest to obey Him is the indispensable harmony in it.” _____
4. “It used to be a rare but welcome exception for youth to bring the names of their own ancestors to the temple. Now this is the norm.” _____

Answers: (1) Dale G. Renlund, (2) D. Todd Christofferson, (3) Jeffrey R. Holland, (4) Henry B. Eyring



LOVE AND CHOCOLATE CAKE: WHAT WILL YOU GIVE TO BRING THEM BACK?

By Devin G. Durrant

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

Sister Babata Sonnenberg was discouraged. As a young mother of five girls age eight and younger, she was surprised to be called to teach the 16- to 17-year-old Sunday School class in her ward. Months into her calling, she found class attendance sporadic and usually sparse. One Sunday a single boy showed up for class. Rather than teach just one student, she combined her class with another. She was ready to give up. But as she pondered and prayed about her bleak situation, inspiration came, and she had a change of heart.

Team Effort

Her husband, Ken, was the ward mission leader. The two of them felt prompted to combine their efforts to reach out to the youth of the ward. She would make chocolate cake, and he would invite the young people in

the ward to come to their home each Sunday evening to eat the cake and discuss mission preparation. While the teens ate her cake, Sister Sonnenberg would invite them to her Sunday School class.

As a result of this “sweet” invitation, attendance climbed in the Sunday School class. But one young man, Nate, was not swayed by persistent invitations. Sister Sonnenberg felt she was losing one of her sheep. Her response to that feeling was to “go after that which [was] lost, until [she found] it” (Luke 15:4). So rather than give up on Nate, Sister Sonnenberg came up with a plan.

Home Visits

One Sunday evening she went to Nate’s house. She found him home with another member of her class, who also hadn’t attended that day.

She told both of them she had missed them in class and proceeded to teach them the lesson right then and there. Nate’s father, who had been recently released as bishop of the ward, was touched by this teacher’s persistence. He sent a text message to her husband that read: “Ken, please tell your wife thank you for me. Coming here and teaching Nate and McKay was inspired.”

Nevertheless, the next Sunday Nate again chose not to attend Sunday School. So Sister Sonnenberg went again to his home to have a gospel discussion with him. Nate figured that might happen, and he had gone to a friend’s house to hide. Sister Sonnenberg discovered him a few doors down from his home and shared the lesson there.

Finally, Nate decided to return to his Sunday School class.





What Worked?

Why did Nate come back?

Was it the chocolate cake Sister Sonnenberg served in her home?

Was it the visits she made to Nate's home (and the neighbor's home) to find him?

Was it encouragement from friends and family to attend church?

Or was it the love he felt from Sister Sonnenberg, his Sunday School teacher?

The answer is probably all of the above. For all these reasons and more, Nate began to attend Sunday School consistently, along with his friends.

The Rest of the Story

So let me add the rest of the story. Because of how Nate came to feel about his Sunday School teacher, he didn't pass up the opportunity to buy her chocolates when he later saw her at the mall. Sister Sonnenberg, who had shown him so much love, became a recipient of his love.

Soon thereafter, in September 2015, Nate completed his mission application and is now serving in the Mississippi Jackson Mission.

Other class members who struggled to attend Sunday School also decided to serve missions. Five young men and three young women who attended Sister Sonnenberg's 16- to 17-year-old Sunday School class during her time as the teacher have



served, or are serving, missions, and several others may yet serve.

Reach Out to Those Who Do Not Attend

“Love Those You Teach,” part 1 of *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, includes a discussion topic titled “Reach Out to Those Who Do Not Attend.” The topic reads: “Reaching out to less-active members is not only the duty of a home teacher, a visiting teacher, or a priesthood or auxiliary leader—teachers can help with this work as well. Teaching is much more than presenting a lesson on Sunday. It involves ministering with love and helping others receive the blessings of the gospel, and this help is often exactly what a less-active class member needs. We all need to work together to reach out to those who struggle, and as a teacher you may be in a unique position to help.”¹

Sister Sonnenberg recognized the unique position she was in to help her class members. She was blessed with a weekly opportunity to touch their hearts, and she was determined to do so—either in her classroom or in their homes. Clearly, all teachers may not be in a position to visit the homes of those who do not attend class each week, nor is it always possible, but we all can do something, even something small, to show love to those in our stewardship.

Remember the words of the prophet Alma: “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

Invite with Love

The “Invite with Love” section of this same discussion topic includes this perspective: “Sincere expressions of Christlike love have great power to soften the hearts of class members who are struggling with the gospel. Often these individuals simply need to know they are needed and loved.”²

As a result of Sister Sonnenberg’s efforts to reach out to Nate, he felt needed and loved. As full-time missionaries, Nate and his classmates now have the opportunity to help others feel that same Christlike love. What a blessing that they can

remember and emulate the example of their Sunday School teacher.

Until You Find That Which Is Lost

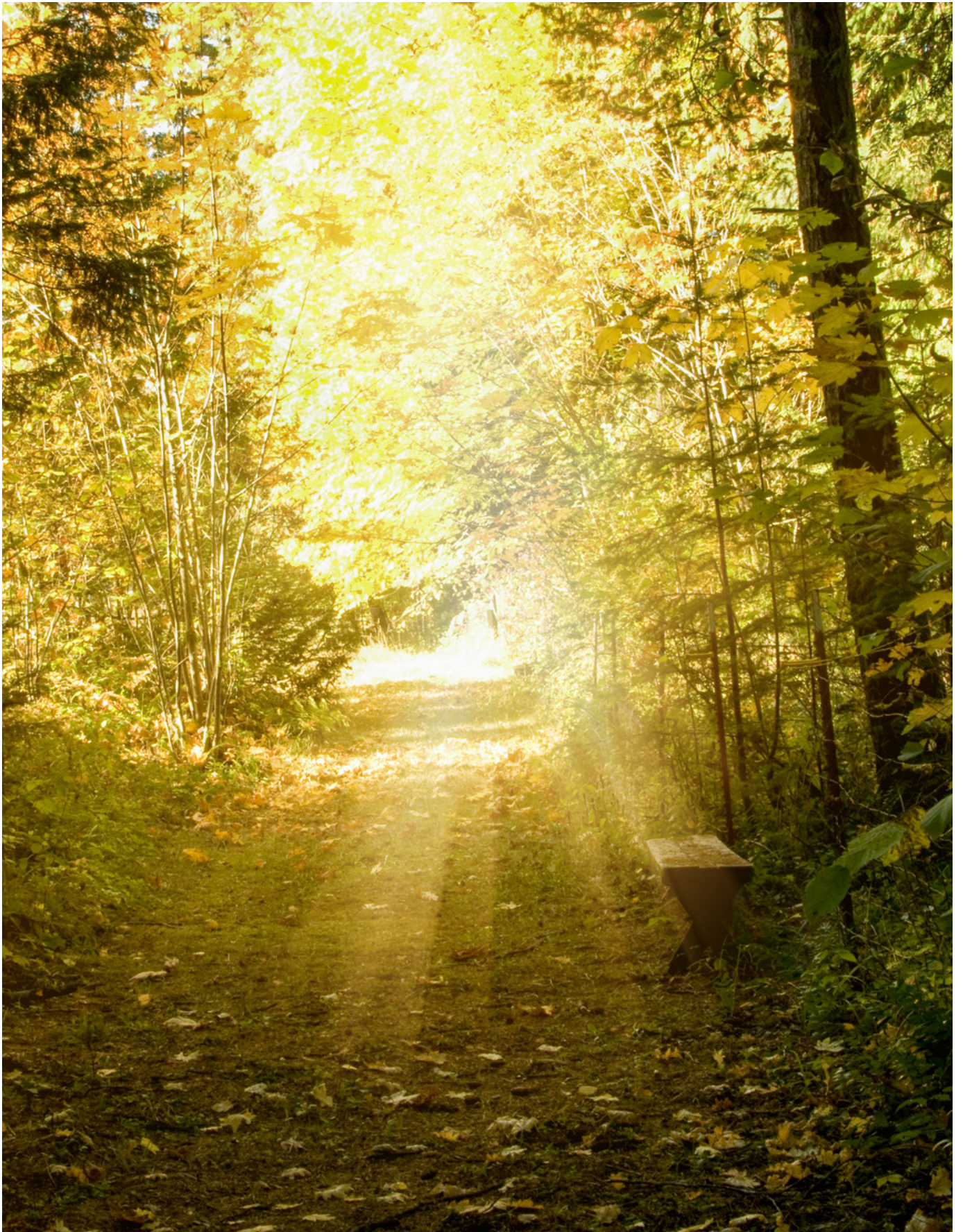
As a General Sunday School Presidency, we are grateful to Sunday School teachers throughout the world who, in a variety of ways, invite their class members to come unto Christ. We pray that the Lord will bless you in your efforts to love those you teach and, because of that love, to “go after that which is lost, until [you] find it”—as He did during His mortal ministry. ■

NOTES

1. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* (2016), 8, teaching.lds.org.
2. *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, 9.

To learn more about teaching as the Savior taught, you can watch the video “Love Those You Teach,” found at teaching.lds.org, as well as the other *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* videos.







**By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland**
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles

THE GOSPEL PATH TO Happiness

*Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth,
and the life.” No one comes to true
happiness except by Him.*

In a phrase I am sure you have heard many times, the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) once said, “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it.”¹

It is that worthy quest for happiness of which I wish to speak. Note that I said, “quest for happiness,” not happiness itself. Remember the Prophet Joseph’s choice of language: he spoke of the path that leads to happiness as the key to realizing that goal.

This is not a new quest. It has been one of the fundamental pursuits of humankind through the ages of time. One of the greatest intellectual minds the Western world has ever known once said that happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.²



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

Henry David Thoreau said, “Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.”

That was Aristotle, but note how presciently his statement parallels that of the Prophet Joseph—almost the exact phrasing. In the opening lines of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson immortalized both our personal and political quests by forever linking (at least in America) the three great inalienable rights of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” But notice in that magnificent troika that it is not happiness that is a right (like life and liberty) but specifically the *pursuit* of happiness.

So how do we “pursue” happiness, especially when we are young and inexperienced, maybe a little fearful, and life lies ahead of us as a challenging mountain to climb? Well, we know one thing for sure: happiness is not easy to find running straight for it. It is usually too elusive, too ephemeral, too

subtle. If you haven’t learned it already, you will learn in the years ahead that most times happiness comes to us when we least expect it, when we are busy doing something else. Happiness is almost always a by-product of some other endeavor.

Henry David Thoreau, one of my favorite writers from my university days, said, “Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.”³ This is one of those great gospel ironies that often don’t seem obvious, like “the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30; D&C 29:30) and “lose your life to find it” (see Matthew 16:25). The gospel is filled with such ironies and indirections, and I think the pursuit of happiness is one of them. So how do we optimize our chance for

happiness without pursuing it so directly that we miss it? Let me go to a most remarkable book for some answers.

Living “after the Manner of Happiness”

The first 30 years of Book of Mormon history do not present a pleasant story. The hostility within the family of Lehi and Sariah became so intense that the two halves of their family split asunder, with one group fleeing yet farther into the wilderness, fearing for their lives lest they fall victim to the bloodthirsty quest of the other. As the first group plunged into unsettled terrain to seek safety and fashion a life for themselves as best they could, the prophet-leader of this Nephite half of the family says they “lived after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

In light of what they had just been through for 30 years and with what we know yet lay in store for them in the trials ahead, such a comment seems almost painful. How could any of this be described as anything remotely like “happiness”? But Nephi does not say they were happy, though it is evident they were. What he says is, they “lived *after the manner of happiness*.” I would have you understand that there is a wonderful key in that phrase that can unlock precious blessings for you the rest of your life.

I do not think God in His glory or the angels of heaven or the prophets on earth intend to make us happy all the time, every day in every way, given the testing and trials this earthly realm is intended to provide. As President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, once phrased it: “Happiness is not given to us in a package that we can just open up and consume. Nobody is ever happy 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”⁴

But my reassurance to you is that in God’s plan we can do much to find the happiness we desire. We can take certain steps, we can form certain habits, we can do certain things that God and history tell us lead to happiness with the confidence that *if we live in such a manner*, that butterfly is much more likely to land upon our shoulder.

In short, your best chance for being happy is to do the things that happy people do, live the way happy people

live, and walk the path that happy people walk. As you do so, your chances to find joy in unexpected moments, to find peace in unexpected places, and to find the help of angels when you didn’t even know they knew you existed improve exponentially. Here are five ways we can live “after the manner of happiness.”

Live the Gospel

Above all else, ultimate happiness, true peace, and anything even remotely close to scriptural joy are found first, foremost, and forever in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lots of other philosophies and systems of belief have been tried. Indeed, it seems safe to say that virtually *every* other philosophy and system has been tried down through the centuries of history. But when the Apostle Thomas asked the Lord the question young people often ask today, “How can we know the way?”—which for many translates, “How can we know the way to be happy?”—Jesus gave the answer that rings from eternity to all eternity:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . .

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. . . .



“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:5–6, 13–14).

What a promise! Live my way, live my truth, live my life—live in this manner that I am showing you and teaching you—and whatsoever you ask will be given, whatsoever you seek you will find, including happiness. Parts of the blessing may come soon, parts may come later, and parts may not come until heaven, but they will come—all of them. What encouragement that is after a mournful Monday or a tearful Tuesday or a weary Wednesday! And it is a promise the realization of which *cannot come any other way* than by devotion to eternal truth!

In the words of then newly ordained Elder David O. McKay (1873–1970) just short of a full century ago, unlike gratification or pleasure or some kind of thrill, true “happiness is found only along that well beaten [gospel] track, *narrow as it is . . . [and] straight [as it is]*, which leads to life eternal.”⁵ So love God and each other, and be true to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Choose Happiness

Second, learn as quickly as you can that so much of your happiness is in your hands, not in events or



circumstances or fortune or misfortune. That is part of what the battle for agency was over in the premortal councils of heaven. We have choice, we have volition, we have agency, and we can choose, if not happiness per se, then to live after the manner of it. U.S. president Abraham Lincoln had plenty to be unhappy about in the most difficult administration a president of the United States has ever faced, but even he reflected that “most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”⁶

Happiness comes first by what comes into your head a long time before it comes into your hand. Joseph Smith was living “after the manner of happiness” in a very unhappy situation when he wrote from Liberty Jail to those on the outside who were also the victims of great injustice and persecution:

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45–46).

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.” That is not only good counsel against the modern plague of pornography, but it is also good counsel for all kinds of gospel thoughts, good thoughts, constructive thoughts, hopeful thoughts. Those faith-filled thoughts will alter how you see life’s problems and how you find resolution to them. “The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34), the revelation says.

Too often we have thought it was all up to the heart; it is not. God expects a willing mind in the quest for happiness and peace as well. Put your head into this. All of this takes effort. It is a battle but a battle for happiness that is worth waging.

In a popular book a few years ago, the author wrote: “Happiness is the consequence of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and . . . [look] for it. You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings. And once you have achieved a state of happiness, you must never become lax about maintaining



it, you must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upward into that happiness . . . to stay afloat on top of it.”⁷

I love the phrase “participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings.” Don’t be passive. Swim upward. Think and speak and act positively. That is what happy people do; that is one aspect of living after the manner of happiness.

Be Kind and Pleasant

Here is another. In preparing this message, I sat in my study for a long time trying to think if I had ever known a happy person who was unkind or unpleasant to be with. And guess what? I couldn’t think of one—not a single, solitary one. So learn this great truth early in life: You can never build your happiness on someone else’s unhappiness.

Sometimes, maybe especially when we are young and insecure and trying to make our way up in the world, we think if we can tear someone else down a little, it will somehow miraculously lift us up. That is what bullying is. That is what catty remarks are. That is what arrogance and superficiality and exclusiveness are. Perhaps we think if we are negative enough or cynical enough or just plain mean enough, then expectations won’t be too high; we can keep everyone down to a flaw-filled level, and therefore our flaws won’t be so glaring.

Happy people aren’t negative or cynical or mean, so don’t plan on that being part of the “manner of happiness.” If my life has taught me anything, it is that kindness and pleasantness and faith-based optimism are characteristics of happy people. In the words of Mother

If my life has taught me anything, it is that kindness and pleasantness and faith-based optimism are characteristics of happy people.



Be industrious and labor, including laboring for and serving others—one of the truly great keys to true happiness.

Teresa, “Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness—kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”⁸

A related step along the path toward happiness is to avoid animosity, contention, and anger in your life. Remember, it is Lucifer, Satan, the adversary of us all who loves anger. He “is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29).

After quoting that verse in general conference a few years ago, Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy said, “The verb *stir* sounds like a recipe for disaster: Put tempers on medium heat, stir in a few choice words, and bring to a boil; continue stirring until thick; cool off; let feelings chill for several days; serve cold; lots of leftovers.”⁹ Lots of leftovers indeed.

Anger damages or destroys almost everything it touches. As someone has said, to harbor anger is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. It is a vicious acid that will destroy the container long before it does damage to the intended object. There is nothing in it or its cousinly vices—violence, rage, bitterness, and hate—that has anything to do with living the gospel or the pursuit of happiness. I do not think anger can exist—or at least be fostered and entertained and indulged in—in a life being lived “after the manner of happiness.”

Work at It

Here is one last suggestion when there are so many others we should consider. Nephi said that in an effort to find happiness in their new land after their 30 years of trouble, “I, Nephi, did cause my people to be

industrious, and to labor with their hands” (2 Nephi 5:17). By contrast, those from whom they fled became “an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety” (2 Nephi 5:24).

If you want to be happy in school or on a mission or at a job or in a marriage—work at it. Learn to work. Serve diligently. Don’t be idle and mischievous. A homespun definition of Christlike character might be the integrity to do the right thing at the right time in the right way. Don’t be idle. Don’t be wasteful. “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Be industrious and labor, including laboring for and serving others—one of the truly great keys to true happiness.

Now, let me close by citing Alma’s straightforward counsel to Corianton. With all the encouragement a father would want to give a son or daughter, he said that in the Resurrection the faithful are raised to a state of “endless happiness” wherein they “inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 41:4). At that time, he added, we will be “raised to happiness according to [our] desires of happiness” (Alma 41:5). But he also sternly cautioned: “Do not suppose . . . that [without repentance] ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, *wickedness never was happiness*” (Alma 41:10; emphasis added).

Sin is the antithesis of “living after the manner of happiness.” Indeed, those who believe otherwise, Alma says, “are without God in the world, and . . . have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11).

Reject Transgression

I ask you to reject transgression in order to live consistent with the nature of God, which is the nature of true happiness. I encourage you and applaud you in your efforts to “pursue the path that leads to it.” You can’t find it any other way.

My testimony is that God, the Eternal Father in Heaven, is always encouraging and applauding your pursuit even more lovingly than I. I testify that He wants you to be happy, to have true joy. I testify of the Atonement of His

Only Begotten Son, which provides the right path and, if necessary, a new start on it, a second chance, a change in our nature if necessary.

I pray that you will know that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that no one comes to true happiness except by Him. I pray that someday, sometime, somewhere you will receive every righteous desire of your heart as you live the gospel of Jesus Christ, thus living “after the manner” that leads to those blessings. ■

From a devotional address, “Living after the Manner of Happiness,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on September 23, 2014. For the full address in English, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:134.
2. See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (1982), 31.
3. Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau on Nature: Sage Words on Finding Harmony with the Natural World* (2015), 72; this quote has also been attributed to Nathaniel Hawthorne and to anonymous.
4. James E. Faust, “Our Search for Happiness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Oct. 2000, 2.
5. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 180; emphasis added.
6. This quote was attributed to Abraham Lincoln by Dr. Frank Crane in the *Syracuse Herald*, Jan. 1, 1914 (quoteinvestigator.com/category/frank-crane).
7. Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia* (2006), 260.
8. Mother Teresa, in Susan Conroy, *Mother Teresa’s Lessons of Love and Secrets of Sanctity* (2003), 64.
9. Lynn G. Robbins, “Agency and Anger,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 80.





We Can Do Better:

WELCOMING OTHERS into the Fold

Here are four ways you can help new and returning members feel like they belong.

Note: No matter how strong someone's belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ, staying faithful can be difficult for new and returning members if they feel like they don't belong. In this article we examine what members who are already in the fold can do to welcome others in. In the December issue we will look at what those who feel they're on the outside can do to find their place.

By Betsy VanDenBerghe

Within a month of Melissa's (all names have been changed) baptism in the Midwestern United States, she offered the opening prayer in sacrament meeting. She was nervous about praying publicly but "felt every confidence in my ability to speak to my Heavenly Father," she recalls. "After all, I had been praying for years, especially while investigating the Church, and could feel the Holy Ghost helping me."



So it was with surprise that she received an email from a ward member who described “in great detail” all of the ways her prayer was wrong. Shame, embarrassment, and an onslaught of doubt raced through Melissa until she felt prompted to call the returned missionary who had taught her. “He quickly assured me that it was totally inappropriate for this member to criticize me in such a way,” she says. “He also told me the bishopric would never ask another member, as I had assumed, to give me this kind of feedback.”

Reassured, Melissa remained active in the ward, accepted callings, and went on to flourish in her faith.

But it took several months to get over the pain and lost confidence from receiving that discouraging email.

Unfortunately, Melissa’s story is not unique. Many new and returning members face significant, but often avoidable, challenges from feeling like they don’t belong. Sometimes even those with strong testimonies struggle to remain faithful when they feel excluded. In a recent video series titled *Unity in Diversity*, Church leaders address this issue, encouraging members to be more sensitive, inclusive, and loving in our interactions.

The following stories help to illustrate how we as members can apply these principles and offer genuine



friendship and emotional support to those who hunger for heartfelt acceptance in the Lord's Church.

Be a Friend in the Faith

"When anyone's shadow darkens the door of a chapel, they ought to feel immediately embraced and loved and lifted and inspired . . . to go and be better because they know the Lord loves them and because they have friends in their faith."

—Carol F. McConkie, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Melissa needed genuine friends, especially in her ward, she could approach when she needed advice or help. Her husband and daughter hadn't joined the Church with her.

"Coming to church and seeing all the families made me feel deeply alone," she says. Everyone was friendly, but even their happiness made her feel as though "I would never attain that Mormon glow because I was the only one with problems."

In addition to the returned missionary who had taught her, Melissa was blessed with Cindy, an online friend who had first introduced her to the Church. "It was hard to watch Melissa struggling in her local area as I looked on helplessly," Cindy explains. "So I created a private Facebook group with a few incredibly grounded, loving, diverse members who helped and befriended her in ways I could never do alone."

The group not only offered a sense of inclusion for Melissa while she found her place in her ward but also responded to questions about lifestyle and cultural concerns. "I was raised in tank tops and short shorts," Melissa says. She appreciated online friends who responded with photos of outfits she could check out in local stores. This encouraged her



to ask sisters in her ward for movie recommendations after she no longer felt comfortable with some selections in her collection.

An important aspect of friendship, Melissa points out, is that she sought the advice. Unsolicited advice feels like intrusion rather than inclusion, an invasion of privacy that can be hurtful to those who aren't prepared for it.

Eventually, Melissa was called to teach in Relief Society. Her calling provided opportunities to interact with others in the ward. Melissa shared with the sisters her difficulties not only in adjusting as a new member but also in dealing with an autistic child, some personal health issues, and "Oh, and my dog is dying." The experience of having other sisters listen and respond with their own difficulties in class and in private conversations proved deeply healing. These connections helped Melissa feel that she finally had true friends in the faith.

Include Everyone

"The Savior commanded His followers to 'love one another; as I have loved you' (John 13:34; emphasis added).

So we look at how He loved us. . . . If we make Him our role model, we should always be trying to reach out to include everyone."

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Robert, an investigator in Canada, has attended a variety of LDS meetings and activities. He has researched various religions but continues studying the Church because of the inspiration he has found in its doctrine and the Book of Mormon. He attends institute to learn more and finds the social environment "refreshingly wholesome, friendly, with a really good vibe," he says. "Mormons are the nicest people in the world."

A self-described introvert, Robert wants to interact but says, "I tend to hug the walls, unsure of how to be part of the groups, some of them long-term LDS friends who don't seem to need anyone else." But it doesn't take much to ease this sense of isolation. During an activity, he recalls, "someone came up to me after dinner and encouraged me to stay for the movie; otherwise, I would have left, but instead I had a great time. I just needed to know that someone wanted me there."

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERACTIONS WITH NEW MEMBERS AND INVESTIGATORS

- Go out of your way to warmly greet them, interact with them, and introduce them to other members.
- Invite them into your home or to other activities so that they will have friends during the week as well as on Sunday.
- Listen and ask questions that help them feel understood.
- Share your own stories of overcoming difficulties so they know that we all struggle.
- Wait for them to ask for your advice, and when offering it, don't be prescriptive or overbearing.
- Allow priesthood and Relief Society leaders to give ecclesiastical direction; fellow members should worry more about being a good friend.
- Avoid comparing their progress to your own or anyone else's.
- Teach the fundamental doctrines of the Church, not cultural tendencies.
- While you can look for opportunities online to reach out to new converts, investigators, and less-active members, in-person friendships can be more meaningful.

Like Melissa, he appreciates LDS friends who explain doctrine but don't get too specific about how to live it. Friends who listen more than they admonish are like "someone who walks beside you, as opposed to pushing from behind to make you go faster. Most of the time, you just trip and stumble."

Robert has struggled to give up smoking. His discomfort illustrates how those who are new are deeply aware of their differences. "Not one member has ever said anything to me about smelling like smoke," he says. "Yet if my clothes aren't fresh out of the laundry, I will stay home from institute or church."

We can create a greater sense of belonging as we reassure and include those who are new to the Church. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles says, "It breaks my heart if someone comes and is very vulnerable and says . . . , 'I want to be here,' and then gets a cold shoulder or a lack of interest. That's tragic. . . . We have to be better than that" ("Is There a Place for Me?" [video], [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library)).

Put Yourself Out There

"When you choose to put yourself out there, you are blessing someone else's life. . . . Can you look for the person who is sitting on the outside, sitting on the fringe? . . . When you've opened your heart to other people, you see that we all belong."

—Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President

After Elsa joined the Church in the Netherlands, she experienced a genuine connection with a loving Heavenly Father. But as a young single adult, she also dealt with loneliness when family members and friends felt uncomfortable with her new religious beliefs and habits. "The best thing members have done for me," she said, "is to willingly befriend me outside of church. Some go to the temple to do baptisms with me even though they have been endowed. I need to interact with members beyond Sunday to get strength and endure to the end."

Elsa feels like her biggest challenge as a recent convert is "the expectation to suddenly understand everything," she says. "All the acronyms, events, callings. It can be a little mind-blowing, and I sometimes worry people are judging me for not learning faster." Additionally, like many others, she experiences social anxiety that "keeps me comfortable sitting toward the back of the chapel, rarely interacting." Large groups are daunting, and she wonders if others judge her for her lack of participation. "It's not that I don't want to take part in the lessons or sing hymns openly or say a public prayer," she explains. "It's just that I'm afraid I might actually burst out crying in front of these people I don't really know yet."

Sister McConkie says: "I know people who come to church every Sunday so that they can be inspired and uplifted and who just simply walk away feeling judged and unloved—unneded, like there is no place for them at church. We need to do this differently."

Members who are nonjudgmental, Elsa says, help her the most. "They listen to my dilemmas and don't intrude into my personal space. They act with sincerity and patience while I learn for myself what being a member is all about." In spite of her anxiety, she accompanies the missionaries and looks out for new members and investigators. "I know how it feels to be new," she explains, "and want to make sure no one turns away from the gifts of the gospel that saved me from despair."

Live the Gospel, Become Disciples

"People can bring different gifts and perspectives. The wide range of experience and backgrounds and challenges that people face will show us what really is essential in the gospel of Christ. And much of the rest that's been, perhaps, acquired over time and is more cultural than doctrinal can slip away, and we can really learn to be disciples."

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In spite of having previously been critical of the Church, Jim joined because he received "an unquestionable spiritual testimony from the Holy Ghost that testified of the



truth of the gospel and its doctrine.” One of his greatest challenges, however, was adapting to LDS culture.

After baptism, he discovered that many generally accepted behaviors among members were cultural rather than doctrinal. “While this happens in any organized religion,” he explains, “I felt that if I didn’t conform in certain ways, I would be accused of not fully embracing the gospel. My struggles weren’t with the gospel or doctrine but with a level of conformity that felt only cultural.”

As Elder Christofferson explains, we need our new converts, investigators, and others to help us shed non-doctrinal practices that have accumulated over time and become true disciples.

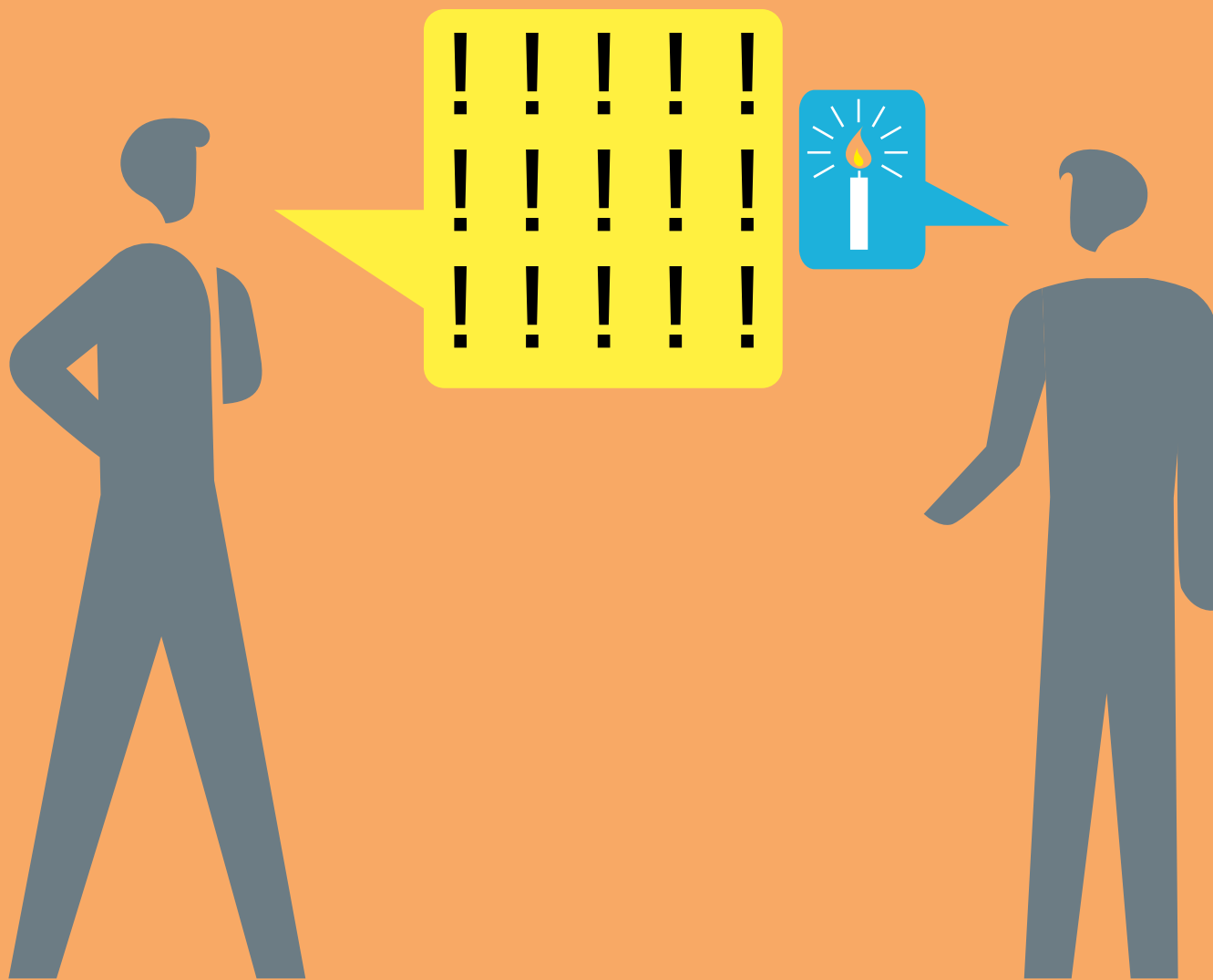
Extolling the benefits of interacting with people of different backgrounds, Elder Oaks encourages Latter-day Saints to avoid focusing on differences and, instead, begin by asking, “Where are you coming from? What are your basic values? What do you want to accomplish?” This kind of openness and acceptance, in turn, helps those new to our circle feel included, lifted, loved, and ready to embrace salvation within the body of Christ.

Like Church leaders today, the Apostle Paul worried about divisions in the ancient Church of Christ. He urged members with strong opinions to avoid offending fellow Saints about practices that did not, in the end, really matter, explaining that while “knowledge puffeth up, . . . charity edifieth” (1 Corinthians 8:1). He called for “no divisions among you” and to focus on “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” rather than on the ways members differ from each other (1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:2).

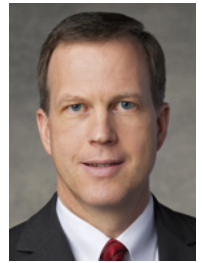
Today, modern apostles and prophets urge us to find unity in diversity, encouraging us to make room for each member of the Church of Christ as an important part of our purpose to come to a “unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). ■

WATCH UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Watch a series of short videos from Church leaders on what it means to belong to the Church at [lds.org/go/unity917](https://www.lds.org/go/unity917).



Defending THE FAITH



By Elder
Jörg Klebingat
Of the Seventy

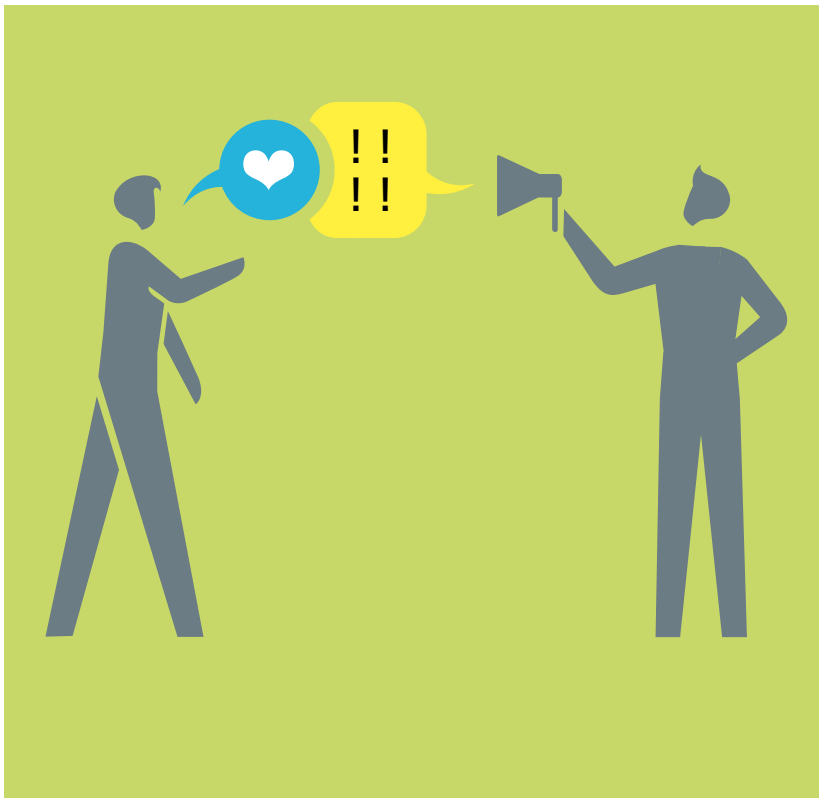
The Lord needs a people willing and able to humbly yet firmly defend Christ and the kingdom of God.

In the premortal existence we possessed agency, reasoning powers, and intelligence. There we were “called and prepared . . . according to the foreknowledge of God” and were initially “on the same standing” with our brothers and sisters (Alma 13:3, 5). Opportunities for growth and learning were widely available.

However, equal access to the teachings of a loving heavenly home did not produce a uniform desire among us—Heavenly Father’s spirit children—to listen, learn, and obey. Exercising our agency, as we do today, we listened with varying degrees of interest and intent. Some of us eagerly sought to learn and obey. With war in heaven on the horizon, we prepared for graduation from our premortal home. Truth was taught and challenged; testimonies were borne and ridiculed, with each premortal spirit making the choice to either defend or defect from the Father’s plan.

No Neutrality

Ultimately, retreating indecisively to neutral ground was not an option in this conflict. Nor is it today. Those of us armed with faith in the future Atonement of Jesus Christ, those energized by testimonies of His divine role, those possessing spiritual knowledge *and the courage to use it in defense of His sacred name* fought



The Lord needs a host of true Latter-day Saints willing, in a spirit of meekness and love, to testify of truth when any aspect of the restored gospel is challenged!

on the front lines of this war of words. John taught that those valiant spirits, and others, have overcome Lucifer “by the blood of the Lamb, and by *the word of their testimony* (Revelation 12:11; emphasis added).

Yes, the promise of a Savior and of a bloodstained Gethsemane and Calvary won the premortal war. But our premortal *courage and testimony*, our willingness to explain, reason with, and persuade other spirits also helped stem the tide of falsehoods from spreading unopposed!

Having successfully completed a premortal tour of duty in His defense, we became witnesses of His holy name. Indeed, having proven us in battle and being thus assured of our hearts and courage, the Lord later said of us—members of the house of Israel—“Ye are my witnesses” (Isaiah 43:10). Let us ask ourselves: Is this declaration still true of us today?

Our Current Battle

A conflict for the minds, hearts, and souls of our Father’s children still rages today in

anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. While many in the world are sincerely curious about the teachings of the Church, an ever-widening gulf between the wicked and the righteous separates a world in moral free fall from restored gospel truths. When imperfect yet striving Saints who seek for light are accused of following darkness, when the sweetness of their intent and works is declared to be bitter (see Isaiah 5:20), is it any wonder that mocking fingers are pointed toward the Lord’s restored Church and His faithful servants? (see 1 Nephi 8:27).

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “We live in a time when we are surrounded by much that is intended to entice us into paths which may lead to our destruction. To avoid such paths requires determination and courage.”

Passive, casual membership is not enough in this latter-day conflict! President Monson continued: “As we go about living from day to day, it is almost inevitable that our faith will be challenged. . . . Do we have the moral courage to stand firm for our beliefs, even if by so doing we must stand alone?”¹

Despite the permanent background noise emanating from the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27), are we determined to walk steadfastly along the road less traveled by?² Are we both willing and able to engage in polite discussion with those who have honest questions? Without resorting to contention, are we able and willing to clarify and defend the teachings of the restored Church of Jesus Christ?

Counseling us to be able to disagree without being disagreeable, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Even as we seek to be meek . . . ,

we must not compromise or dilute our commitment to the truths we understand.”³

Become Valiant

Let us consider carefully President Monson’s invitation: “Once we have a testimony, it is incumbent upon us to share that testimony with others. . . . May we ever be courageous and prepared to stand for what we believe, and if we must stand alone in the process, may we do so courageously, strengthened by the knowledge that in reality we are never alone when we stand with our Father in Heaven.”⁴

Church membership alone does not automatically make one a valiant witness of Christ and His restored Church. The Lord taught us to let our light shine through gospel living, yet a few members keep their membership a secret by putting their light under a bushel. Some will answer occasional gospel questions but hesitate to testify and invite. Yet others actually look for opportunities to share the gospel and do so willingly. How many of us are proactive, valiant *defenders* of the faith?

To hold and regain ground in today’s war of words, the Lord needs a people both willing and able to humbly yet firmly defend Christ, His living oracles, the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the standards of the Church. He needs a people “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [them]” (1 Peter 3:15). He needs a host of true Latter-day Saints willing, in a spirit of meekness and love, to testify of truth when any aspect of the restored gospel is challenged!

The Example of Captain Moroni

If you feel inadequate as a valiant defender of truth in our day, you are not alone. Most of us feel that way to some degree. Yet there are simple things we can do to gain both ability and confidence.

In the Book of Mormon, we learn that Captain Moroni “prepar[ed] the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God” (Alma 48:7). He realized that the first line of defense was a life built on a foundation of personal

obedience. Furthermore, he “erect[ed] small forts, . . . throwing up banks of earth . . . , and also building walls of stone to encircle them about” (verse 8). Not only did he take some obvious defensive precautions, but he also strategically strengthened “their weakest fortifications” (verse 9). His precautionary strategies were so successful that his enemies were “astonished exceedingly” (Alma 49:5) and unable to execute their evil designs.

You may ask, “Can someone as weak as I am be a valiant defender of Christ and His restored gospel?” Your perceived weakness can be made strong as you accept that all the Lord initially requires is “[your] heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). Endowed with a courageous spirit, the “small and simple” of the world are His favorite recruits. Remember that by “very small means,” He delights to “confound the wise” (see Alma 37:6, 7). If you are willing to share and defend the restored gospel and its leaders and doctrines, you may consider the following suggestions.

1. Know whom and what to defend. A solid defensive strategy is the foundation for a solid offense. While you *can’t* effectively defend that which you know nothing or little about, you *won’t* defend it if you don’t deeply care. Just as a hireling, who is paid to care for the sheep, will retreat or flee at the first sign of trouble, so you will not hold your defensive lines very long unless you have a



spiritual conviction that your cause is just and true. To witness of and defend Christ and His Church, you must know that He lives and that this is His restored Church!

Those who know *and* live the gospel are filled with both understanding and a burning conviction kindled from worthiness and personal experience. They are more prepared to witness of the truth than those who have given attention only to learning how to give the answers.

2. Evaluate your fortifications. Follow the example of Captain Moroni. Honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your gospel understanding. Are you setting a good example by living a Christlike life? Are you able to find answers to questions by searching the scriptures? Are you comfortable bearing your testimony? Can you answer questions regarding the Church's doctrines and teachings, even some that are more challenging to explain, by appealing to the scriptures? Are you prepared to say, "I don't know, but I will find out," or to direct people to places where they can find answers? Could it be that diligent study will help you gain the confidence and courage you seek?⁵

3. Strengthen your fortifications. With an assessment of your doctrinal "fortifications" before you, begin a focused, long-term study with the aim of making weak things become strong unto you (see Ether 12:27). Respond to Moses's cry, "Would God that all the Lord's people were

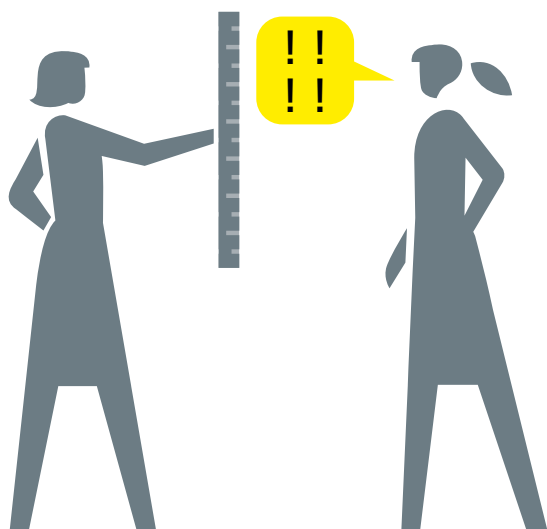
prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Weary the Lord with the request that for every spoonful of daily effort, He will heap pounds of earth onto your defensive walls.

Prayerfully read the scriptures, again and again. Don't merely sip familiar stories through a straw. Feast upon them. Consider keeping doctrinal study notes and continually adding to them. For each topic, consider identifying and then memorizing in logical order a few scriptures to support your own thoughts and teachings. As Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, "When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased."⁶

Consider memorizing a few quotes by prophets and apostles. The Holy Ghost typically can "bring . . . to your remembrance" only that which you first put there (see John 14:26). True Christ-centered doctrinal knowledge combined with "the sword of [His] Spirit" (D&C 27:18) is the greatest fortification and offensive weapon you possess.

4. Practice! The Church's full-time missionaries are encouraged to role-play to prepare for situations in which they might find themselves. Because you may be asked to defend the Church or to explain its doctrine at the most unexpected times or places, consider following the missionaries' example by preparing yourself *spiritually* before you have a conversation *naturally* (see Moses 3:5, 7). Role-play before you find yourself in circumstances in which you are teaching or defending gospel standards. Whether alone or with family or friends, pose hypothetical questions and then answer them! As you become increasingly prepared, you will "wax stronger and stronger" in your confidence as a witness of Christ (see Helaman 3:35). Start with brief and simple answers. They will be adequate in most situations. But you can also strengthen your defenses even more by studying related scriptures and connecting various doctrines.

5. Seek opportunities. Having thus prepared yourself, pray for opportunities to humbly yet confidently share and, if needed, defend the gospel. Remember, "*discouragement* is not the absence of adequacy but the absence of



courage.”⁷ Pray that you will love Heavenly Father’s children in and out of the Church sufficiently to share and defend gospel standards. Pray that you will never experience indifference or resignation regarding personal doctrinal blind spots, but with faith in Christ work to overcome them.

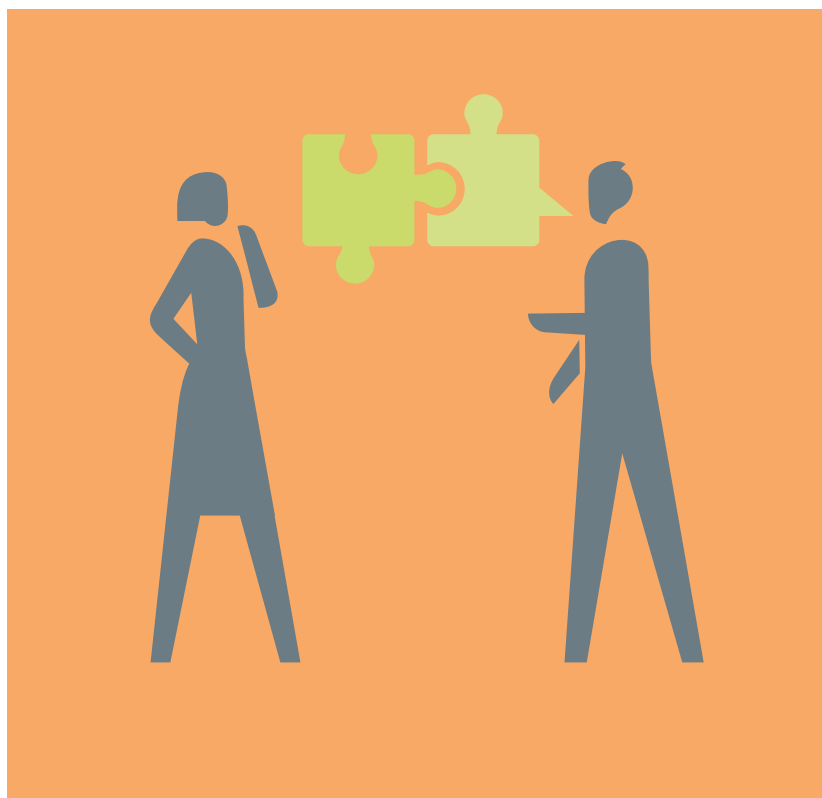
Remember that even a child can be a defender of Christ on the playground by bearing a simple testimony; that you don’t have to be a gospel scholar to be a witness of the truth; that you don’t have to have all the answers; that it is OK to sometimes say, “I don’t know” or “these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear” (Alma 37:11). Not being “ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16) is more than simply ignoring or enduring half-truths and falsehoods; it means knowing and defending the doctrines! Hence, if we remain silent, let it not be out of fear but because we are following a prompting (see, for example, Alma 30:29).

Stand as a Proactive Witness

As you continue defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify [you] for the work” (D&C 4:5). Let us here call to mind that Christ was meek but never weak—that He invited but also rebuked, and that He also said “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me” (3 Nephi 11:29).

As a wicked world continues violating the moral and doctrinal standards of God, Christ depends on even the least of the Saints to be living witnesses of His name.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) reminded us that “it is not enough just to be good. You must be good for something. You must contribute good to the world. The



world must be a better place for your presence. . . . In this world so filled with problems, so constantly threatened by dark and evil challenges, you can and must rise above mediocrity, above *indifference*. You can become involved and speak with a strong voice for that which is right.”⁸

If you desire to be a witness of the restored gospel, join the ranks of a latter-day army of witnesses by letting your light so shine! May your gospel living *and* your defense of that same gospel be a reflection of the depth of your conversion to Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 60.
2. See “The Road Not Taken,” *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (1969), 105.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Loving Others and Living with Differences,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 26.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” 67.
5. The Gospel Topics essays at topics.lds.org are particularly helpful in answering questions about the history and doctrine of the Church.
6. Richard G. Scott, “He Lives,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 88.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, “Notwithstanding My Weakness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 14.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Up for Truth” (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 17, 1996), 2; emphasis added.

Start with brief and simple answers. They will be adequate in most situations. But you can also strengthen your defenses even more by studying related scriptures and connecting various doctrines.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID STOKER, POSED BY MODELS

Saved

AFTER MY DAUGHTER'S SUICIDE

My ward stepped in to help me through this trial because I was without family of my own.

By Le Etta Thorpe

A friend of mine recently asked me a question that took me by surprise. Of all the questions that are left unanswered after a loved one takes his or her life, she had just one on her mind. Her question was, “How has the Church helped you after the suicide of your 15-year-old daughter?”

My initial thought was, “It hasn’t. I pushed everyone away, hibernated in my home, and suffered in absolute solitude.”

But after a few days of reflection, I realized that thought was totally off base. I have no doubt that the unimaginable horror I experienced clouded my perspective.

While at the hospital where they took my daughter Natalie (who had already passed), I was in a state of shock. I was completely numb, physically and mentally. Things were happening around me that I could see but not feel: police asking questions, friends crying, medical staff informing. It’s all a blur yet perfectly clear.

My former bishop and his wife were there. A colleague of mine had called them. My daughter, Natalie, and I had moved from their ward only a few months prior. My bishop and his wife were beloved friends of ours.

The bishop’s wife, also named Natalie, said I would be staying with them. The next thing I knew, I was in their vehicle riding back to my old neighborhood. I had no comprehension of time passing, yet I was aware it was dawn

of the next day when I received a priesthood blessing from the bishop and a friend.

I was kept in the loop with all of the funeral arrangements, yet I was unaware of all the details. I would get dressed when I was told to get dressed. I would get in the car when I was told we had somewhere to go. I was a robot following simple commands. That was all I was capable of doing. Surprisingly, I had not yet shed a tear.

My daughter’s funeral was beautiful. There was a lot of laughter mixed with tears, and the Spirit was very much present. My oldest daughter, Victoria, traveled back to Utah from another state. She wrote a song and performed it at the funeral.

I was never approached about the funeral costs except to be informed it was being handled. Within a few weeks the funeral had been paid in full by donations from Church members.

At the time, I was still staying with my former bishop’s family. Members from my previous ward were looking for a new place for me to live. A cute little basement apartment became available, and the next thing I knew, I was signing a lease. This did not happen by my own doing. It was the actions of a network of Church members, including my dear friend Natalie, the bishop’s wife.

Ward members helped move my personal effects and got

me and Victoria settled in. The first two months' rent had been paid in advance—again, by Church member donations. I still had no perception of time, and I was still emotionally numb to a certain degree, yet I was starting to get feeling back.

A few weeks after my daughter's death, the realization and magnitude of what had happened started to creep in. It was like heavy, thick black smoke seeping in at first, followed by all-consuming billows until I was surrounded by complete darkness. Grief in its rawest form has its own dimension of blackness.

Natalie had died on Thanksgiving Day. It was now Christmas. The holidays only magnified my loss. The agony lingered throughout the day and tormented me throughout the night. It was relentless. The tears poured endlessly for days. Minutes passed like hours. Hours passed like days. Days passed like years.

As a divorced woman, I did not have a husband who could go out and earn a living. If I could have, I would have curled up in a ball, locked myself in a closet, and remained there forever. But I didn't have that luxury. I had to somehow gather the strength to function. I had to find a job. I was working when Thanksgiving Day happened, but somehow in all the chaos, I had forgotten about my job. I could have gone back to it, but my Natalie loved to hang out there, and

the thought of going back without her was unbearable.

By the first week of January, I had gotten a low-paying job. I tried to act like I was normal. My body kept going, but I felt like my soul had died. No one knew I was a hollow shell of a being just going through the motions. It was only during the drive to and from work that I was able to break down emotionally. This was my new normal.

I started going to my new ward a little at a time. I just knew if someone asked me how I was doing, I would fall to pieces. I desperately wanted to go to church, but I didn't want to talk to anyone, much less make eye contact. I wished with all my heart that I could be invisible. More than anything, I just wanted to rip this all-consuming pain out of my chest! But it wouldn't begin to diminish until sometime later.

I have no idea what the sisters in Relief Society thought of me, and at the time I didn't much care. I was too busy just trying to breathe! I'm sure I gave off the impression that I wanted to be left alone, for none of them bothered me. They did, however, occasionally give me a warm smile that I found a little comforting—just the exact small dose to keep me from running out the nearest exit, which was a constant thought.

Time is a healer. It doesn't erase events, but it allows gaping wounds to slowly close.

That fateful Thanksgiving Day was in 2011, and it took me a few years to realize just how much I was helped by my brothers and sisters in the Church. I felt like I was carried off the battlefield after having been critically wounded. I was nursed back to health and cared for until I could stand on my own.

Countless blessings have come my way, in a variety of ways. My testimony has grown to near full maturity. I know now what it feels like to be held in the loving arms of our Savior.

So to answer my friend's question, "How did the Church help you through this ordeal?" I say, "They didn't help me. They saved me." ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Natalie was a source of joy and laughter in my life. I am grateful for the support of my friends and ward members as I grieved her loss.



LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID STOKER,
POSED BY MODELS



How Survivors Heal

By LDS Family Services

When someone chooses to end their pain with suicide, a complicated and uniquely painful grieving process begins for loved ones left behind (typically referred to as survivors). Feelings of confusion, guilt, abandonment, rejection, and anger are intensified. The unanswered questions of Why? What did I miss? Why didn't I receive a prompting? How will this affect eternal rewards? etc., can cause tremendous turmoil as well as thoughts that perhaps they were somehow responsible for their loved one's death.

There is a tendency for survivors to withdraw from others in shame because of fears of blame, judgment, and stigma. Survivors might also feel trauma-related reactions, especially for someone who discovers the body. Survivors can even develop suicidal thoughts themselves in their grief.

Notwithstanding such deep pain and anguish, our Savior "descended below all things" (see D&C 88:6; 122:8) "that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12) so "that we may . . . find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

To those who are grieving:

- Don't blame others, especially yourself.
- Take care of yourself spiritually: Trust in the gift of agency, allow for unknowns (see 1 Nephi 9:6), and trust in the Lord's power to heal and provide peace (see Philippians 4:7).



- Take care of yourself physically: Maintain a routine of good diet, rest, and exercise.
- Reach out for support from those you trust (family, friends, bishop), and let others help you through this crisis.
- Engage in healthy activities that provide distraction.
- Talk with a professional counselor and/or attend a suicide support group.
- Be patient in your healing process.

To those caring for someone who is grieving:

- Be compassionate and do not blame or judge. Understand how "the Lord . . . suit[s] his mercies" (D&C 46:15).
- Reach out and ask the survivors how you can help even in simple tasks, or accompany them in activities.
- Be patient, listen, and accept the feelings they share at their pace.
- Avoid clichés and false assurances such as "It'll be OK," "It could be worse," "I know how you feel," "I understand," "It's God's will," "Time heals all wounds," and so on.
- Don't try to provide answers to their unanswerable questions.
- Don't compare their grief to yours even if it was related to a suicide.
- Talk to them about their loved one in similar ways as you would about someone who died in another manner.
- Reassure affected children that they are not responsible.
- Offer to help them find additional resources for their grieving (counseling, support groups, etc.). ■





PORTRAITS OF FAITH

Cayo Sopi and Anthony Linat have been friends since childhood. Cayo, a member of the Church, always hoped Anthony would join.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

Cayo and Anthony

Paris, France

Anthony:

I could see that Cayo was different from my other friends. We all do dumb things as we're growing up, but Cayo helped me choose a good path.

From age 8 to age 18, I reflected a lot about getting baptized. But it took me a long time because I had a lot of things I needed to change in my life, even though I tried to live good principles.


Cayo:

It took the time that it took, more than 10 years, but finally he was baptized.

I believe the Lord does everything He can so we can truly, honestly, and deeply change. Becoming a Latter-day Saint and a disciple of Christ is not just a question of deciding to adopt certain attitudes; it is to witness a profound change in ourselves. I saw that change in Anthony.

See more about Cayo and Anthony's story at lds.org/go/91738.

Learn more about sharing the gospel from Elder Dallin H. Oaks at lds.org/go/91739.



When our baby boy began to breathe on his own, it was as if he was saying, “Mom, I’m going to be strong and do my part.”

WATCHING OUR BABY LEAVE THIS LIFE

After the first ultrasound, the doctor told us there was a chance that our new baby had Down syndrome. My husband and I didn’t expect to hear this, and my vision for the future changed immediately.

All through the pregnancy, I was filled with questions and concerns about what to expect. But we prepared carefully for our baby’s arrival. When the day finally arrived, I felt in my heart that someone beautiful and special was about to be born.

We named our baby boy Santiago, and shortly after his birth we learned that he had not only Down syndrome but also several serious health complications that affected his heart,

liver, and lungs. Immediately, the doctors and nurses connected him to an artificial respirator and a heart–lung machine. As the days went by in the hospital, my husband and I began discussing how we were going to raise Santiago alongside his brothers. It was then we realized how much we needed our Heavenly Father.

Our little “Santi” improved enough to be disconnected from the artificial respirator. When he began to breathe on his own, it was as if he was saying, “Mom, I’m going to be strong and do my part.” He squeezed our fingers in his tiny hand. He was strong, but his heart could not hold up. He went into cardiac arrest, and a short while later,

he returned to his Heavenly Father.

I never dreamed I’d go through something like that. To wait for your child to arrive with so much anticipation, to make so many plans for him, and then to watch him leave this life is one of the most painful things a father and mother can go through.

My husband and I went to the temple after Santiago’s burial. When we entered, we felt comforted. I knew someday I would know my baby and enjoy him as his mother. I’m grateful for temples and for eternal families. Now it is up to us to live in a way that we can be with our little Santiago again. ■
Rocio Alvarado, Santiago, Chile

THE SAVIOR: THE PERFECT PHYSICIAN

As a physician, I once had a patient come to me after a routine blood test was out of normal range. In the days between her test and our visit, she had consulted the internet about what the results could mean. When we met, she was upset and worried. I tried to explain the results, but she was still distraught.

“Don’t worry about what could go wrong,” I told her. “That’s my job! This is what I’m here for. I studied hard to know what to do about this. We’ll get through this together, and if you’ll follow my instructions, you’ll know how to be whole again. Trust me and let me take the burden of medical worries. Then you can focus all your energy on getting better.”

This helped to calm her fears. We

made plans to run more tests, and I promised we would move forward on this together.

Months later, I was experiencing turmoil in my own life. Pressures at work, a baby on the way, and an upcoming move overwhelmed me. I found myself frustrated, anxious, and afraid.

I prayed earnestly about my worries, sins, and frustrations. As I prayed, the Spirit testified of the Savior’s importance in my life. It was as if He said to me:


“Don’t worry about all the things that could happen. That’s my job! It’s what I’m here for. I suffered all things to know what to do about this. Have faith in me, and we’ll get through this together. If you’ll follow my instructions, you can again be whole. Trust

me and let me take those spiritual burdens. Then you can focus all your efforts on becoming your best self.”

With this realization, my worry, guilt, and frustration were lifted. Faith in Him removed unproductive feelings that blocked my progress. I could focus on the things in my control. I could live the gospel and turn to the Savior in my challenges.

In the same way that a physician might lead us to physical wholeness, the Savior, who is the perfect Physician, can take away the burden of shame, worry, guilt, and even feelings of frustration and anxiety and show us the way to be spiritually whole again. That’s His job, and He performs it perfectly. ■

Matt Lindsey, Hawaii, USA



“Don’t worry about all the things that could happen. That’s my job! That’s what I’m here for.”

MY ADDICTION; THE SAVIOR'S HELP

Several years ago, my wife and I were on the verge of getting a divorce because of my problem with alcohol. Not even our daughters' tears could change me. When the missionaries visited our home, it did not take long for my wife and daughters to be baptized, but I would not accept the things of God.

My addiction to alcohol controlled my life. I would go to bars after work and often missed work because I was drunk. When I drank, I became physically aggressive. I often got into arguments and fights with others.

When I would leave for work, my daughters would cry and ask to go

with me to keep me from drinking. I promised them I wouldn't drink, but I never kept my promises. I just wanted to keep drinking.

Eventually, I realized I needed help. With the help of the missionaries, I worked to overcome my addiction. For a while, I couldn't stop drinking for more than a week at a time.

Then one day the missionaries shared a passage from the Book of Mormon that changed my life: "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for

if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

I needed the Savior's help. Without Him, I would never overcome my addiction. I found that the more I relied on Him, the longer I could go without drinking. After several visits with the missionaries, I accepted their invitation to be baptized.

Since then my life has changed. More than eight years have gone by, and I have not tried even one drop of alcohol. Today I am free, and I owe it all to the Lord. ■

Victor Muñoz Walde, Huancayo, Peru

I promised my daughters that I would not drink, but I never kept my promises.





As Mom struggled to fall asleep, I felt prompted to read the scriptures to her.

PHYSICAL COMFORT FROM THE SCRIPTURES

As a child, I was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. I was often sick, and my parents spent many hours with me in doctors' offices. They worried about my health and felt helpless because they could not fix what was wrong. I never appreciated how they felt until it was my turn to helplessly watch my mother battle breast cancer.

One weekend, I drove to Mom's home in New Jersey to be with her as she went through a round of chemo. I wanted to be with her and to provide my brothers a break from her daily care. Someone needed to monitor her during the night because of her treatment. A bed had been set up for her

in the living room, and I planned to sleep on the couch. Mom was in pain and there was nothing I could do. I felt helpless and frustrated.

As Mom struggled to fall asleep, I felt prompted to read the scriptures to her. She loved the scriptures, but she was too weak to hold or read them herself. When I asked her what she wanted me to read, she said she loved the book of Alma. After scanning the chapter headings, I felt prompted to read from chapter 7.

The Spirit filled the room as I read the words describing Christ's earthly mission: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this

that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy" (Alma 7:11–12).

I continued reading until Mom fell into a peaceful sleep. The scriptures had invited the Comforter into her home and helped her sleep. I gained a greater testimony of the power of the scriptures and of Jesus Christ, who was willing to act as our Savior and to comfort us in all of our afflictions. ■
Inger de Montecinos, Virginia, USA



By Elder
Hugo Montoya
Of the Seventy

OVERCOMING THE DANGER OF DOUBT

During the Savior's earthly ministry, He was tested by Satan. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, *If thou be the Son of God*, command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:2–3; emphasis added).

The adversary tempted the Savior by placing His divinity in doubt. He used the conditional phrase "*If thou be the Son of God.*"

But using the strength that comes from knowing the scriptures, the Lord rejected the temptation. "It is written," He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

This conversation between Jesus Christ and Satan gives us a clear

idea of how the adversary tempts us to place insidious doubts in our hearts and minds.

A Hidden Invasion

Where I grew up in Sonora, Mexico, there are large trees called Indian laurel. They are nearly 100 feet (30 m) high, with huge trunks and well-developed branch and leaf structures. Recently many of these trees were attacked by a disease called Texas root rot. When this fungus attacks, the effects are not seen for some years. However, the fungus gradually rots the roots of those beautiful trees, and they begin to die. The leaves turn yellow and fall. Then the trunk and branches dry up, and the trees must be cut down.

Like the fungus that enters these trees, doubts can invade our thoughts.

Even large trees can succumb to unseen fungus. It's the same with faith—if we let doubt grow, it can rot spiritual roots until we topple.

If we let them grow, over time they can affect our roots and rot our foundation of faith until we too may be cut down.

So-called friends can introduce doubt by asking hurtful questions. Internet sites can generate doubt by presenting information out of



context. But doubts especially intensify when we ourselves, feeling abandoned or overwhelmed, question the burdens we bear. The natural man's complaints, such as "Why me, Lord?" or "If I am Thy servant, why dost Thou allow . . . ," can be

whispered in our ears by the father of lies. He has a sinister purpose: to weaken our certainty that we are God's children.

To counter such doubt, we must remember the perfection of our Father's plan. Rather than dwelling

on negative questions, we should ask for strength, as did Joseph Smith: "Remember thy suffering saints, O our God; and thy servants will rejoice in thy name forever" (D&C 121:6). We must also trust that the Lord will deliver us (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Robbed at Gunpoint

I remember a personal experience that helped me learn to replace doubt with hope. I was serving as a stake president at the time. My children were small. My wife and I owned a tortilla-making business, and we worked long hours.

One of those nights, when my wife and I had to make tortillas from midnight until 3:00 a.m., three young men came to our shop. All three were high on drugs. Two of them wore ski masks and long raincoats. The raincoats hid their weapons. They threatened us, put us inside the shop, and closed the door. One stood guard outside, repeatedly shouting, "Kill them! Kill them!"

One of the young men put the barrel of his gun against my temple and forced me to lie down. The other put the barrel of his gun to my wife's chest. I prayed that my children would not become orphans, and the Lord protected us. The robbers finally locked us in the bathroom and disappeared, driving away in my truck.

We escaped and called for help. The police came and so did my brother. As soon as possible, we took my wife home. Then my brother and I went looking, unsuccessfully, for my truck. Feeling very sad, I returned home at 5:00 a.m.

Where Was My Family?

To my surprise, my wife and children were not there. A neighbor told

me that my four-year-old daughter was suffering stomach pain, and they had rushed her to the hospital. Knowing that we would desperately need money for her care, I felt I had no choice but to return to the tortilla shop and fill the orders for the day. Since my wife and I were the only workers, I was alone, rushing like crazy, kneading, putting dough in the hopper, adjusting the size, running back and forth to finish tortillas and wait on customers.

By now it was 8:00 a.m. I began to reflect on the events of the night. The question went through my mind, "If you are the stake president, why is all this happening to you?"

Everything but Tortillas

I pushed the malicious thought aside and prayed for strength. Then I heard a voice behind me: "President." It was my bishop and a brother from the ward, my home teachers.

The bishop said, "We don't know how to make tortillas, so we can't help you here. But don't worry about your truck, your wife, your sick daughter, or your other children. You stay here and we will help you with the rest." My eyes filled with tears of gratitude.

They took charge of everything but tortillas. That afternoon when I returned home, I found my house clean and tidy, my shirts ironed, and food waiting for me. No one was home, but I knew that the Relief Society had been there. The police



The spiritual roots of my family tree have been strengthened for six generations because of the unwavering faith of my great-grandfather.

had found my truck, and someone from the ward had paid to get it released.

I quickly went to see my wife and daughter. The bishop had been there and had given my daughter a blessing. She had appendicitis, but everything was under control.

As my wife and I talked, we were impressed that the bishop had not used fast offerings or items from the bishops' storehouse to assist us. Rather, he used the resources and mercy of the members of our ward.

A few days later, while my daughter was recuperating and my wife was helping me in the tortilla shop, three women arrived. They were the mothers of the young thieves and had come to offer their apologies. They explained that the police had caught their sons. Later these mothers practically dragged their sons into the shop to ask forgiveness, and we forgave them.

They Did Not Doubt

Another example in my family history reminds me not to doubt. In 1913 in Mexico, Elder Ernest Young and his companions preached the gospel to my great-great-grandmother Maria de Jesus de Monroy, a widow; her three daughters, Natalia, Jovita, and Guadalupe; and her only son, Rafael—my great-grandfather. They were baptized on June 10. Two months later, citizens of the United States left the country because of the Mexican Revolution.

On August 29, 1913, the day President Rey L. Pratt and all American missionaries were to depart, Rafael Monroy, a 34-year-old convert of two months, went to the mission home to express his concern. "What is going to become of us?" he asked.

"There is no organized branch in San Marcos, and we don't have the priesthood." Listening to Rafael's concerns, President Pratt asked him to sit down. He placed his hands on Rafael's head, conferred on him the Melchizedek Priesthood, ordained him an elder, and set him apart as president of the San Marcos Branch.

Rafael, who understood that his baptismal covenant was sacred and eternal, also understood that he should share the gospel. For 23 months he and his counselor, Vicente Morales, helped in the conversion and baptism of more than 50 people. They preached to dozens more.

Then, on July 17, 1915, the revolution arrived in San Marcos. Revolutionary soldiers accused Rafael and Vicente of belonging to and supporting the opposing army, hiding weapons, and belonging to a strange religion. They took them prisoner, tortured them, and hanged them until they fainted. Then the soldiers gave them one last chance to save their lives. They would be spared if they would renounce their religion. Rafael answered, "I cannot do it, for I know that what I have received is true."

Rafael and Vicente did not doubt. They acted consistent with their knowledge and testimony. At the end of that day, they were executed by the Liberation Army of the South, giving their lives for what they believed.¹

Still True Today

Let us not doubt that this work is true. Whenever we are tried with doubts, let us ponder our spiritual experiences. Doing so will help us to erase the doubts. This is particularly true for those who have returned from full-time missionary service and then allowed doubts to creep in, for long-time members who have grown tired of enduring, and for recent converts who initially felt great joy but have not nourished their faith.

If such is your case, I would like to say: If the gospel was true when you sent in your missionary application (and it was!), if it was true when you entered the temple (and it was!), if it was true when you were converted and baptized or when you converted and baptized others (and it was!), if it was true when you were sealed (and it was!), then it is equally true today!

Jesus showed by example that we can receive strength from the scriptures. Joseph Smith showed that asking in prayer will bring relief. Those who have given their lives, nothing doubting, have shown that even when faced with death, we have hope.

We must not succumb to desperation, for trials and temptations are temporary. We can all find hope in the Savior's declaration: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). ■

NOTE

1. See Rey L. Pratt, in Conference Report, Apr. 1920, 90–93.

Experimenting on the Music

By Marcel Hall

I always thought that I was one of the lucky exceptions to some gospel standards. So I did my own thing, deciding which standards were important and which weren't. One of the standards I saw as optional was not listening to profane and vulgar music (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 22). I didn't think that the music I listened to made a difference in how I acted and how I felt about the gospel. I still had a strong testimony of Jesus Christ, and I did my best to serve others and attend my Church meetings. I told myself that it was unfortunate that those musicians didn't live virtuous lives, but I was OK listening to their music—after all, it didn't keep me from living a gospel-oriented life.

As I prepared to serve a mission, I didn't think twice about how the music I listened to was

stifling my spiritual progression.

However, within hours of opening my mission call, the scripture Alma 32:27 came into my head: "But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words."

And then I thought of that one word: *experiment*. If I wanted to receive the blessings I was missing out on, I had to experiment. So for the next three weeks, I went without my inappropriate music. It was hard at first, and I had many relapses. But after a few days, the peaceful feelings I began having every day were enough to get me through. On top of that, as a college student, I began to do better in my

If I wanted to deepen my testimony and progress spiritually, I had to stop making excuses for my behavior.

classes. I could focus more, and I was more in tune with the Spirit in a time of my life where heavenly guidance was especially important.

I found that even my desires changed. I wanted to have every blessing that Heavenly Father is waiting to give me. My experience in changing my music habits helped me realize that





ALIGNING OUR WILLS

“Only by aligning our wills with God’s is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see Alma 12:10–11). . . .

“So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity!”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 23.

there are no optional standards and that every commandment we are given is designed to deepen our relationship with our Heavenly Father and make us more like Him. Skipping out on ones we don’t like will only deny us His promised blessings.

Following gospel standards and keeping the commandments set us apart as true disciples of Christ. When we make that step to go from good to even better, we truly please our Father

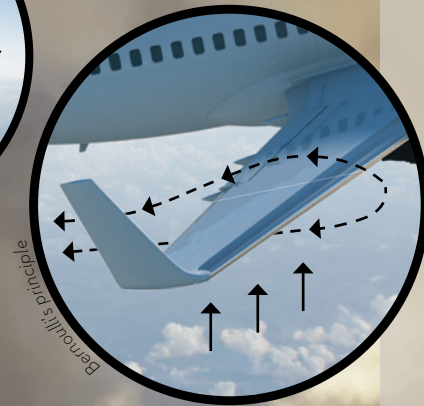
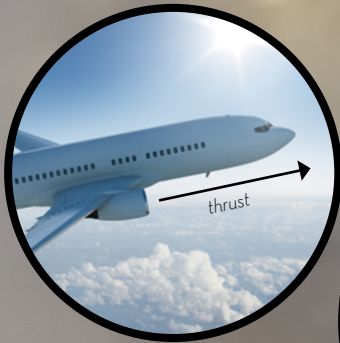
in Heaven. We cannot be fence-sitters in this gospel. We are either moving forward or falling back, and the idea of “I’m doing well enough right now” will inevitably cause us to fall back. But if we rely on Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement to improve at least a little bit each day, then we can live with His peace and know that we are becoming the kind of people He knows we can be. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.



MECHANICS OF FLIGHT

AN AIRPLANE CAN TEACH YOU A LOT ABOUT OBEDIENCE, REVELATION, AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.



TWO FORCES

When I worked as an airplane mechanic, I learned that, to fly, an airplane requires two forces:

1. **Thrust**, or forward momentum, at a speed sufficient to create lift. Thrust overcomes drag, the resistance to movement.
2. **Lift**, which is created by the difference in pressure of the air going over the wing and the air going under the wing (referred to as Bernoulli's principle). Lift overcomes gravity, which would otherwise pull the plane back to earth.

By **Richard M. Romney**
Church Magazines

WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH YOU

Make a few simple comparisons, and you'll find some inspiring similarities between the principles of flight and the principles of the gospel.

⇒ SPIRITUAL LIFT

Obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel builds momentum. It provides spiritual thrust that creates spiritual lift. It keeps us moving forward. It enables us to rise above the world, where we can see clearly how to return to our Heavenly Father.



COURSE CORRECTION

After you were baptized, you received the Holy Ghost, the best of all spiritual navigation devices. As you continue in obedience, the still small voice will provide constant promptings about what to do, where to go, and how to act. If you listen carefully, it will guide you.

But it is up to you to use the means the Lord has provided to correct your course. These include checkpoints—are you praying regularly, searching scriptures, attending meetings, preparing for and going to the temple? And they include repentance, which enables you to make both major and minor adjustments to spiritual attitude, altitude, and direction.



COURSE CORRECTION

Of course, there's a lot of other stuff going on when an airplane flies. But much of it involves two additional systems.

1. **Navigational aids** help the pilot keep the plane on course. These include gauges and dials in the cockpit, but also include radar beacons and voice contact with flight towers.
2. **Flight controls** facilitate change of direction. They include rudders (flaps on the tail of the plane), ailerons and trim tabs (small flaps on wings), large flaps and spoilers, slats, and stabilizers. These enable the plane to roll, climb, dive, turn, and come gently back to earth when it's time to land.

WELL-GROUNDED

Pilots depend on the ground crew. The crew prepares the plane to fly, guides the aircraft to and from the runway, conducts pre-flight and post-flight inspections, and performs or recommends maintenance. The crew is responsible for the upkeep and safety of the aircraft.



SPIRITUAL CERTIFICATION

Like a pilot, you must rely on your spiritual ground crew. Your crew includes your parents, Young Men or Young Women leaders, your bishop and his counselors, home teachers, seminary teachers, and righteous friends. Think of interviews with them as pre-flight and post-flight inspections. Just as an airplane is checked at regular intervals, you will have opportunities to verify your readiness to fly during regularly scheduled interviews. Your spiritual ground crew will help you assess your abilities, prepare your flight plan, and counsel you about spiritual wind speed and potential turbulence. Certain activities, such as going to the temple, will require verification that you're cleared for takeoff. General conference talks are like hearing from a flight controller who can see all the planes at once and provide far-reaching navigational instructions. Obedience to the counsel provided will help you steer clear of potential danger.



READY TO FLY

In a spiritual sense, we are meant to fly. We are children of our Heavenly Father, and He wants us to reach spiritual heights. As His children, we should reach for the sky because with His help, we can always soar to new heights. ■

For more on this topic, visit youth.lds.org.

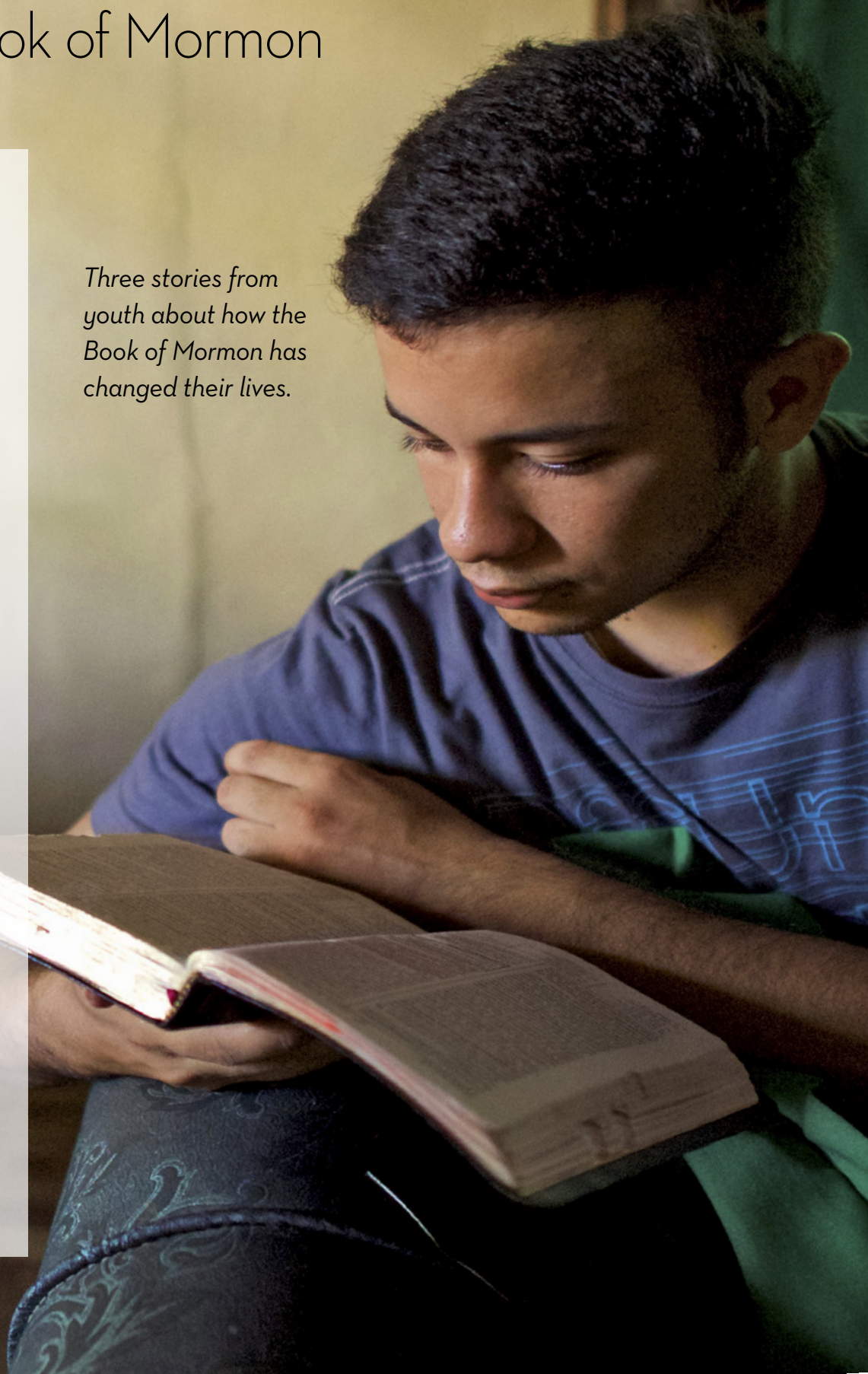
YOUR TESTIMONY

and the Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon is “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (introduction to the Book of Mormon). The Book of Mormon is a powerful witness of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel. Knowing that it is true changes everything.

The people who wrote the following testimonies became converted to Jesus Christ and His gospel because of their experiences reading and praying about the Book of Mormon. Sincerely reading and praying about the Book of Mormon can change your life too.

Three stories from youth about how the Book of Mormon has changed their lives.



JUST READ AND PRAY

By Michael Peak,
Idaho, USA



When I was 17, a friend of mine told me she was a Mormon. At that time I had no idea what a Mormon was. My parents didn't make me go to church, so I didn't know much about the Bible or about God, nor did I want to. I told my friend, "If I want to know anything about it, I'll find out on my own."

Seeing that I wasn't too concerned with the Church, she just gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon. Then she asked me to read and pray about it. She didn't pressure me or get upset that I didn't want to hear about the Church. All she

wanted me to do was read and pray.

Later that night as I opened the book, I noticed her testimony in the front. As I read her testimony, I felt that I should learn more about this book. So I started from 1 Nephi. I could not put the book down. I needed to know more.

Soon after, I went to a family home evening with her family where they taught me about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though I knew nothing about the gospel, everything seemed to make sense. As I learned more, my attitude about church, God, and Jesus

Christ changed. For once in my life I wanted to do what God wanted me to do. Soon I was taught by the missionaries and baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Book of Mormon changed my life. As I look back, I can see how the Holy Ghost helped me want to learn more. The gospel helped me to know who I am, where I came from, and where I can go if I'm faithful. I'm thankful for my friend who shared it with me and showed me that a true friend shares gospel truths.



ACCEPTING A PROPHET'S CHALLENGE

By Portia Marjorie J. Alvaro,
Texas, USA



My family moved to America from the Philippines when I was 11 years old. At first, I had a hard time fitting in. But once I learned how to speak English, I quickly adopted the popular culture. I loved listening to pop music, trying different hairstyles, and wearing faddish clothing. I did not have a testimony. Instead, I had a rebellious attitude.

My life turned around when I decided to accept the prophet's challenge to seriously read and study the Book of Mormon. I read the book from cover to cover. It felt good and wonderful, but I still wasn't sure whether it was true.

Nervously, I tried Moroni's promise in Moroni 10:4-5. I expected angels to appear, but nothing happened. I thought, "That was it?"

In spite of my disappointment, I continued studying the book. One night I had a dream about the Book of Mormon. When I woke up, I felt a burning in my heart, peace of mind, and assurance. I thought, "This is it. This is my answer."

After that experience, my confidence soared. I did better in my studies, attended more school activities, and, most importantly, became very active in the Church. I continue to study the Book of Mormon and apply its teachings to my life. The experiences I had while reading the Book of Mormon became anchors to me in my life.

THE BOOK THAT SAVED MY LIFE

Name withheld



My family and I joined the Church when I was 12. At the time, I had no idea of the magnitude of that gift. I didn't even know if the Church was true, but my father and mother were impressed with the message the missionaries carried. I liked the missionaries too but didn't fully understand what they were saying. Eventually they invited us to be baptized, and my family decided we would join as a family or not at all. I agreed and was baptized without ever being converted.

I attended church and seminary, but my family later fell away. I had friends at church and went to seminary and Mutual to be with them. I didn't care about the gospel or the teachings and thought church was generally boring. My life grew troubled as I began to engage in activities such as shoplifting and vandalism. My father became abusive, and I thought about suicide.

However, suicide was never an option. I couldn't do that to my mother, whom I loved deeply. So I was left to find an answer. I looked around and saw my friends from church. The one thing they had that I didn't was a testimony. So at the age of 16, four years after my baptism, I sat down to read the Book of Mormon for the first time.

It was difficult, and it took me nearly two years. As I read in 3 Nephi about the Savior's visit to the Nephites after His Resurrection, where He blesses their children and angels descend from heaven and encircle them, it was as though I stood among the Nephites and saw with my own eyes that miraculous

event. The Holy Ghost bore witness of that great moment.

I could not read any more, as my eyes blurred with tears. When I regained my composure, I continued reading. A few more weeks passed, and I finished the book, knelt, and prayed to know if it was true. But I got no answer.

Days passed with me kneeling regularly and pleading to know if the book was true, if the Church was true, but still I got no answer. Despairing, weeks after I'd finished reading, I knelt one more time and asked, "Heavenly Father, is the Book of Mormon true?" The answer that came was not what I expected: "I have already told you. You know it is."

I had gained my testimony weeks before, when I read about Christ blessing the children. I knew that this Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the kingdom of God on earth, restored by a prophet and led by a prophet, as in days of old.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Book of Mormon saved my life, but it would be more accurate to say the restored gospel saved me and continues to renew me and nourish me each day. It is my most precious possession. ■

YOU CAN KNOW FOR YOURSELF

Whether you already have a testimony of the Book of Mormon or you want to gain that witness for yourself, reading and praying about the Book of Mormon will deepen your conversion.

The Book of Mormon helps all of us draw closer to Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon will help you know that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's true Church on the earth. Open your heart as you open its pages, and you will see how your life can change for the better.

25

TRUTHS

IN THE

BOOK OF MORMON

Prayerfully studying the truths in the Book of Mormon can help you acquire the spiritual knowledge you need to guide your life and to answer questions that you or others may have. Here is a sample of the truths you can learn during your study of the Book of Mormon at seminary, at home, and at church. As you study, ponder, and pray over them, consider ways to share and act upon what you have learned to deepen your understanding, testimony, and conversion to these important truths.



The Book of Mormon builds on the Bible's witness of Christ.

1 Nephi 13:26-29, 39-42

We receive **direction** from **God** through **faith, diligence,** and **obedience.**

1 Nephi 16:27-29



THE BOOK OF MORMON was translated by the gift and power of God.

2 Nephi 27:6-23

We can be saved only through **Jesus Christ.**

2 Nephi 25:19-20

== The ==
WORDS OF CHRIST

will tell you what to do.

2 Nephi 32:3



LEARNING is good if we follow God's counsel.

2 Nephi 9:28-29

Jesus Christ is the Savior, and **Joseph Smith** is His chosen prophet.

Introduction to the Book of Mormon



.....
GOD ALWAYS PREPARES A WAY for you to obey His commandments.

..... *1 Nephi 3:7*

God loves all His children perfectly.

2 Nephi 26:33

THE SPIRIT speaks the truth.

Jacob 4:13

We serve God by serving others.

Mosiah 2:17



THE NATURAL MAN is an enemy to God.

Mosiah 3:19

GOD knows all things and is the source of all truth.

Mosiah 4:9

We covenant with the Lord through BAPTISM.

Mosiah 18:8-10



The Lord gives us STRENGTH to endure trials.

Mosiah 23:20-24; 24:13-15

Jesus Christ suffered for our sins, pains, and sicknesses.

Alma 7:11-13

FAITH IS NOT a perfect knowledge.

Alma 32:21



Learn to keep the commandments in your youth.

Alma 37:35

Christ is a sure foundation.

Helaman 5:12



The Lord will fulfill all the words spoken through His prophets.

3 Nephi 1:1-26

GOD WORKS MIRACLES according to our faith and His will.

Mormon 9:20-21

Faith is hope for things that are true but not seen.

Ether 12:6



We pray in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

3 Nephi 18:15, 20-21

CHARITY is the pure love of Christ.

Moroni 7:45, 47-48



We can gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon as we read, ponder, and pray.

Moroni 10:3-5

TEN

By Hadley Griggs
Church Magazines

Have you ever set a scripture-study goal that sounded something like this? “From this day forward, I *will* study my scriptures for an hour every single day—and I will do it *perfectly*.”

If you have set that kind of goal, how did it go? Chances are, not very well. Trying to develop a new habit can be really challenging, especially because we often come up with unrealistic goals (like the one above) that we quickly get tired of or overwhelmed by.

To really make scripture study a habit, it's best to start small. Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a great suggestion: “Many young people spend an average of seven hours a day looking at TV, computer, and smartphone screens. . . . Will you replace some of that daily screen time—particularly that devoted to social media, the internet, gaming, or television—with reading the Book of Mormon? . . . Even if for only 10 minutes a day.”¹

We asked five youth to accept Elder Stevenson's invitation. They tracked their daily screen time, and then they replaced 10 minutes of it with Book of Mormon study. Check out how it went—maybe they'll inspire you to try it yourself!

MINUTES A DAY

We asked five youth to try Elder Stevenson's invitation to replace 10 minutes of daily screen time with reading the Book of Mormon.



“After keeping record of my time spent on social media for the first week,

I was a little shocked at the amount of time I spent on my phone. It was definitely a good idea for me to use some of that time for the Book of Mormon, especially because diligently reading scriptures is not one of my strengths.

“Ironically, one of the first days I read my scriptures in the morning was a *terrible* day. However, I knew that reading scriptures would only improve my life, so I kept reading.

“I think the greatest impact from reading every day was that I felt much more in tune with the Spirit. I was able to make decisions much easier. I felt more love for the people around me and an increased desire to serve. When I read my scriptures in the morning, the day went so much better. When I read at night, I slept well. I would strongly recommend that everyone try this. What a difference it makes!”

Bryn C., age 18, Utah, USA



“When I tracked my phone usage, I realized that I was on my phone the most on Sunday. I thought that was sad because that’s when I should be trying to get closer to my Savior—but instead, I had been staring at my screen.

“As I started reading my scriptures, I would read the 10 minutes every night before I went to bed, which for me was just about a chapter a night. As I did this, I noticed that I was able to fall asleep much easier. I also found myself making better decisions throughout the week, and I overall just felt better about myself.

“I am grateful that I was able to receive this invitation, and I plan to continue to read for 10 minutes a day and say my nightly prayers.”

Ryan E., age 16, Alabama, USA



“Before I tracked the time I spent, I thought it was going to be really hard to take time out and read the scriptures—but after realizing how much time I spent on social media, taking 10 minutes out of that felt super easy! I could read at lunch or right before seminary started.

“After I had read the scriptures, I was a lot more aware of what I looked at on social media. If I stumbled across something bad, with bad language or a negative message, I noticed it and tried to avoid it way more than before. I also noticed that my prayers were a lot more sincere and that I was receiving more answers to them. This is definitely something that I hope to continue for a lot longer!”

Izzie J., age 16, California, USA

“I didn’t really think I was on social media *that much*

until I was asked to track my usage, and that’s when I realized how much of my life social media was consuming.

“As soon as I started really focusing on reading the scriptures every day, I felt such an eagerness to read the Book of Mormon, and I wanted to learn from it. As I read for 10 minutes each day, I became more and more invested in the stories. About halfway through I decided that, before I read, I would pray that I would find answers to my questions, and without fail I received those answers through the Holy Ghost.

“I know that God speaks to us through the scriptures and that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. It can truly bless our lives through fervent and prayerful study. I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to participate in this, and I invite everyone to do the same. It was a life-changing experience.”

Sydney B., age 16, Arizona, USA



“Even though I forgot to read a few times,

overall it was a success. I realized that before I started Elder Stevenson’s invitation, I was really only reading about 3 minutes each night, and by increasing my reading to 10 minutes each night, I saw a difference in my life. When I read, I feel more in tune with the Spirit and I can feel the blessings of spiritual protection every day. The same way that it can be hard to start reading after not reading the scriptures for a while, once I started the habit of reading, I couldn’t stop.

“I noticed that for me, when I read the scriptures right before bed, I normally fell asleep or didn’t get as much out of my reading. It worked best to read either in the morning or after school.

“I had a blast doing this and would challenge everyone to try it.”

Rachel A., age 15, Colorado, USA ■



Want to try it for yourself? Check out this article on the LDS Youth website for eight tips on how to make this goal a success: lds.org/go/91761.

NOTE

1. Gary E. Stevenson, “Look to the Book, Look to the Lord,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 46.

OVERWHELMED?

“How do we find our way through the many things that matter? We simplify and purify our perspective. Some things are evil and must be avoided; some things are nice; some things are important; and some things are absolutely essential.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen
of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles,
Apr. 2007
general conference.

TO THE POINT

With help, I've repented of repeated sins. But I'm afraid I'll fall back. How can I resist temptation and stay happy?

Replace your fear with faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, in His power to lift and transform you, and in His love and mercy. Remember Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and Their goodness to you. Be humble, pray, study the scriptures, and be faithful. (See Mosiah 4:11–12.) Then you can have joy, which is “the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ.”¹

Complete repentance can be challenging. It often takes time, especially if you've sinned repeatedly. Avoid situations that bring temptation. You may need to change your daily routine, your surroundings, and your friends. If you slip, remember that you can still repent and change. Keep trying. Your Heavenly Father and your Savior won't give up on you. “The Atonement . . . can wash clean every stain no matter how difficult or how long or how many times repeated.”² ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 84.
2. Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 28.



What should I do if close family and friends question the Church and fall away?

If people close to you begin to question whether the Church is true, love them and stay strong. When they talk with you about the Church, focus on what they're feeling rather than proving you're right. Don't make them feel ashamed for having questions or doubts. Don't act shocked or hurt, even if that's how you feel. If possible, talk to them about their questions calmly and try to help them find answers and to hold onto the faith, belief, and testimony they *do* have (for help, see [lds.org/go/91763](https://www.lds.org/go/91763)).

If someone wants nothing more to do with the Church, your relationship doesn't need to end. Love them, be kind to them, and pray for them. If the Church and the gospel aren't things you share with them anymore, hold onto things you do share. Let them know you care about *them*, not just their association with the Church. But don't give up on your own spiritual goals, either. Try to lift them up, but don't let them bring you down. ■



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

HOW TO INVITE THE HOLY GHOST

One of the ways I know that I'm feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost is that I feel a light and I am happy. When the Holy Ghost seems far from me, I feel a darkness and I am not happy. I have felt that ebb and flow of light and happiness in my life and so have you.

I like to feel of that light and I like to be happy. I don't have to wait for troubles and tests to make me want the help of the Holy Ghost. I can **choose to remember** what that companionship has been like, and whenever I do, I want that blessing again with my whole heart.

When we want the Holy Ghost and the peace of mind and enjoyment that comes with it, we know what to do. We **plead with God** for it in faith. It takes the **prayer of faith** to bring the companionship of the Holy Ghost. That faith has to be that God the Father, the Creator of all things, lives and wants us to have the Holy Ghost and wants to send us the Comforter. It takes faith that Jesus is the Christ and that He atoned for our sins and broke the bands of death. With that faith we **approach our Father** in reverence and with confidence that He will answer. With that faith we **close our prayer** in the name of Jesus Christ as His true disciples, confident that our deep repentance, our baptism by His servants, and our faithful service in His cause have purified us and made us clean and worthy of the blessing we seek, the companionship of the Holy Ghost. ■

From a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional given on January 25, 2005.



HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?

I receive the Holy Spirit through the power of prayer, keeping my mind pure, and striving to keep gospel standards. Learning and understanding the role of the Spirit is a continuous process. And then following what my Savior asks gives me a greater desire to act upon it and be more Christlike.

**Katie S., age 17, Auckland Region,
New Zealand**

OUR SPACE

THE BLESSINGS OF SEMINARY

During my second year in seminary, we had only three students in our class, but we had an incredible teacher who enjoyed sharing the gospel with us. In one class we learned about how many people thought that the Church would come apart following the deaths of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. But other early members of the Church remembered that this is God's Church, not man's Church. Our teacher taught us that the Church would not fail because it is the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that our lives were changed by that lesson. That

afternoon, we decided that we would serve the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We prepared to serve full-time missions. I continued attending seminary.

Over the following two years, I could tell how my life was being blessed from attending seminary, as well as how preparing to serve the Lord nourished my testimony and my desire to serve.

Attending seminary confirmed to me how special I am to Heavenly Father. It has helped me apply the gospel in my life, and above all it has helped me understand that the

gospel is not something we live only on Sundays. Seminary confirmed my desire to serve a mission. There is no doubt in my mind that the blessings of seminary remain present in my life. No one said it would be easy, but if we do decide to attend seminary, the Lord will bless us and will give us the strength necessary to fulfill the desires of our heart. ■

Begona C., Guayaquil, Ecuador







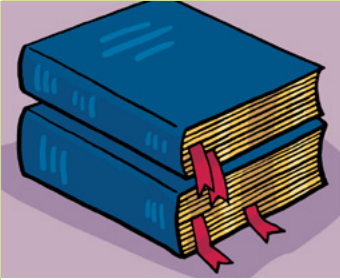



HELPING REFUGEES

Youth in Thailand worked together to create over 100 hygiene kits for refugees in Bangkok from items donated by members of the Church. The hygiene kits were distributed to several different local organizations that work to help refugees from all over the world who come to Thailand in search of relief. This special multi-stake youth conference was part of a countrywide celebration of the 50th anniversary of the dedication of Thailand by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008) for the preaching of the gospel on November 2, 1966.

Conference Counting

For general conference, here's a fun way to keep track of different words you might hear. Put a coin or bean on a square each time you hear that word in a talk. Whenever you reach five times on a word, you could switch out the pile with a different coin or different-colored bean. On the blank lines, fill in other words you might hear in conference.

| | |
|--|--|
|  Jesus Christ _____ |  Prophets _____ |
|  Atonement _____ |  Heavenly Father _____ |
|  Love _____ |  Family _____ |
|  Scriptures _____ |  Children _____ |

A Painting of Christ



By Tesla S., age 11, Utah, USA

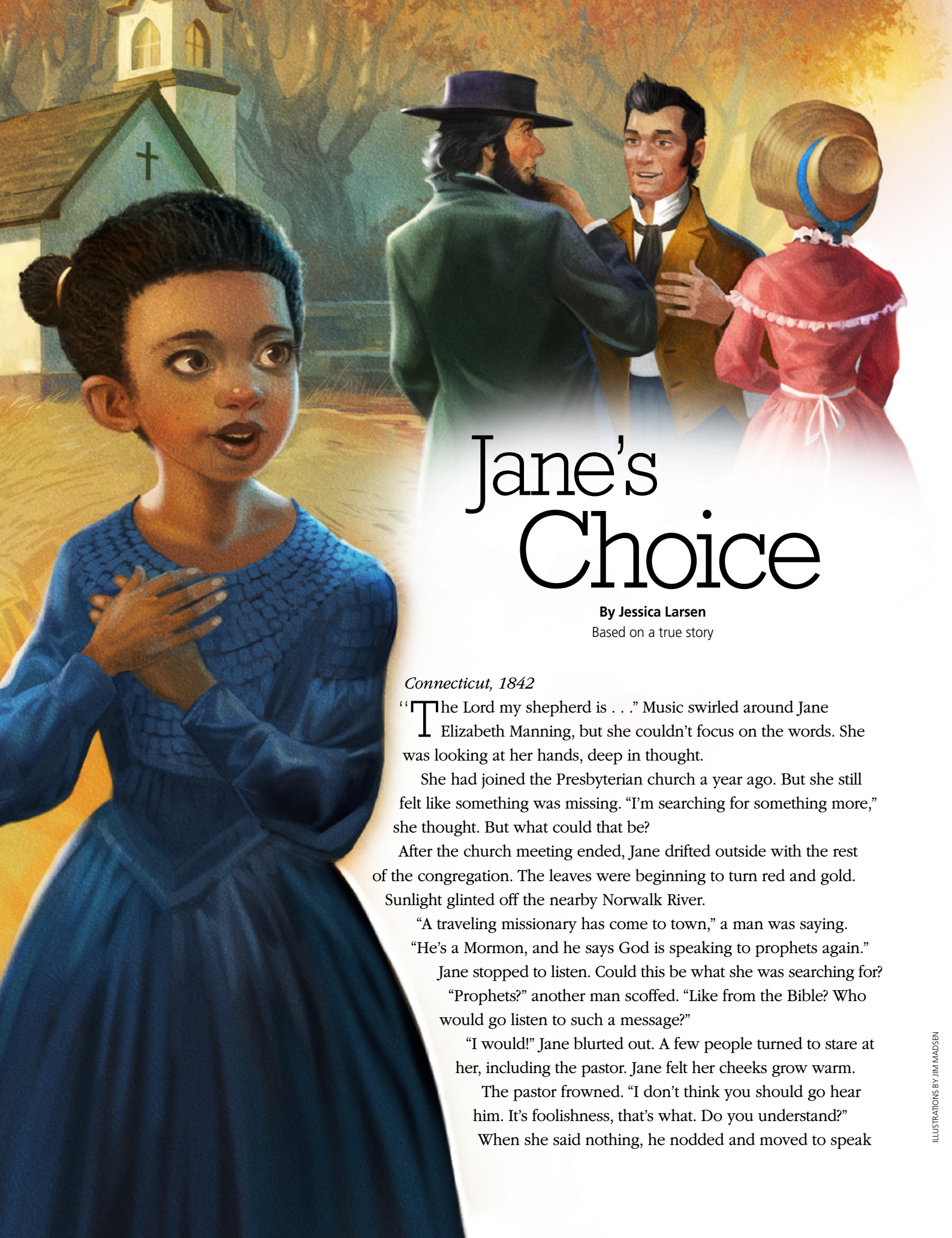
Every Sunday night my dad and I sit down together and work on my goals in my *Faith in God* booklet. One of the goals I wanted to complete for developing talents was to paint a picture of Christ.

After I made the goal, a friend of mine from school invited me to her first communion. The first communion

is a very special occasion in the Catholic Church. It is the first time someone can partake of the sacrament. My friend had done a lot to prepare for her first communion, and I knew it was very important to her.

I decided to paint the picture of Christ to give to her as a present. I worked very hard on my painting. After I finished it, I bought a nice frame to put it in and gave it to my friend. She was very grateful for it. It made me feel good inside to give it to her and to be part of her special day. ■





Jane's Choice

By Jessica Larsen

Based on a true story

Connecticut, 1842

“The Lord my shepherd is . . .” Music swirled around Jane Elizabeth Manning, but she couldn’t focus on the words. She was looking at her hands, deep in thought.

She had joined the Presbyterian church a year ago. But she still felt like something was missing. “I’m searching for something more,” she thought. But what could that be?

After the church meeting ended, Jane drifted outside with the rest of the congregation. The leaves were beginning to turn red and gold. Sunlight glinted off the nearby Norwalk River.

“A traveling missionary has come to town,” a man was saying. “He’s a Mormon, and he says God is speaking to prophets again.”

Jane stopped to listen. Could this be what she was searching for?

“Prophets?” another man scoffed. “Like from the Bible? Who would go listen to such a message?”

“I would!” Jane blurted out. A few people turned to stare at her, including the pastor. Jane felt her cheeks grow warm.

The pastor frowned. “I don’t think you should go hear him. It’s foolishness, that’s what. Do you understand?”

When she said nothing, he nodded and moved to speak



with someone else. Jane watched him leave and then hurried home.

Home wasn't where Mamma and her brothers and sisters lived. It was at the Fitches' farm. She had gone to live there as a servant when she was just six years old. Every day she worked hard, helping Mrs. Fitch with the washing, ironing, and cooking. She usually got up before the sun. She built the fire, kneaded bread, and churned the butter. Whenever she could, she went to visit her own family.

A few days later, Jane was still thinking about the missionary while she was hanging up Mr. Fitch's shirts to dry. The clothes flapped in the brisk breeze.

The pastor had told her not to go, and yet . . . she needed to. She needed to see if this Mormon could help her find the truth she was searching for. By the time she finished hanging the clothes, she had made up her mind. She would go to the meeting, no matter what anyone else said.

On Sunday, Jane woke at dawn, put on her nicest dress, and walked alone to the meeting hall. She quietly slipped onto a wooden bench at the back of the hall. Jane smiled when she saw how many people were there. It seemed she was not the only one looking for something more!

The room quieted when Elder Wandell stood. The next hour passed quickly as he spoke about the Book of Mormon and a prophet named Joseph. He said people could be baptized by immersion, just as Christ was. And he talked about the Saints gathering to a faraway city called Nauvoo. By the end of the meeting, Jane's heart felt so full she could hardly breathe.

That night, Jane visited her family.

"And what did you think of the missionary's message?" her mother asked when Jane explained how she had spent her Sunday.

"I am fully convinced he presented the true gospel," Jane said. "I must embrace it. I am going to be baptized next Sunday."

"Baptized? You're joining another church?" her brother, Isaac, asked, pulling up a chair.

"Yes! It's what I've been searching for. It's true."

Isaac could tell she was serious. "So what happens next?" he asked quietly. "What will you do after you're baptized?"

"I'll gather with the Saints," Jane said. "I'm going to Nauvoo."

To be continued . . . ■

The author lives in Texas, USA.

OUR PAGE

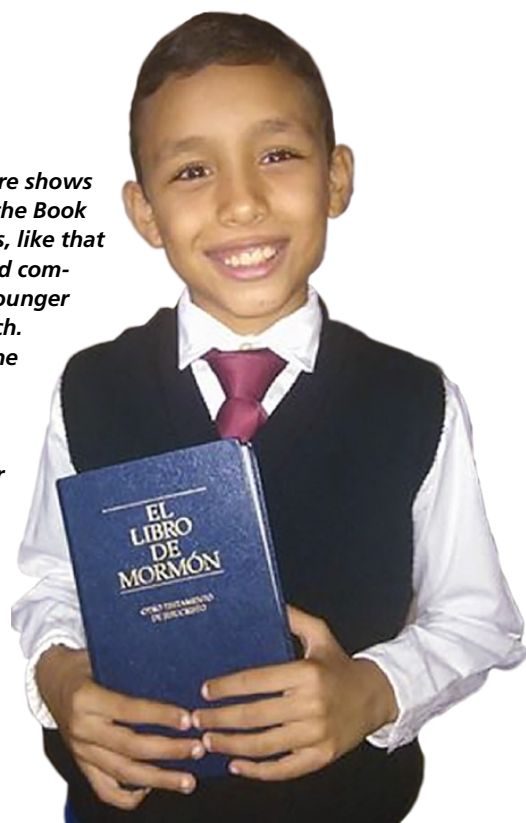


Jaziel B., age 10, Argentina

I feel happy this day. This picture shows me on the day I finished reading the Book of Mormon. I learned many things, like that Nephi was obedient in all that God commanded him and that Alma the Younger went about persecuting the Church. Later on he repented, thanks to the visit of an angel and the prayers of his parents, and he preached the gospel.

I am thankful to my parents for encouraging me each day to read the Book of Mormon and to my Primary leaders for helping me to fulfill this goal through the Faith in God notebook.

Sebastian C., age 10, Venezuela



I love Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost. I know I will be resurrected. I can feel the warmth that is the Holy Ghost. Heavenly Father sent Jesus Christ. I want to be like Them.

Gabriela F., age 8, Brazil

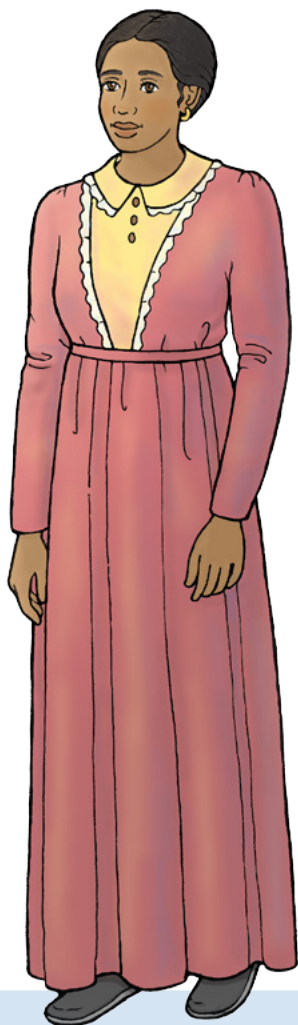


"Families Can Be Together Forever," by Rubi, age 8, "Celestial Glory," by Rebeca, age 8, El Salvador

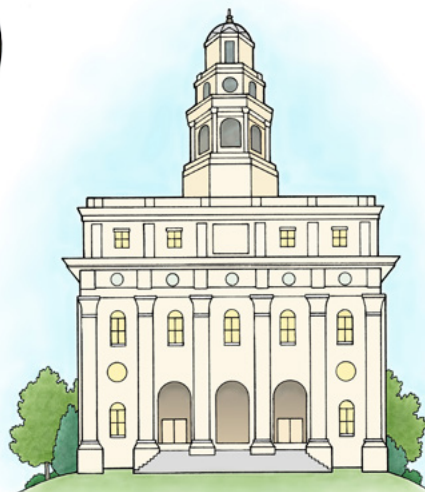


Relief Society Sisters and the Nauvoo Temple

Cut out these figures to share Church history stories.



Jane Manning



Nauvoo Temple

The early Saints settled in a place they called Nauvoo. They worked hard to clear the swampy land and build their homes. They also built the Nauvoo Temple! Men cut and hauled stones. Women cooked meals, sewed clothes for workmen, and collected pennies to buy supplies. The Relief Society was organized, with Emma Smith as the first president. During this time, new members of the Church gathered in Nauvoo from around the world. Jane Manning walked 800 miles (1,290 km) from New York to join the Saints!

You can also use Emma Smith from the March 2017 issue to tell this story! Find more Church history figures at liahona.lds.org.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

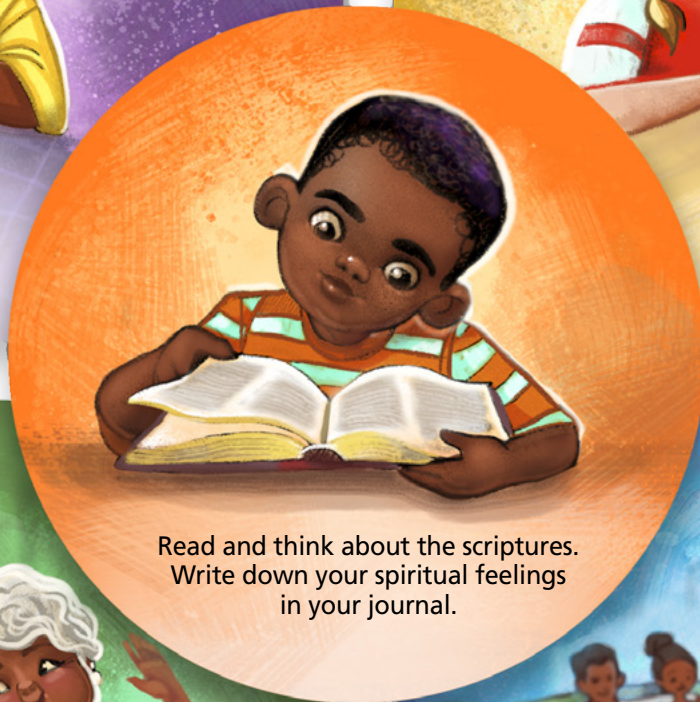
How can I make my testimony strong?



Remember times when you felt the Spirit.



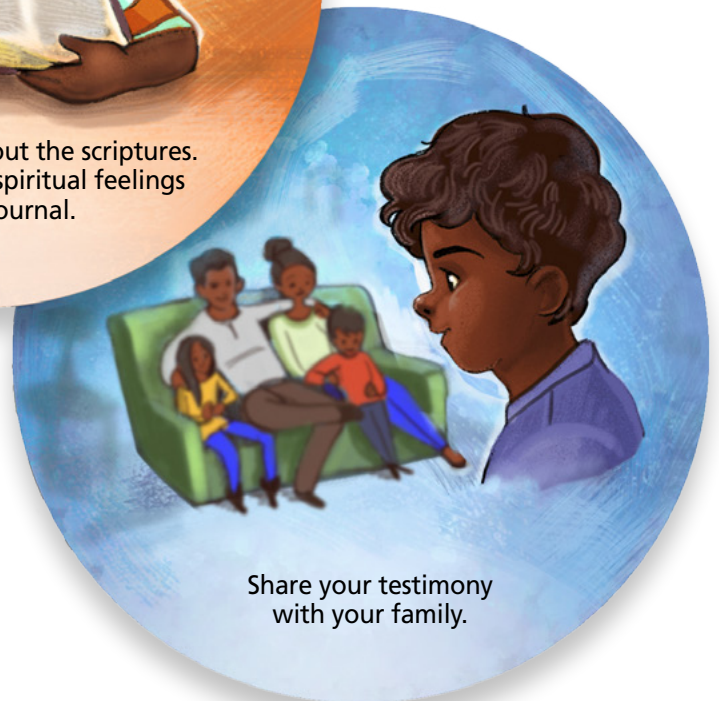
Avoid things that do not build and strengthen your testimony.



Read and think about the scriptures. Write down your spiritual feelings in your journal.



Reach out to others in Christlike service. This will help you feel God's love deep in your heart.



Share your testimony with your family.



By Jean B. Bingham
Relief Society
General President

Don't Play with FIRE!

“Keep the commandments! In this there is safety; in this there is peace” (Children’s Songbook, 146).

When I was growing up, one of my jobs was to burn the trash. I would gather the garbage from the house. I’d put it in a big metal barrel in the backyard. Then I would light a match and drop it in the barrel.

One day it was really windy, and the match just wouldn’t stay lit. I decided to make a torch out of newspaper. I thought that way the flame would last long enough to light the trash on fire. I remembered that it wasn’t smart to play with fire, but I ignored the warning feeling. I rolled up some newspaper into a cone, lit it with a match, and dropped it into the barrel.

Whoosh! The strong wind made the newspaper burst into flames, and the trash quickly caught fire. Big flames blew past my face. Luckily most of my hair was pulled back into a ponytail. But my bangs were singed into crisp little wisps! My eyelashes were gone, and my eyebrows too. It just happened so fast!

That taught me a lesson: if you play with something dangerous, you can get hurt! Our parents and the Holy Ghost warn us to avoid dangerous things like pornography and drugs. If we choose to ignore the warnings, there are consequences.

I’m grateful that my hair grew back over time. That’s like repentance. When we make wrong choices, we can choose to change. We can be forgiven because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. No matter how young or old



we are, our Savior is always there to help us. We can feel peace again, just like on the day we were baptized.

Heavenly Father gave us commandments because He loves us. He wants to protect and help us. What wonderful gifts Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ have given us! ■

By Julie Cornelius-Huang

Based on a true story

“We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may” (Articles of Faith 1:11).

Iren was having fun visiting Taiwan. His grandfather, his Yéyé, took him and his little sister, Ila, to the zoo and on a ferry ride to a small island. They went to beautiful gardens filled with mango trees and orchids. And they visited a mountain where monkeys tried to steal their food! The monkeys made Ila nervous, but Iren thought they were awesome.

Yéyé wanted to teach Iren and Ila about where their family came from. He took them to meet all of their relatives and to restaurants to try new foods. Iren had been practicing with chopsticks. He was getting really good.

One day Yéyé took Iren, Ila, and their parents to a special place. It was a big building with large, open doors and shiny wooden floors. Before they went in, Iren and his family took off their shoes. “This is a place where you have to be reverent,” Mom said. “Just like at our church.”

“Is this a church?” Iren asked. It sure didn’t look like any church he’d ever seen. The building’s colorful roof had curled-up edges. People in dark blue robes walked quietly through the doors.

“Sort of,” said Mom. “It’s a Buddhist temple. But people don’t get married or sealed here, like in our temples. It’s a church building for Yéyé’s religion. He comes here to learn the teachings of Buddha and to help people.”

Dad added, “Do you remember the earthquake in Taiwan we saw on the news a month ago? Yéyé and the other volunteers at this temple all helped after the earthquake was over.”

“What did they do?” asked Ila.

“I think they brought water to people and cleaned up rubble,” said Dad. “They also helped people who lost their homes find a place to stay.”

“Whoa,” said Iren. He grinned at Yéyé. “That sounds like a lot of work!”

When they went in the temple, Iren noticed how quiet and peaceful it was. He looked around and

All Children of



saw a large wooden statue. Ila and Iren stopped and stared.

“Is that Buddha?” Ila asked.

Mom nodded.

Yéyé said something to Dad in Chinese, pressed his hands together, and bowed in front of the statue of Buddha three times.

“Yéyé is teaching us how he shows respect for Buddha,” Dad said, his voice just above a whisper.

Iren scrunched his eyebrows together. “Isn’t that . . . ?” He tried to remember something he’d heard before.

“Isn’t that worshipping idols?”

“Buddhists don’t actually worship Buddha,” Dad said.

“Buddha was a great teacher, and they visit his statue to remember what he taught.”

*“It’s a Buddhist temple,”
said Mom. “This is
Yéyé’s religion.”*

“When people bow here, they’re showing respect—sort of like shaking hands,” Mom whispered. “Yéyé bows to show respect for Buddha and what he taught.”

Mom put her arms around Iren and Ila. “And do you know what?”

“What?” Ila asked.

“These are all God’s children. He loves them. He loves what they’re doing to help each other.”

Iren looked over at Yéyé and all the other people sitting quietly. He felt warm and good inside and knew what Mom said was true. Iren said a little prayer to Heavenly Father: “Thank you for helping me meet more of Thy children.” ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

God



Jesus Is Kind

By Kim Webb Reid



One day Jesus was teaching people. Some families came to Him with their babies and little children. They wanted Jesus to bless their children.

The disciples didn't want the children to bother Jesus. They tried to send them away.



Jesus told His disciples to let the little children come to Him. He said that grown-ups need to have faith like little children to get to heaven.



Then Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them.



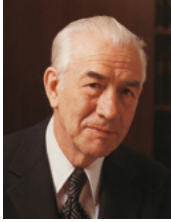
Jesus loves children. He wants me to be kind to people everywhere. ■

From Luke 18:15-17

I Can Be Kind



ILLUSTRATION BY APRYL STOTT



By Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–84)
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

THE BOOK OF MORMON: TRULY A MIRACLE

From cover to cover, the Book of Mormon is a revelation, an inspired translation, the work of God and not of any man.

I . . . testify to the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and . . . declare my faith in the miracle by which the Book of Mormon was translated and published. . . .

On the 22nd day of September 1823, near Palmyra, New York, an angel of God revealed its resting place to [a seventeen]-year-old boy named Joseph Smith. . . .

. . . Let us consider for a moment the actual translation of this record. Joseph Smith says he did it by the gift and power of God. . . . As unlearned as he was at that time in his life, he could have done it in no other way. . . .

. . . How can critics [then] say that Joseph Smith, in his youth, was so scholarly that he could or would



deliberately take passages from the Bible and skillfully make it appear that they were part of the Book of Mormon manuscript?

His mother said that at that early point in his life he had not yet even read through the Bible. Then how could he select carefully chosen passages and work them into the Book of Mormon so appropriately and skillfully?

Not having read through the Bible in his early years, he had no adequate knowledge with which to do such an editing job even if he had been adept at writing or editing, neither of which skills he possessed that early in life.

[Yet] the Book of Mormon is a literary and a religious masterpiece, and is far beyond even the fondest hopes or abilities of any farm boy. . . .

Read, for example, some of the Savior's beautiful sermons in that book. Note that the Lord quotes Bible prophets. Are we to say that the unlearned Joseph Smith had the audacity or the skill to rewrite the Savior's sermons and insert [Bible] passages in them, thinking to improve on what Jesus said?

. . . [Joseph Smith] . . . did not tamper with the work of Mormon, the sermons of Jesus, the marvelous defense of Abinadi, or the writings of Malachi or Isaiah. He was strictly a translator, not an editor or a composer; nor was he a thief plagiarizing someone else's work. . . .

From cover to cover the Book of Mormon is a revelation, an inspired translation, the work of God and not of any man. From cover to cover it is true. ■

From "It Was a Miracle!" Ensign, Nov. 1977, 11–13.



**MORONI TUTORS JOSEPH,
BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE**

On the night and morning of September 21–22, 1823, the angel Moroni told Joseph Smith about the golden plates. Joseph went to the Hill Cumorah but couldn't remove the plates because he felt tempted to use them to gain wealth. Moroni appeared again and showed Joseph "the glory of the Lord" and "the prince of darkness." Moroni explained the purpose of the contrasting visions: "that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one." (See Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, Oct. 1835, 196–98.)

Also in This Issue

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

OVERCOMING THE DANGER OF DOUBT

Just like trees that can be unknowingly attacked by disease, our spiritual roots can be weakened by doubt. How can we counter doubt in trying times?



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FOR YOUTH



p. 58

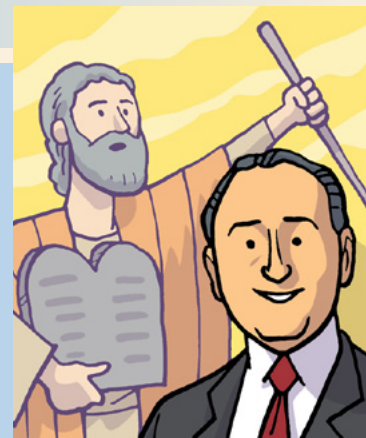
TEN MINUTES A DAY

Five youth discover the change in their lives by replacing 10 minutes of daily screen time with reading the Book of Mormon. Take the challenge for yourself!

FOR CHILDREN

Conference Counting

Here's a fun way to keep track of what the prophet and the apostles say during general conference!



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