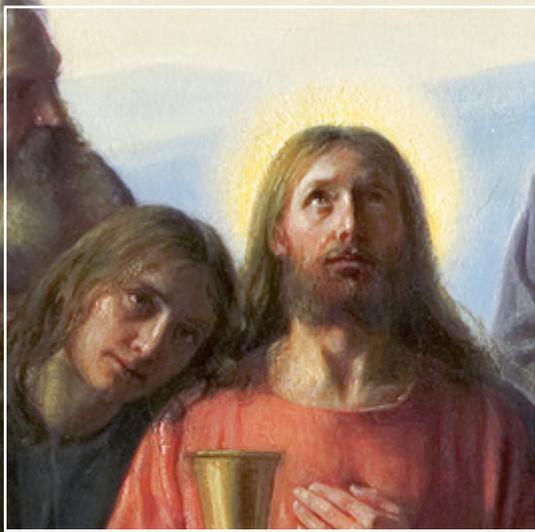
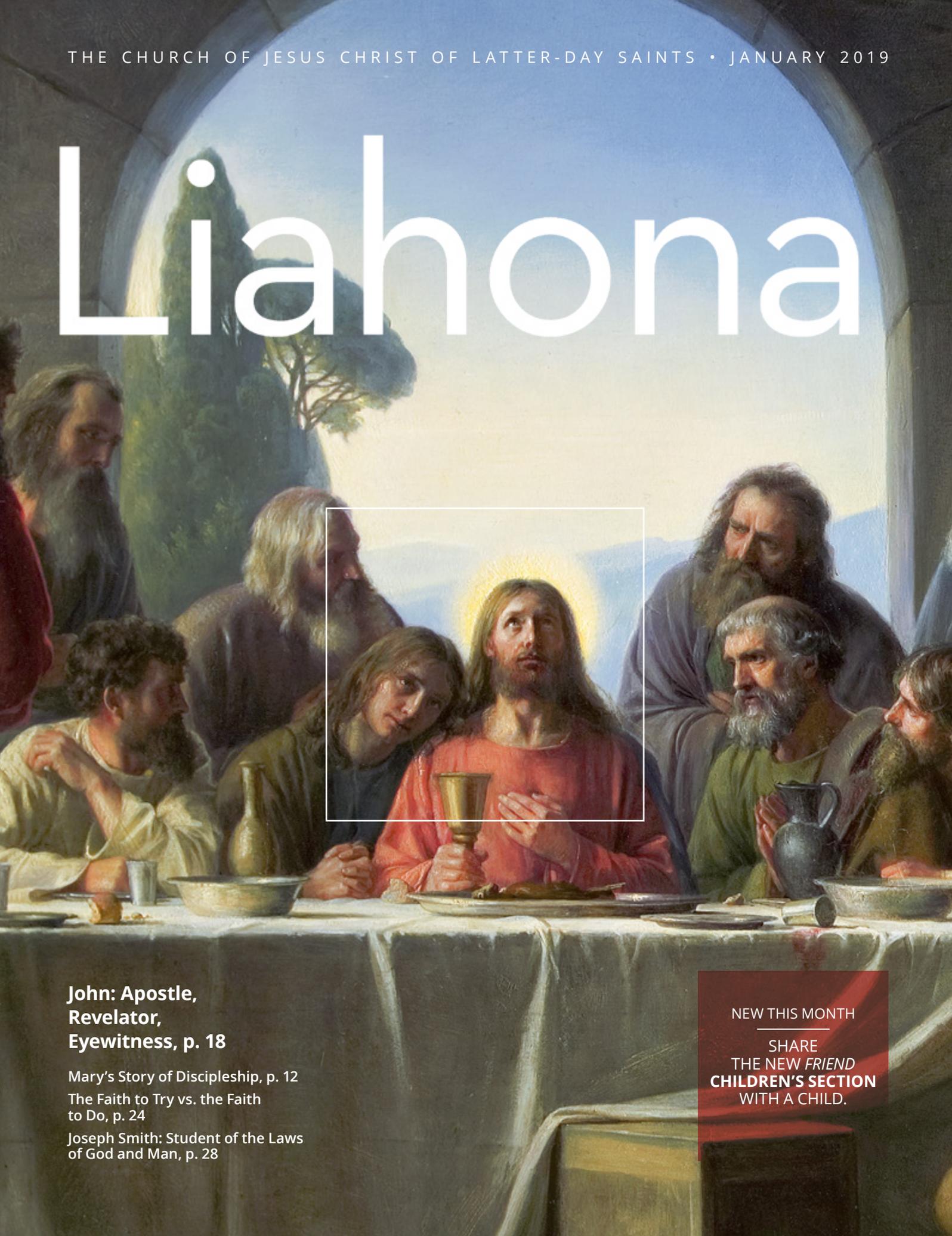


Liahona



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Mary's Story of Discipleship, p. 12

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NEW THIS MONTH

SHARE
THE NEW *FRIEND*
CHILDREN'S SECTION
WITH A CHILD.

THE
CHURCH
IS HERE

Tokyo Japan





At the Yanaka Cemetery in Tokyo, Japan, a Latter-day Saint family, the Saitōs, visit their family memorial. For them it is a place of remembering, made all the more sacred because of their gospel knowledge that families can be together forever.

Respect for family and ancestors is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, and Japanese Latter-day Saints rejoice that their nation is now blessed with three temples: Tokyo (the first in Asia, dedicated in 1980 and currently under renovation), Fukuoka (dedicated in 2000), and Sapporo (dedicated in 2016). Japan is also home to 64 LDS family history centers.

Missionaries first arrived in Japan in 1901, led by Elder Heber J. Grant (1856–1945), then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later seventh President of the Church. Today there are nearly 130,000 members in Japan in 261 congregations.

- The first translation of the Book of Mormon into Japanese took five years and was completed in 1909. A revised translation was published in 1957.
- The first LDS meetinghouse in Asia was dedicated in Japan in 1964.
- General Authorities of Japanese descent include Adney Y. Komatsu (1923–2011), born in Hawaii; Sam K. Shimabukuro (1925–2015), born in Hawaii; Yoshihiko Kikuchi, emeritus; Koichi Aoyagi, emeritus; Takashi Wada; and Kazuhiko Yamashita.



Discipleship

The world we live in seems designed to test our dedication to discipleship. As we study the New Testament this year, we can be inspired by the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ and of His disciples, who strived to both learn from and become more like their Master.

As teachers of the New Testament at Brigham Young University, my colleague Gaye Strathearn and I share some thoughts in this issue about the patterns of discipleship we can learn from Mary, the Lord's mother (page 12), and John the Beloved (page 18). These two figures were among the greatest witnesses of Jesus Christ. Other than God the Father Himself, no one knew better than Jesus's mother that He was in fact the Son of God, and John was numbered among the original Twelve and appears to have been one of the Lord's closest friends.

The devotion of these and other disciples teaches us how we can become beloved disciples of Jesus Christ ourselves and maintain our discipleship in spite of the world's challenges.

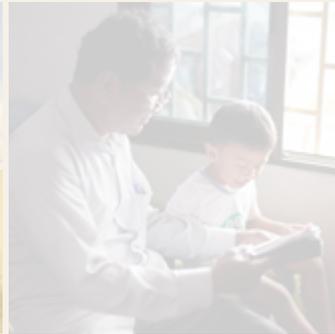
As we prayerfully study the New Testament, we can come to know not only more *about* Jesus but actually come to better *know* Him (see John 17:3).

Sincerely,
Eric D. Huntsman



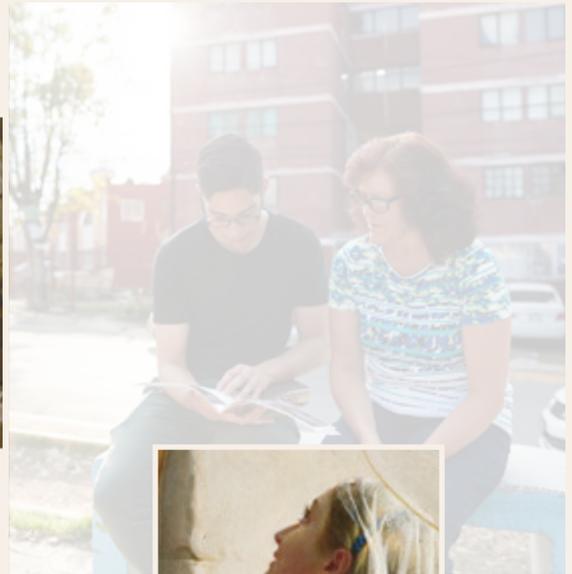
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Children

The children's section has become its own magazine, the *Friend*! We hope this will give children better access to faith-building stories just for them. If you don't have children in your home, please give the new *Friend* to a child in your ward, branch, or neighborhood.



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14 Ways to Get Your Emotional Health Back on Track

By *Heather J. Johnson*

These tips can help you feel like yourself again.



Finding a Mental Health Professional Who's Right for You

By *Kevin Theriot*

If you're thinking about seeing a mental health professional, this can help you know where to start!

JANUARY 2019 VOL. 43 NO. 1 LIAHONA 18601

International magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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Printing Director: Steven T. Lewis

Distribution Director: Troy R. Barker

Mailing address: *Liahona*, Fl. 23, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0023, USA.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning "compass" or "director") is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian,

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For Readers in the United States and Canada: January 2019 Vol. 43 No. 1. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at store.lds.org. (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2). NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.



SYMBOLS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

IN ADDITION TO THE TEACHINGS, WE CAN FIND MEANING IN THE OBJECTS, CULTURE, HISTORY, AND PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Mountains: "Mountains are not easy to climb. Then, as now, the Lord called His disciples to climb mountains to emphasize the efficacy of effort and obedience. He will ask the same of you, figuratively and possibly literally, also."

Olives: "Jesus came to the base of the Mount of Olives to effect the first component of the Atonement. This He did at the Garden of Gethsemane. The word *Gethsemane* comes from two Hebrew roots: *gath*, meaning 'press,' and *shemen*, meaning 'oil,' especially that of the olive.

"There olives had been pressed under the weight of great stone wheels to squeeze precious oil from them. So the Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane was literally pressed under the weight of the sins of the world. He sweat great drops of blood—his life's 'oil'—which issued from every pore. (See Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18.)"



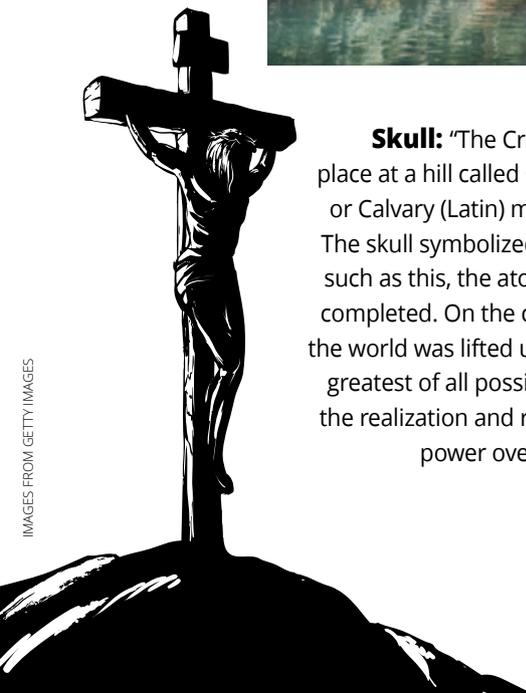
Water: "The River Jordan was the site Jesus chose for His baptism by John to 'fulfill all righteousness' [Matthew 3:15]. Is it significant that this sacred ordinance was performed in virtually the lowest body of fresh water on the planet? Could He have selected a better place to symbolize the humble depths to which He went and from which He rose?"

Skull: "The Crucifixion took place at a hill called Golgotha (Hebrew) or Calvary (Latin) meaning 'the skull.' The skull symbolized death. At a place such as this, the atoning sacrifice was completed. On the cross, the Savior of the world was lifted up over death in the greatest of all possible significance—the realization and reality of the Lord's power over death."



Excerpted from Russell M. Nelson, "Why This Holy Land?" Ensign, Dec. 1989, 15, 16, 17; "In This Holy Land," Tambuli, Feb. 1991, 13, 17, 18.

IMAGES FROM GETTY IMAGES



Phan Phon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia



When Phan's home caught on fire, he could only save his three grandchildren. Everything else burned to the ground. Phan was angry at the neighbor who caused the fire. When his anger spread to his family and neighbors, Phan knew he needed to forgive.

LESLIE NILSSON, PHOTOGRAPHER

I realized that my neighbor was poor like me. He didn't intend to start the fire. If I made him pay, he would be in trouble, and I would still feel hatred. I remembered the word of the Lord that we should love our neighbor. I felt that I should forgive.

When I decided to forgive, I felt peace.

My neighbor was happy I forgave him. My family is more happy too. When I see this, I am also happy.

Members and neighbors contributed what they could to help my family. I received a lot of rice and shared it with others. They asked me why I give when I'm in a bad situation. I tell them when I serve others, I serve the Lord. I want to give to Him because He made many miracles happen in my life. We have a beautiful home, better than the one that burned down.

FIND MORE

Elder Larry J. Echo Hawk teaches how forgiveness helps you move forward and brings peace to your life. Read his message at lds.org/go/1196.

Find more Portraits of Faith at lds.org/go/18.





Ministering Principles

THE PURPOSE THAT WILL CHANGE OUR MINISTERING

While there are many purposes of ministering, our efforts should be guided by the desire to help others achieve a deeper individual conversion and become more like the Savior.

When we love others as the Savior does, we want to help them as He did. As the Good Shepherd, He is the ultimate example of meaningful ministering.

In modeling our ministering after Him, it is important to remember that His efforts to love, lift, serve, and bless had a higher goal than meeting the immediate need. Certainly He knew of their day-to-day needs and had compassion on their current suffering. So He healed, fed, forgave, and taught. But He wanted to do more than take care of today's thirst (see John 4:13–14). He wanted those around Him to follow Him (see Luke 18:22; John 21:22), know Him (see John 10:14; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22–24), and reach their divine potential (see Matthew 5:48). The same is true today (see Doctrine and Covenants 67:13).

There are countless ways we can help bless others, but when the end goal of our ministering is to help others come to know the Savior and become more like Him, we will be working toward the day when we won't have to teach our neighbor to know the Lord because we will all know Him (see Jeremiah 31:34).





The Savior's Focus Went beyond Immediate Needs

- Several individuals went to great lengths to bring their friend to Jesus to be healed of palsy. In the end the Savior healed the man, but He was more interested in forgiving him of his sins (see Luke 5:18–26).
 - When the people brought to the Savior the woman taken in adultery, His withholding of condemnation saved her life physically. But He wanted to save her spiritually too, telling her to “go, and sin no more” (see John 8:2–11).
 - Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus asking Him to come heal His friend, Lazarus. Jesus, who had healed others on countless occasions, delayed His arrival until after Lazarus had died. Jesus knew what the family wanted, but in raising Lazarus from the dead, He strengthened their testimonies of His divinity (see John 11:21–27).

What other examples can you add to this list?



“Ministering Principles” articles are intended to help us learn to care for one another—not to be shared as messages during visits. As we come to know those we serve, the Holy Ghost will prompt us to know what message they might need in addition to our care and compassion.

What Can We Do?

If our purpose is to help others become more like the Savior, it will change how we minister. Here are some ways this understanding can guide our efforts to minister.

Idea 1: Connect Service with the Savior

All of our efforts to do good are worthwhile, but we can look for opportunities to enhance our service by connecting it with the Savior. For example, if the family you minister to is sick, a meal might be helpful, but your simple expression of love could be multiplied by your testimony of the Savior’s love for them. Your help with yardwork would be appreciated, but could perhaps be made more meaningful with the offer of a priesthood blessing.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “A person with a good heart can help someone fix a tire, take a roommate to the doctor, have lunch with someone who is sad, or smile and say hello to brighten a day.

“But a follower of the first commandment will naturally add to these important acts of service.”¹

Idea 2: Focus on the Covenant Path

Upon speaking to members for the first time as President of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson said, “Keep on the covenant path.” Making and keeping covenants “will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available.”²

As Latter-day Saints, we are baptized, confirmed, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Worthy male members receive the priesthood. We are endowed with power in the temple and are sealed together as families forever. These saving ordinances and their associated covenants are essential for us to become like Him so that we can be with Him.

We can have an important role to play in helping others along that path as we help them keep their covenants and prepare to make future covenants.³ How can you help the individuals or families you serve to receive the next ordinance they need? This could mean helping prepare a father to baptize his daughter, explaining the blessings of the next covenant to be made, or sharing ways to have a more meaningful experience renewing our covenants while partaking of the sacrament.



Idea 3: Invite and Encourage

When it’s appropriate, counsel with those you care for about their conversion and efforts to be more Christlike. Let them know the strengths you see and admire in them. Find out where they feel they could improve and talk about how you could help. (For more on counseling together with those to whom you minister, see “Counsel about Their Needs,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2018, 6–9.)

Don’t be afraid to invite them to follow the Savior and allow Him to help them reach their divine potential. This invitation can be life-changing, when coupled with an expression of your confidence in them and your faith in Him.



Six Ways We Can Help Others Progress toward Christ

Following are suggestions for supporting others in making life improvements and progressing along the covenant path. (See *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 11, for more ideas.)

1. Share. Be authentic and bold when sharing how the Savior has helped you as you have tried to draw nearer to Him by living gospel principles in spite of setbacks.

2. Promise blessings. People need a reason to change that is more compelling than the reasons not to change. Explaining the blessings associated with an action can provide powerful motivation (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21).

3. Invite. Living a gospel principle brings a testimony that it is true (see John 7:17) and leads to deeper conversion.⁴ Nearly every interaction could include a simple invitation to do something that would help them progress.

4. Plan together. What needs to happen for them to successfully keep their commitment to change? How can you help? Is there a time line involved?

5. Support. When helpful, develop a support network of people who can help the individual stay motivated and succeed. We all need a cheerleader.

6. Follow up. Share progress regularly. Stay focused on the plan but refine it if necessary. Be patient, persistent, and encouraging. Change can take time.

Invitation to Act

Consider ways your efforts to minister—both large and small—can help others deepen their conversion and become more like the Savior.

Share Your Experiences

Send us your experiences as you have ministered to others or have been ministered to. Go to liahona.lds.org and click “Submit an Article or Feedback.” ■

NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, “A Holier Approach to Ministering” (Brigham Young University devotional, Apr. 10, 2018), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
3. See Henry B. Eyring, “Daughters in the Covenant,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 125–28.
4. See David A. Bednar, “Converted unto the Lord,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 106–109.



MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS. BY HOWARD LYON

Mary

the Mother of Jesus

Mary's story is a timeless reminder of the costs and blessings of discipleship.

By Gaye Strathearn

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is one of the few women mentioned in scripture and the only one whose life and ministry were prophesied about centuries before her birth (see 1 Nephi 11:15, 18; Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10).¹ The New Testament authors of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John provide only glimpses into her life and ministry because their focus is rightly concentrated on the Savior. But the early Christian church gave Mary the title of *theotokos*, the “bearer or mother of God”² as a reminder of the important part that she also plays in the Father’s plan.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has written: “Can we speak too highly of her whom the Lord has blessed above all women? There was only one Christ, and there is only one Mary. Each was noble and great in [the premortal existence], and each was foreordained to the ministry he or she performed. We cannot but think that the Father would choose the greatest female spirit to be the mother of his Son, even as he chose the male spirit like unto him to be the Savior. . . . We should . . . hold up Mary with that proper esteem which is hers.”³

Luke’s account of the story of the Annunciation to Mary

(see Luke 1:26–56) gives us a window through which to better appreciate this remarkable young woman. Through her interactions with Gabriel and Elisabeth, we see a young woman trying to grasp and understand her unique call from God. The magnitude of that call must have weighed heavily upon someone so young, and yet she readily submitted her will to that of the Father. Her story reminds us that God is aware of all of His children and that He calls ordinary men and women to participate in extraordinary ways to help build His kingdom. She became Jesus’s first disciple, and thus she is a model for all who choose to follow Him.

Nazareth: Mary’s Home

Unfortunately, the New Testament tells us nothing about Mary’s parents, her birth, or anything about her life in Nazareth. Luke describes Nazareth as a *polis*, which can be translated as either a city or a town, but it does not appear to have been a place of significance. Outside of the New Testament, Nazareth is not mentioned in any text until the end of the second century AD.

We do know that Nazareth was located on a hill in lower Galilee overlooking the fertile Jezreel Valley, 65 miles (105 km) north of Jerusalem. Archaeology indicates that

first-century Nazareth was more like a village than a city or even a town, with an estimated population of around 400–500.⁴ With few exceptions, much of the population throughout Galilee struggled to survive as subsistence workers, tending livestock, fishing, and working the land just to put food on the table for their families and to pay their taxes. The village had no fortifications; there is no evidence that it had paved streets or monumental architecture, nor that it used luxury items such as marble, mosaics, or frescos in the buildings, or that the households contained imported fine wares.⁵ The two first-century houses that have been excavated appear to be modest one-story abodes with two rooms, a thatched roof, and a small courtyard.⁶ Burial practices and some limestone vessel fragments indicate that the inhabitants were Jewish rather than Gentiles.

While none of these discoveries can be tied directly to Mary or her family, they do give us a sense of what her life in Nazareth may have looked like: a peasant girl living in a rural village, far from the religious center of Jerusalem with its temple, priestly aristocracy, and wealth. Even as a young girl, she would have worked beside her mother and the other women of the village, weaving cloth, cooking, gathering firewood, collecting water from the household cisterns or village wells, and working in the fields—all to help her family survive from day to day.

Mary's Call

Mary's story in the book of Luke opens with the appearance of the angel Gabriel, the same angel who had earlier appeared to Zacharias in the temple (see Luke 1:11, 19, 26). When Gabriel appears, Mary is a young woman who was engaged to be married to Joseph (see Luke 1:27). Although we do not know how old Mary was at the time, in antiquity it was possible for marriage contracts to be arranged even before puberty. Gabriel's appearance and declarations that Mary is "highly favored," that "the Lord is with thee," that she is "blessed among women," and that, according to the Joseph Smith Translation of Luke 1:28, she was "chosen" (see also Alma 7:10) must have elicited a mixed reaction

of confusion and even fear in Mary. We can only imagine what thoughts might have raced through her mind at that moment, but they could have included questions like, "Why does God consider me to be 'blessed among women'?" "Why have I 'found favor with God' and what does that even mean?" "Why did God send Gabriel to me and not to any of the other young women in Nazareth, or in Jerusalem?" Yes, she was from the house of David (see Luke 1:32; Romans 1:3), but that meant little under the Roman occupation. After all, she was just a young woman from a peasant family, living in an insignificant village. As Nathaniel would later ask, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

Gabriel does not answer any of the questions that may have filled Mary's mind and heart. Instead he continues with his message: she will conceive a child, but not just any child. Her child shall be called the "Son of the Highest" and will receive "the throne of his father David" (see Luke 1:32–33). In other words, Gabriel told Mary that her son would be both the Son of God and the promised Messiah. If Mary had been confused and afraid before this announcement, we can only imagine her heightened state after it.

Let's consider one principle that this part of Mary's story teaches about discipleship. God's plan for Mary was not something that she had asked for! Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias because he and Elisabeth had prayed for a miracle child, but he came to Mary under very different circumstances: not to fulfill a petition, but to announce God's will for her. With her impending wedding, Mary had probably thought about the possibility of having children in the future. But even though there was a wave of messianic expectation in Judaism in the first century, would Mary have thought that she, a peasant young woman from Nazareth, would be the mother of the Messiah? Probably not. The point is that calls of discipleship often require alterations to our personal life plans.

Luke focuses his record on the declarations of Gabriel and then Elisabeth. But there are three occasions when Mary articulates her thoughts and feelings.



The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the astonishing message that she was “blessed among women” and that she would bear the Son of God.

An Inspired Question

The first is her question to Gabriel, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34). Given the circumstances, her question is a reasonable one. It reminds readers of Zacharias’s question, “Whereby shall I know this? [i.e., that Elisabeth would bear a son]” (verse 18). But whereas his question expresses doubt about Gabriel’s answer to a prayer that Zacharias himself had offered up to God, Mary’s question seeks clarification about God’s declared will for her. Questions are inevitable when God’s invitations challenge disciples to raise the bar and move out of their comfort zones, and inspired questions lead to revelation.

Gabriel’s answer to Mary’s question comes in three parts:

1. First, he tells Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee” (verse 35). The Holy Ghost is the power whereby

disciples in every age are magnified in their callings.

“Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone,” taught President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018). “It is the Lord’s work, and when we are on the Lord’s errand, we are entitled to the Lord’s help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”⁷ Then Gabriel gives Mary information specific to her situation: “And the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:⁸ therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (verse 35).

2. Second, Gabriel tells Mary about Elisabeth, someone who is experiencing a similar, although not identical, miraculous pregnancy (see verse 36). Elisabeth’s pregnancy is a sign to Mary that she is not alone, that there is at least one other person who has some sense of what she is going through.



Mary's and Elisabeth's stories are interwoven through their love and support for each other in a time of need.

3. Third, Gabriel unequivocally declares, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (verse 37). God did the impossible when Elisabeth conceived.⁹ Gabriel’s declaration is a reminder to disciples in every age that when we respond to God’s invitations, miracles can take place.

A Disciple’s Willingness

Mary’s second verbal response in the story epitomizes, in my mind, the commitment and outlook of a disciple: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). “Handmaid” indicates that Mary has chosen to accept the call that God has extended to her. This statement is Mary’s version of what her Son will say in Gethsemane, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). While it seems clear that at this point in her journey, she cannot possibly understand all that will be required of her—Simeon later prophesies to her that “a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:35)—nevertheless, Mary chooses to move forward with faith.

“And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38). When Gabriel leaves, Mary is left alone. While it is one thing for a disciple to make declarations like hers in the presence of a divine messenger, what does she do now that the angel is gone? How does she explain this experience to her parents? to Joseph? What is the personal cost to her if they or the inhabitants of Nazareth do not believe her? The close quarters of her life in Nazareth could now become difficult for her.

So she recalls the second part of Gabriel’s answer to her question and journeys to the home of Elisabeth. Once again, Luke’s two opening stories are woven together. As soon as Mary greets Elisabeth, “the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke 1:41–42). Her Spirit-directed salutation reinforced what Gabriel had already declared about Mary’s blessed place among women. Mary now had a second witness of her calling, but it came only after she had willingly accepted the call.

The account of Mary and Elisabeth is a reminder of two great aspects in the lives of modern disciples. It is a reminder of the great symbiotic value at the heart of Relief Societies around the world: women of different ages and at different stages of life coming together to sustain and support each other in times of need. It is also a reminder that God does not abandon those He has called in their times of need but that

He often responds by encircling them in the arms of others whom He has also called.

The Magnificat

Mary's final expression is known as the Magnificat and is her manifestation of joy in response to Elisabeth's declarations. She expresses her feelings about what has transpired in her life and reflects her newfound understanding of her place in God's plan. First and foremost she feels to magnify, give praise to, and glorify her God, in whom she rejoices as her Savior (see Luke 1:46–47). She sees in her experience the ongoing mercy of God, both in the fact that He chose someone of "low estate" like her (see verses 48–50) and also in the fact that He has chosen her to play a central part in the fulfilling of the Abrahamic covenant (see verses 54–55).

"And Mary abode with [Elisabeth] about three months, and returned to her own house" (verse 56). Mary was now more prepared to fulfill her divine calling.

Mary's Example for Us

Modern disciples are removed from the story of Mary by both culture and 2,000 years. Nevertheless, her story is a timeless reminder of the costs of discipleship. God expects His followers to step up to the invitations He extends to them. President Russell M. Nelson reminds us that "God has always asked His covenant children to do difficult things."¹⁰ Mary was no exception, and neither are we. Our challenge is to have the faith to submit our will to His, to accept His calls with faith that His Spirit will magnify us in His service. Bonnie H. Cordon, Young Women General President, also reminds us that "we can do hard things," and then adds, "but we can also do them joyfully."¹¹

As modern disciples, what will our Magnificat be? How will we express our rejoicing in our God? How will we express the magnificence of His mercy in our lives? How will we find ways to celebrate our part in the fulfilling of the Abrahamic covenant in our day? These are perhaps just some of the ways that we can learn from Mary's remarkable story of discipleship. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew also understands Mary to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a virgin who will bring forth a son named Immanuel (see Isaiah 7:14). His quotation of "a virgin" is from the second century BC Greek translation of Isaiah, which was used by the early Christians and is used in the King James Version of Isaiah 7:14.
2. In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 11:18 also describes Mary as "the mother of God."
3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (1981), 1:326–27, footnote 4.
4. See James E. Strange, "Nazareth," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:1050; Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (2002), 131.
5. See Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 131.
6. See Ken Dark, "Has Jesus' Nazareth House Been Found?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, vol. 41, no. 2 (March/April 2015), 54–63; see also Ken Dark, "Early Roman-Period Nazareth and the Sisters of Nazareth Convent," *The Antiquities Journal*, vol. 92 (2012), 37–64.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
8. The Greek word translated as "overshadow" (*episkiazō*) is the same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to describe the cloud descending on the tabernacle when it was completed. It described the glory of the Lord.
9. The Lord said likewise to Abraham when he and Sarah learned that they would have a child in their old age (see Genesis 18:14; Romans 4:19–21).
10. Russell M. Nelson, "Stand as True Millennials," *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 27; *Liahona*, Oct. 2016, 49.
11. "Bonnie H. Cordon: Young Women General President," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 129.



John

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

The New Testament writings associated with John the Beloved present him as both a teacher and a model for our own discipleship.

By Eric D. Huntsman

Professor of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University

After Peter, John is perhaps the best known of Jesus’s original Twelve Apostles. He and his brother, James, were with Peter at some of the most important moments of the Savior’s mortal ministry, and he has been traditionally associated with five different books in the New Testament.¹ His personal closeness to the Lord is suggested by John 13:23: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Throughout the ages, Christian art has reflected this image, picturing John as a young man, often resting in the Savior’s arms. This is the origin of his unique title, John the Beloved, but his witness and mission reveal aspects of discipleship that we can all share.

John, Son of Zebedee

John’s Hebrew name, *Yohanan*, means “God has been gracious.” Most of the details we know about him come from the first three Gospels, which tell the story of the Savior’s mortal ministry largely from the same perspective. They all agree that John was the son of a prosperous Galilean fisherman named Zebedee, who owned his own boat and was able to hire day laborers to assist him and his sons in their work. John and his brother, James, also had a partnership with brothers Peter and Andrew, and all four left their fishing business when Jesus called them to follow Him in full-time discipleship.²





Responding to Jesus's call, John and James "left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him" (Mark 1:20).

While the Gospels do not mention Zebedee again, the mother of James and John became a follower of Jesus, interceding with Jesus on behalf of her sons and being present at the Crucifixion.³ Usually identified by the name Salome, the mother of James and John may also have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, making them first cousins of Jesus and relatives of John the Baptist.⁴

Soon after his initial call, John witnessed many of the Lord's early miracles and teachings.⁵ Seeing these miracles and listening to discourses such as the Sermon on the Mount no doubt prepared John for the moment when Jesus called him to be one of His Twelve Apostles.⁶ Of these special witnesses, Peter, James, and John formed an inner circle of close disciples who were present at significant moments of Jesus's earthly ministry:

- At the raising of the daughter of Jairus, seeing firsthand the Lord's power over death.⁷
- On the Mount of Transfiguration, where

they saw Jesus revealed in His glory and heard the voice of the Father testify that Jesus was His Son in whom He was well pleased.⁸

- On the Mount of Olives for His final prophecy about the last days.⁹
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, where they were nearby as the Savior began His great work of Atonement.¹⁰

Just as Jesus Christ gave Simon the additional name *Cephas* or Peter, which means "rock," He also gave James and John the title *Boanerges*, or "sons of thunder."¹¹ Because they asked Jesus whether they should call down fire upon a village of Samaritans who had rejected Him (see Luke 9:51–56), this nickname might suggest that they were hot-tempered or at least very strong-willed. However, it is just as likely that the name was in anticipation of the powerful witnesses that they might become, much as Peter's name probably reflected not so much his earlier devoted

but impulsive nature as it did his firmness and strength after Jesus's Resurrection.¹²

In John's appearances in the book of Acts, he is portrayed as a strong, steady companion of Peter. John was with Peter when he healed the lame man in the temple, and together they boldly preached before the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem. Together, the two Apostles traveled to Samaria to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the Samaritans whom Philip had taught and baptized.¹³

Yet it is in the writings that are associated with John that he is best seen as a powerful witness of the divinity of his master and friend, Jesus Christ. These New Testament books present John as both a teacher and a model for us in our own discipleship.

Beloved Disciple

Interestingly, John is never named in the Gospel that has traditionally been attributed to him. The Gospel of John mentions the two sons of Zebedee only once, in the last chapter, where they were two of the seven disciples who met the risen Lord by the Sea of Galilee. Even there, however, they are not mentioned by name. Instead, tradition, supported by references in Restoration scripture,¹⁴ has identified John as being the anonymous "disciple whom Jesus loved" who was present at the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the empty tomb, and in Jesus's final Sea of Galilee appearance.¹⁵

He may also have been the "other disciple" who, along with Andrew, had been a follower of John the Baptist and heard him testify that Jesus was the Lamb of God (see John 1:35–40), and it is likely that he was the disciple who accompanied Peter after Jesus's arrest and helped Peter gain access to the court of the high priest (see John 18:15–16).

In the Gospel of John, the beloved disciple emerges as a close, personal friend of the Lord. Along with Martha, Lazarus, and Mary, John is described explicitly in this Gospel as one whom Jesus loved (see John 11:3, 5). His position at the table during the Last Supper reflected not only honor but also closeness.

Beyond his friendship with the Savior, other passages reveal him as a powerful witness of the most important events of Jesus's mission: he stood at the foot of the cross to witness the Lord's death as a sacrifice for sin, ran to the tomb after the Resurrection to confirm that it was empty, and saw the resurrected Savior.

Twice the Gospel of John mentions that it is based upon the eyewitness

of the beloved disciple and emphasizes that his witness is true,¹⁶ something which echoes Joseph Smith's retitling of the Gospel as "The Testimony of John."¹⁷

While scholars still debate the identity of the beloved disciple, if he were the Apostle John, then he was the source of the material in the Gospel, if not its original author.¹⁸

"This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24).

Why then did he remain unnamed, never being directly identified as the Apostle John? The answer might partly be because he intended his own experiences to be types for believers and disciples in every age. By remaining anonymous, he could allow us to project ourselves into his experiences, learning how to love and be loved by the Lord and then gaining our own witnesses, which we are then called upon to share with others.

The Epistles: 1, 2, and 3 John

Like the Gospel of John, none of the three letters attributed to John ever directly name him. Nevertheless, 1 John, which is more of a doctrinal treatise than an actual letter, is closely associated with the Gospel in its style and topics, which include the importance of love and obedience, themes that the Savior taught in John's account of the Last Supper.

Written after the Gospel, 1 John begins by declaring the author's

witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, “which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1; emphasis added). Besides restating the opening lines of the Gospel of John, the author stresses his powerful, personal, physical witness of Jesus Christ, who was the Word of God literally made flesh.

The early Christians, who were the book’s original audience, had apparently suffered internal division with a group who espoused incorrect beliefs about Jesus having left the Church.¹⁹ In 1 John, the author is not only a witness; he is an authority called upon to correct false doctrine and counter threats to faith from anti-Christians and false spirits (see 1 John 2:18–27; 4:1–6). His mission was also to encourage those who remained faithful by sharing meaningful truths about God and Christ and the importance of continued faith and righteousness.

In 2 John and 3 John, he identifies himself simply as “the elder” and continues to stress the importance of love and obedience and the dangers of false teachers and those who reject proper Church authority.²⁰

All three of these books teach us the importance of continued devotion to the revealed Jesus Christ.

The Revelator

Of the five books attributed to him, only Revelation actually uses the name John, identifying its author three times by that name in its opening verses (see Revelation 1:1, 4, 9). Other than identifying himself as the servant of God, the author gives no other indication of his position or calling, but most early Christian authorities believed that he was John, son of Zebedee.

The Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants confirm that the Apostle John had been given a special commission to receive and write the visions that he received.²¹ A complex and heavily symbolic book, Revelation was intended to comfort and reassure Christians suffering persecution or trials in every age while at the same time revealing the role of Jesus Christ throughout history.

Although two different dates have been proposed for when John wrote Revelation—an early date in the AD 60s during the reign of the emperor Nero and a later date in the AD 90s during that of the emperor Domitian—both would have been after the martyrdom of Peter, making John the senior Apostle left living.

His calling, however, was not only to receive and record the visions

contained in the book. In one of his visions, an angel told John the Revelator to take a small book, or scroll, and to eat it. Sweet at first in his mouth, it made his belly bitter, which Joseph Smith interpreted as representing his mission to help gather Israel as part of the restoration of all things (see Revelation 10:9–11; Doctrine and Covenants 77:14). This mission was possible because of John’s continuing ministry after he was translated. While commentators, ancient and modern, have been divided regarding the meaning

*“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments”
(1 John 5:2).*

of Jesus’s statement to Peter about John’s fate at the end of the Gospel (see John 21:20–23), Joseph Smith received a revelation confirming that John’s mission will continue as a translated being until the Savior’s return (see Doctrine and Covenants 7:1–6). In other words, he not only prophesied of the end times, but his mission includes helping fulfill these prophecies as well as witnessing the fulfillment of the things that were revealed to him.

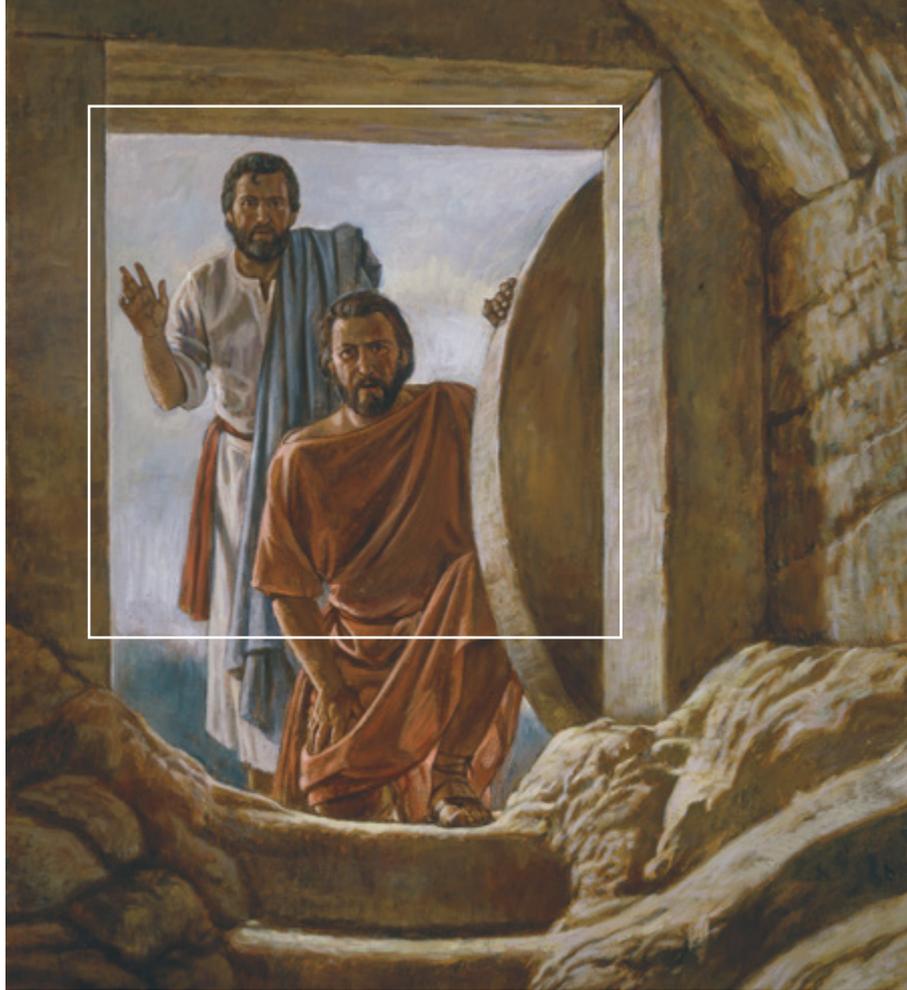
Although our own missions may not be as grand, John’s example teaches us that our love for Jesus Christ leads us to accept our own calls and challenges in life, no matter how bittersweet they at times may seem.

Becoming Beloved Disciples Ourselves

John was a leading member of Jesus's original Twelve Apostles, one who had a close personal relationship with the Savior and served important roles as His witness, as a leader of the Church, and as a revelator. Yet the way he chose to portray himself as the beloved disciple in the Gospel that bears his name allows him to serve as a model for all of us in our own discipleship. From him we learn that as followers of Jesus Christ, we can all rest in the arms of His love, which love we realize most fully through ordinances such as that which He established at the Last Supper. We too can symbolically stand at the foot of the cross, testifying that Jesus died for us, and run with hope to learn for ourselves that the Lord lives. Like John, as beloved disciples our call is to share that witness with others, testifying of the truth and fulfilling whatever calls come our way until the Lord comes again. ■

NOTES

1. Interestingly, only the book of Revelation directly states that its author was John (see Revelation 1:1, 4). None of the Gospels, including John, identifies its author. Early Christian tradition, however, identified the figure of the beloved disciple in the Gospel of John with the Apostle of that name. For a discussion of the evidence, scholarly discussion, and Restoration insights regarding this identification, see note 17. The book of 1 John similarly never identifies its author, but its style and subject matter connects it closely with the Gospel of John. The books of 2 and 3 John are attributed only to "the elder," but early Christian tradition connected them with the author of John and 1 John.
2. See Mark 1:19–20; see also Matthew 4:21–22; Luke 5:10–11. Most scholars agree that Mark was written first, sometime in the mid-60s AD, with Matthew and Luke being written sometime in the AD 70s or early AD 80s. As a result, reading references from Mark first allows us to see how Matthew and Luke added to or adapted the earliest account.
3. While Mark 10:35–37 records that James and John asked to sit at the right and left sides of Jesus in His kingdom, Matthew 20:20–21 adds that this request actually came from their mother. For her presence at the Crucifixion and later at the empty tomb, see Mark 15:40; 16:1–8; see also Matthew 27:55–56; Luke 23:49, 55; 24:1–10; and John 19:25.
4. For further discussion of these possible connections of Salome, as well as more background on the family and fishing business of Zebedee, see R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (2000), 7–23.
5. See Mark 1:21–31, 40–45; 2:1–12; 3:1–6; see also Matthew 8:1–4; 9:1–8; 12:9–14; Luke 4:33–39; 5:12–15, 17–26; 6:6–11.
6. For the Sermon on the Mount, see Matthew 5–7. For the



- call of John and the other original Apostles, see Mark 3:13–19; see also Matthew 10:2–4; Luke 6:13–16.
7. See Mark 5:37; see also Matthew 9:23–26; Luke 8:51, though Matthew does not name Peter, James, and John.
 8. See Mark 9:2–10; see also Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36.
 9. See Mark 13:3–37.
 10. See Mark 14:32–34; see also Matthew 26:36–38.
 11. See Mark 3:17. *Boanerges* is apparently a rough Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *bene regesh* or *r'm*, meaning "sons of commotion or thunder."
 12. See Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee*, 38–40, 50.
 13. See Acts 3:1–11; 4:1–21; 8:14–17.
 14. See Doctrine and Covenants 7; 77; 88:141.
 15. See John 13:23; 19:26, 34–35; 20:2–10; 21:1–14, 20–25; see also Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee*, 57–69.
 16. See John 19:35; 21:24–25; see also John 20:30–31.
 17. See *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, edited by Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews (2004), 234.
 18. For examples of the scholarly discussions about the identity of the beloved disciple, see Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee*, 72–85, and Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, edited by Francis J. Moloney (2003), 189–99. For the Apostle John as either the source or author of the Gospel of John, see Richard Neitzel Holzzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (2006), 126–27, and my own recent treatment in "The Gospel of John" in *New Testament History, Culture, and Society* (2019), ed. Lincoln Blumell.
 19. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (The Anchor Bible, vol. 30 [1982]), 49–55, 71.
 20. See Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee*, 90–95, and Holzzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 274–77.
 21. See Holzzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 281–82, and especially 1 Nephi 14:18–27; Ether 4:16; and Doctrine and Covenants 7:1–3; 77.

A powerful witness of the most important events of Jesus's mission, John stood at the foot of the cross to witness the Lord's death, ran to the tomb after the Resurrection to confirm that it was empty, and saw the resurrected Savior.



THE GOLDEN HARVEST, BY DAVID MERRILL, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

Faith in Jesus Christ
and His Atonement is
the faith to reap.
It is faith in His power,
not yours.





By Elder Wilford W. Andersen
Of the Seventy

DEVELOPING THE

Faith to Reap

Lehi and his family had been in the wilderness for only a matter of days when the Lord told him to send his sons back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates from Laban. We don't often compliment Lehi's two rebellious sons, Laman and Lemuel, but at least they were willing to go. They had enough faith to give it a try.

Laman, and later Lemuel with his brothers, asked Laban for the plates. The brothers lost their family fortune and almost their lives in the attempt. At that point, Laman's and Lemuel's faith failed them, and they were ready to quit. Nephi, on the other hand, rose above the danger and discouragement:

"As the Lord liveth, and as we live," he said, "we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.

"Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (1 Nephi 3:15–16).

Nephi then exercised great faith, obtained the plates of Laban, and returned with his brothers to their father in the wilderness.

There seem to be two distinct levels of faith.

The first level is the faith to try, the faith to thrust in our sickles. The second level is the faith to do. It is more than the faith to thrust in our sickles—it is the faith to reap.

Laman and Lemuel had the faith to try, but Nephi had the faith to do. Laman and Lemuel had enough faith to thrust in their sickles, but Nephi had enough faith to reap.

That subtle distinction between the faith to thrust in our sickles and the faith to reap will make all the difference in our lives. To live again with our Heavenly Father and to live productive and joyful lives on earth, we need to develop the faith to reap.

We have received marvelous promises from the Lord—promises of happiness and joy in this life and exaltation in the next. But the challenges and problems of our daily lives tend to diminish our hope. Our land of promise seems so far away, so improbable, that we begin to doubt.

"It isn't possible for me to reach that goal or to receive that blessing," we think. "Surely, the Lord was thinking about someone else when He made those promises."

No, He *was* thinking of you and of me. We only need sufficient faith to receive our blessings—a faith so strong that it can convert our future promises into present realities. We need the faith to reap.

What exactly is the faith to reap, and how can we develop it?



Pray each day that Heavenly Father will bless you with righteous desires to conform your will to His.

Have Faith in Jesus Christ

First, unlike the faith to thrust in our sickles, the faith to reap is not faith in ourselves. It is not the same as self-confidence or positive mental attitude. It is not even faith in our families or friends—all of which are good. The faith to reap is faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. It is faith in His power, not ours.

When I was called as the stake president of the Mesa Arizona Maricopa Stake, Elder W. Mack Lawrence, at the time a General Authority Seventy, invited my wife and me into the stake president's office and extended the calling. I dutifully accepted. Then he invited us to enter the high council room and prayerfully consider men to recommend as my counselors. As I entered the room, I saw pictures of all the stake presidents who had previously served in the stake since it was organized, and my heart sank. They were great leaders both in the Church and in the community.

I looked at my wife and said, "Kathleen, I don't think I can do this. I'm not in their league."

She said, "Don't talk to me about it. You had better talk to Elder Lawrence."

To my surprise, when I told him that I didn't think I could fulfill the calling, Elder Lawrence responded, "Well, I suppose you're right."

But then he said, "You can't do it, Brother Andersen, but the Lord can. He has the power to do His work, and if you will be worthy and work hard, He will do it. You will see."

And He did.

The faith to thrust in our sickles is the faith to try. It is faith in oneself, and it evaporates as soon as the going gets tough. And then we start to doubt. But the faith to reap is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It never yields.

Align Your Will with God's Will

Second, to exercise the faith to reap, we must be certain that our desires and objectives are consistent with the will of God. We can never exercise faith to reap if God does not agree with the harvest. To have His help, we must align our will with His.

Because the prophet Nephi, the son of Helaman, was a righteous and faithful man, the Lord told him, "I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word." That is a wonderful promise. But then the Lord adds, "For thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will" (Helaman 10:5).

Moroni taught, "And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do *whatsoever thing is expedient in me*" (Moroni 7:33; emphasis added).

Conforming our desires to God's will is a prerequisite to the faith to reap.

When my sons were younger, they played on the high school basketball teams. Back then they used to have a team prayer prior to beginning each game. As I watched from the stands, I would wonder what they were praying for. If they were praying to win the game, their prayers lacked the faith to reap. This was clearly evidenced by the number of games they lost! The Lord apparently did not share their desire that they necessarily win every game.

In other words, God will help us to achieve only the goals that are good for us. That is because He loves us, and He knows better than we do what will be for our good. We should pray each day that Heavenly Father will bless us with righteous desires to conform our will to His. We must learn to pray as the Lord did in the Garden of Gethsemane that God's will, not ours, be done (see Luke 22:42). Only then can we exercise the faith to reap.

Go to Work

The third prerequisite of faith to reap is work. The Apostle James makes it clear that faith without works is dead. The faith to thrust in our sickles requires belief, but the faith to reap requires more than belief. "The devils believe," writes James, "and tremble" (see James 2:17, 19).

I heard a story about a father who noticed his young daughter kneeling beside her bed, praying that Heavenly Father would protect little birds from entering a bird trap her brother had built and placed in the backyard. Later that day, the father grew concerned. He knew the trap was a good one. He had helped his son build it.

"I heard you praying this morning that Heavenly Father would protect the little birds from your brother's trap," he said to his daughter. "But sometimes sad things happen even when we pray that they won't."

She responded, "I just know he won't catch any birds, Daddy."

"I admire your faith, sweetheart," the father said. "But if he does catch some birds, I hope that won't hurt your faith."

"He won't, Daddy," she said. "I know he won't."

The father asked, "How can you have such great faith?"

"Because after I said my prayers," his daughter replied, "I went out back and kicked his bird trap all to pieces."

It is good to pray for Heavenly Father's blessings. But after we say amen, we have to go to work. We cannot expect the Lord to guide our footsteps if we're not willing to move our feet. Nor should we ask Him to do for us that which we can and should do for ourselves.

We must work at reaching our righteous goals. We must work at keeping the commandments. The real power in our covenants and the real power in the faith to reap is realized not when we conclude with certainty that God keeps His promises but rather when we conclude with certainty that we keep ours. That great truth is what converts future promises into present realities. We must work.

Don't be discouraged with your failures or mistakes, but be constant in your efforts, and be determined. The faith to reap does not require perfection, but it does require persistence.

I invite you to develop the faith to reap. Place your faith firmly in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and in His Atonement. Make sure that your desires align with and conform to His will. Then go to work with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, with unflinching determination and persistence. There is no challenge, no problem, no barrier that will not yield to the faith to reap. ■

From a devotional address, "The Faith to Reap," delivered at Brigham Young University—Idaho on March 17, 2015.



SHOW YOUR FAITH

"There is only One in whom your faith is always safe, and that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you need to let your faith show!"

President Russell M. Nelson, "Let Your Faith Show," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 29.

THE MIRACULOUS
MISSION OF THE

PROPHET

*Joseph
Smith*



I have chosen to speak of Joseph Smith, the Prophet and the man. In speaking of him, I hope I will contribute to your understanding of the unique and miraculous accomplishments of the founding prophet of this dispensation.

The relationship of knowledge and testimony of Joseph Smith to missionary work is vital. We all know that some investigators accept the principal doctrines of the gospel but simply cannot accept the fact that a 14-year-old was visited by the Father and the Son and that he translated the Book of Mormon and became the prophet we know him to be. Persons who have difficulty with the Prophet Joseph Smith need to learn from this teaching of President Russell M. Nelson:

“Joseph’s mission in mortality was foreordained. His receptive and pristine mind was open to the Lord’s instruction. But, by worldly standards, Joseph was most unlikely. And his task to be the Prophet of this last dispensation seemed totally impossible. This example demonstrates a principle that is often true of how the Lord works: He uses the unlikely to accomplish the impossible!”¹

It is very important that our missionaries have a testimony of the divine calling and miraculous work of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I am a 65-year student of the life of Joseph Smith. I was



By President Dallin H. Oaks

First Counselor in the First Presidency

Joseph Smith accomplished more than any mortal man could have accomplished in so short a time. The only possible explanation is heavenly help.

JOSEPH SMITH, BY WILLIAM WHITAKER, LITHOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY



At the time of his death, Joseph Smith was serving as both mayor of Nauvoo and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion.

born in 1805, when the Church was just over 100 years old. I believe I am typical of the faithful Latter-day Saints of this second century. We did not meet Joseph Smith, but we feel we know him, and we love him through what he revealed and taught. We are witnesses of the truth of the poetic prediction that “millions shall know ‘Brother Joseph.’”²

I. Joseph Smith, the Prophet

We all know Joseph Smith as the first prophet of this dispensation, the Lord’s instrument in the Lord’s Restoration. But what did the Lord restore through this prophet? Not all Latter-day Saints (and few non-members) are aware of the illuminating and massive additions the Lord inspired the Prophet Joseph to make to Christian doctrine. Here is a brief list:

- The nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
- The relative functions of these three members of the Godhead and Their relationship to mortal beings.
- The nature of the Fall of man.
- The purpose of mortal life in furtherance of the Father’s plan for His children to attain their eternal destiny.
- The role of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in assuring immortality and providing the opportunity for eternal life.
- The role of earthly and eternal marriage in the Father’s plan.
- The essential role of priesthood and ordinances in the Father’s plan.
- The essential role of temples and proxy ordinances in the Father’s plan.
- The knowledge that God desires to save all of His children and that every person who has lived upon this earth—whether then knowing of Jesus Christ or not—is capable of attaining the highest heaven hereafter.

Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, USA.



- The relationship of the threefold sources of truth about man and the universe: science, scriptures, and continuing revelation.

Anyone who studies even a small part of this list—whether believer or nonbeliever—must acknowledge that Joseph Smith stands at the headwaters of an immense stream of bold and new and precious religious ideas. As we read in *Preach My Gospel*, the fullness of the gospel was restored to the earth through Joseph Smith.³

You may have noted that my list did not specifically mention Joseph’s bringing forth the Book of Mormon, a new volume of scripture that is, of course, the source of many of those new religious ideas. That book deserves special mention. Its title proclaims its most important function: “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” But beyond that fundamental role, there is more. Here is what a best-selling scholar said of the book:

“The *Book of Mormon* proposes a new purpose for America: becoming a realm of righteousness rather than an empire of liberty. Against increasing wealth and inequality, the *Book of Mormon* advocates the cause of the poor. . . . Against republican government, it proposes righteous rule by judges and kings under God’s law. Against a closed-canon Bible and nonmiraculous religion, the *Book of Mormon* stands for ongoing revelation, miracles, and revelation to all nations. Against skepticism, it promotes belief; against nationalism, a universal Israel. It foresees



Joseph Smith stands at the headwaters of an immense stream of bold, new, and precious religious ideas.

disaster for the nation if the love of riches, resistance to revelation, and Gentile civilization prevail over righteousness, revelation, and Israel.”⁴

More important is just what President Nelson recently said about the Book of Mormon: it “is the instrument by which the promised gathering of Israel will be accomplished.”⁵

As we read in *Preach My Gospel*, the Prophet Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon is “the keystone of our religion.”⁶

Most non-Latter-day Saints do not know of Joseph Smith’s great contributions to religious thought. In a notable nationwide study, pollster Gary Lawrence found that nearly half of the people he studied thought Latter-day Saints were secluded and mysterious and had “weird beliefs.”⁷

When he asked interviewers, “What is the main claim of Mormonism?” only one in seven could describe anything close to the idea of restoration or reestablishment of the original Christian faith. Similarly, when another national survey asked respondents to describe their impression of our religion, not one person suggested the idea of original or restoration Christianity.⁸

These findings remind us that we must not let our missionaries assume too much knowledge about our faith. Those they teach may have heard the word *Mormon*, but missionaries must not assume that most have even the most primitive understanding of the basic principles of our faith.

II. Joseph Smith, the Man

Here are some of my personal thoughts about Joseph Smith's remarkable life.⁹ The Joseph Smith I met in my personal research, mostly in Illinois, USA, was a man of the frontier—young, emotional, dynamic, and so loved and approachable by his people that they often called him “Brother Joseph.” His comparative youth overarched his prophetic ministry. He was 14 at the time of the First Vision, 21 when he received the golden plates, and just 23 when he finished translating the Book of Mormon (in less than 60 working days).

Over half of the revelations in our Doctrine and Covenants were given through this prophet when he was 25 or younger. He was 26 when the First Presidency was organized and just over 33 when he escaped from imprisonment in Missouri and resumed leadership of the Saints. He was only 38 and a half when he was murdered.

During his short life, Joseph Smith had more than his share of mortal afflictions. When he was about seven, he suffered an excruciatingly painful leg surgery. Because of the poverty of his family, he had little formal education and as a youth was compelled to work long hours to help put food on the family table. He was attacked physically on many occasions. In the midst of trying to fulfill the staggering responsibilities of his sacred calling, he had to labor as a farmer or merchant to provide a living for his family. He did this without the remarkable spiritual gifts that sustained him in his prophetic calling. The Lord had told him that “in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength, for this is not thy calling” (Doctrine and Covenants 24:9).

In spiritual matters, Joseph Smith had no role models from whom he could learn how to be a prophet and a leader. He had to rely on inexperienced associates. He and they struggled and learned together. Joseph was extremely rapid in his acquisition

of knowledge and maturity. He unquestionably had unique gifts. As we would say today, he was “a quick study.” He said he was taught by heavenly messengers and by other revelations from God, and I believe him.

One of his personal gifts is evidenced by the love and loyalty of the remarkable people who followed him. When Joseph challenged his followers to overcome their mortal imperfections, he did not raise himself above them, and they loved him for it. In a sermon Joseph preached a little over a month before he was murdered, he declared, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”¹⁰ Joseph Smith had a “native cheery temperament” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28) that endeared him to almost everyone who knew him. One acquaintance said, “The love the saints had for him was inexpressible.”¹¹ The companionship of his friends was a delight to Joseph, who saw society building and community building as major purposes of the gospel.

I once observed: “All of his life, Joseph Smith lived on the frontier, where men had to pit their brute strength against nature and sometimes against one another. He was a large man, strong and physically active. He delighted in competitive sports, including pulling sticks—a test of physical strength (see *History of the Church*, 5:302). Our archives contain many recollections of his wrestling with friends and acquaintances. On one Sabbath, he and Brigham Young preached to the Saints in Ramus, Illinois, about a day's ride from Nauvoo. On Monday, before departing Ramus, Joseph matched his wrestling prowess against a man someone described as ‘the bully of Ramus’ (see Joseph Smith Journal, 13 March 1843, recorded by Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives). Joseph threw him. I am glad our current conference schedules do not provide the local members opportunity to test the visiting authorities in this manner.”¹²

Joseph Smith was 21 when he received the golden plates, buried in the Hill Cumorah, and just 23 when he finished translating the Book of Mormon.



Few men have been the targets of more assaults on their mission or their memory than Joseph Smith. I investigated some of these charges by personal research in original records in Illinois, where Joseph lived the last five years of his life. One such charge arose when Joseph Smith, then mayor, and the Nauvoo City Council suppressed the *Nauvoo Expositor*, an opposition newspaper. This suppression focused hostilities against the Church and led directly to Joseph's murder.

Early Latter-day Saint historians, including Elder B. H. Roberts, conceded that this action was illegal. However, as I researched this subject as a young law professor, I was surprised to find a legal basis for this action in the Illinois law of 1844. There were many suppressions of newspapers on the frontier

in the period before the Civil War. The guarantee of freedom of the press in the U.S. Constitution was not declared applicable to the actions of city and state governments until 1931, and then only by the U.S. Supreme Court's five-to-four reliance on a constitutional amendment adopted in 1868.¹³ One should judge the actions of Joseph Smith on the basis of the laws and circumstances of his day, not ours.

As students at the University of Chicago, historian Marvin S. Hill and I were intrigued with the little-known fact that five men went to trial in Illinois for the murder of Joseph Smith. For over 10 years we scoured libraries and archives across the nation to find every scrap of information about this 1845 trial and those involved in it. Our book reviewed the words and actions of Illinois citizens who knew Joseph



Smith personally—some who loved him and risked their lives for him, and others who hated him and plotted to kill him. Nothing in our discoveries in the original court records or in the testimony at the lengthy trial disclosed anything that reflected dishonor on the man who was murdered.¹⁴

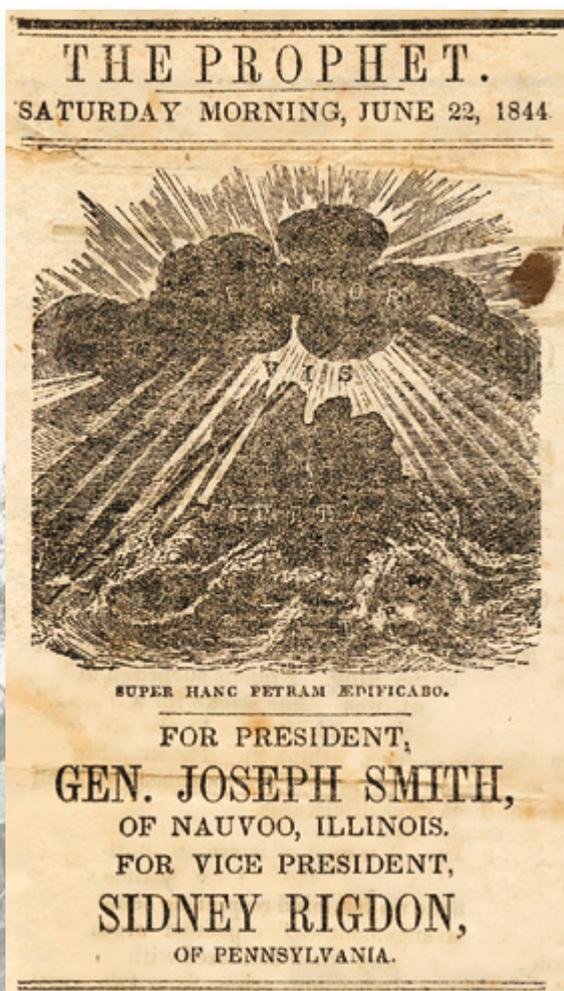
The accessibility of Illinois court records led to another previously untouched area of research on Joseph Smith. Joseph I. Bentley, then a law student at Chicago, and I discovered numerous records of the business activities of Joseph Smith. We coauthored a 1976 *Brigham Young*

Age:	Event:
14	Had First Vision
21	Received the golden plates
23	Finished translating the Book of Mormon
25	Received half of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants
26	First Presidency organized
33	Escaped from jail in Missouri, resumed leadership
38	Martyred

University Law Review article on this subject.¹⁵ The 1840s followed a period of nationwide financial panic and depression. Economic conditions in frontier states like Illinois were ruinous. For example, the biographers of Abraham Lincoln have described his financial embarrassments during this decade, when business was precarious, many obligations were in a default, and lawsuits were common.¹⁶

Joseph Smith's enemies charged him with fraud in various property conveyances, most conducted in behalf of the Church. A succession of court proceedings that extended for nearly a decade examined these charges in meticulous detail. Finally, in 1852, long after the Saints' exodus from Illinois (so there was no conceivable political or other cause for anyone to favor the Saints or their leader), a federal judge

Joseph Smith ran for president of the United States in 1844. This flyer announces a speech he was scheduled to give just five days before he was martyred.



concluded this litigation with a decree that found no fraud or other moral impropriety by Joseph Smith.¹⁷

Scholars knowledgeable about public issues in this period wrote this about Joseph Smith's campaign for the U.S. presidency:

"While he may not have had a serious chance of winning the 1844 national election, he ran shrewdly as a third-party candidate who was definitely serious about encouraging legal reforms in the United States. He hoped and worked to improve public opinions on momentous issues including slavery, religious freedom, prisons, and public lands. He and Robert F. Kennedy remain the only two Americans to be assassinated while they were candidates for the office of United States president."¹⁸

Joseph Smith's character was perhaps best apprehended by men who knew him best and stood closest to him in Church leadership. They adored him and sustained him as a prophet. "His brother Hyrum chose to die at his side. John Taylor, also with him when he was murdered, said: 'I testify before God, angels, and men, that he was a good, honorable, virtuous man . . . —that his private and public character was unimpeachable—and that he lived and died as a man of God' (*The Gospel Kingdom* [1987], 355; see also D&C 135:3). Brigham Young declared: 'I do not think that a man lives on the earth that knew [Joseph Smith] any better than I did; and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, no better man ever lived or does live upon this earth' ["Remarks," *Deseret News*, Aug. 27, 1862, 65]."¹⁹

III. Joseph Smith and the Law

As is evident from the examples I have already cited, my longtime interest in legal history included a special interest in Joseph Smith's interactions with the American legal system of his day. Historians have traditionally stated that Joseph Smith was a party to no more than about 40 legal actions. Today, with the

benefit of the work done on *The Joseph Smith Papers*, we know that the number is more than 220. These legal actions ranged “from simple collection cases to complex [litigation] involving sophisticated legal theories. . . . Joseph retained scores of attorneys to . . . bring and defend [such] actions . . . both civil and criminal matters.”²⁰

Drawing on the remarkable wealth of knowledge we have about the Prophet’s life, Latter-day Saint scholar Jeffrey N. Walker has written: “Undeniably, Joseph Smith was intimately, actively, and consistently involved in the American legal system. To ignore these important activities is to miss much of how he spent his time and energies, brilliantly and effectively—so much so that Daniel H. Wells, himself a lawyer, judge, and attorney general, who was well acquainted with Smith, would opine: ‘I have known legal men all my life. Joseph Smith was the best lawyer that I have ever known in my life’ [as quoted in *The Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith: Six Decades in the Early West: Diaries and Papers of a Mormon Pioneer, 1834–1906* (1953), 456].”²¹

Three Latter-day Saint authors summarize as follows: “With his heavy involvement in the legal system, Smith quickly learned the rules of the game and legally used those rules to his full lawful advantage, striving to make full use of the new opportunities and protections afforded by the young nation’s laws. His legal choices and conduct make it clear that he was well informed about legal matters and that he took explicit steps to make every appropriate use allowed by the law, whether he was obtaining the copyright for the Book of Mormon under federal law, performing marriages under Ohio law, shaping Nauvoo city ordinances, invoking the full protections of religious freedom, making effective use of new laws that governed the sale of federal land, asserting [the] right of habeas corpus, demanding proper venue, or applying for coverage under the newly adopted federal bankruptcy law. In his spare time, he studied law books.



He knew the precise wording of the Constitution and the specific language of state statutes. No doubt he was well aware of many current legal developments at state and federal levels throughout his lifetime.”²²

Significantly, those three authors add this statement: “As a defendant, he was never convicted of any criminal offense. Whenever he was given a fair hearing, he was found to be an upstanding and honest citizen.”²³

The detailed summaries of the Prophet’s litigation selected and analyzed in the book I have quoted depended on the work of numerous J. Reuben Clark Law School students who took courses on the subject and did the detailed work that led to the book by these three authors. I was fascinated with their description of the opinions of these law students:

“The law students who have used previous iterations of this book as their textbook have consistently come to the opinion that Joseph was

“Joseph Smith was the best lawyer that I have ever known in my life.”

—Elder Daniel H. Wells, Utah territorial attorney general



responsible, accountable, loyal, prudent, merciful, cautious, meticulous, law-abiding, patient, positive, resourceful, astute, savvy, a good judge of character, and even legally brilliant (to use some of their own words), especially when it came to protecting the religious and civil rights of others or carrying out the duties with which he had been entrusted. . . . Joseph Smith never lost faith in the Constitution and strived to work solidly under its aegis, even though he was often frustrated, disappointed, and wary of people administering it.”²⁴

IV. Conclusion

In his life, Joseph Smith accomplished more than any mortal man could have accomplished in so short a time. The only possible explanation is heavenly help. I like this summary:

“He translated and published the Book of Mormon in New York; organized the Church in New York, and then resettled it in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois; founded cities, including Kirtland, Far West, and Nauvoo; called and trained hundreds of church leaders; studied Hebrew and the Bible; founded the Relief Society of Nauvoo; ran businesses, alone and with partners; developed real estate and built temples; wrote and published articles and editorials; had a large family and embraced a wide circle of friends; and served in several civic capacities, including commander-in-chief of a large legion of militia men, as well as the mayor and chief judge for the city

of Nauvoo. He spoke regularly in weekly worship services, dedications, and at all-too-frequent funerals; he attracted tens of thousands of followers, prompting waves of converts to immigrate to the United States.”²⁵

In a general conference talk given over 20 years ago, I said this:

“Like other faithful Latter-day Saints, I have built my life on the testimony and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In all of my reading and original research, I have never been dissuaded from my testimony of his prophetic calling and of the gospel and priesthood restoration the Lord initiated through him. I solemnly affirm the testimony Joseph Smith expressed in the famous Wentworth letter of 1842:

“... The standard of truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing, persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done’ (*Times and Seasons*, 1 March 1842, 709; quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 4:1754).”²⁶

Brothers and sisters, I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who appeared with God the Father to the boy prophet and of whom the Father said: “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). We have heard our Lord Jesus Christ in revelation since that time. This is His Church. We are holders of the authority of His holy priesthood. We go forward in His cause. I testify of the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the calling of the prophets who have succeeded him in this great work in which you are engaged. ■

The Prophet Joseph Smith was 38 years old when he was martyred with his brother Hyrum at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844.





From an address, “Joseph Smith: The Prophet and the Man,” delivered at the Mission Leadership Seminar on June 25, 2018.

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, *Accomplishing the Impossible* (2015), 1–2.
2. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
3. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 37.
4. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (2005), 105.
5. Russell M. Nelson, in Sarah Jane Weaver, “President Nelson Shares the ‘Hopes of My Heart’ with New Mission Leaders,” *Church News*, June 26, 2018, news.lds.org.
6. *Preach My Gospel*, 103; see also the introduction to the Book of Mormon.
7. Gary C. Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism: Seven Steps to Improve Our Image* (2008), 32.
8. See Gary C. Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism*, 42.
9. This portion through the text at note 10 is adapted from Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph Smith in a Personal World,” in John W. Welch, ed., *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress* (2006), 159.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522.
11. Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, in “Joseph Smith, the Prophet,” *Young Woman’s Journal*, Dec. 1905, 554.
12. Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph, the Man and the Prophet,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 72.
13. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor,” *Utah Law Review*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1965), 862–903.
14. See Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (1975).
15. See Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, “Joseph Smith and Legal Process: In the Wake of the Steamboat Nauvoo,” *BYU Law Review*, vol. 1976, no. 3 (1976), 735–82.
16. See David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (1995), 94–118.
17. See Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, “Joseph Smith and Legal Process,” 781.
18. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch, eds., *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith’s Legal Encounters* (2014), x–xi.
19. Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph, the Man and the Prophet,” 73.
20. Jeffrey N. Walker in Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, vi.
21. Jeffrey N. Walker in Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, vii.
22. Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, xvii.
23. Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, xvii–xviii.
24. Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, xviii.
25. Gordon A. Madsen and others, eds., *Sustaining the Law*, xi–xii.
26. Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph, the Man and the Prophet,” 73.

“The truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”

—Joseph Smith,
in the *Wentworth*
letter, March 1,
1842

Investigators Falling from the Trees

To the young missionaries tracting the streets of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1995, the promise they had received from a member of the Area Presidency seemed odd: “If you work hard and are completely obedient, investigators will fall out of the trees to be baptized.” We found out about that promise a short time later.

My father was pruning one of the trees along the sidewalk in front of our

home. As he was up in the tree pruning, he noticed two young men walking toward him on the street. As they passed under the tree, he called down to them in English.

My father didn’t really speak English, but he knew a few words, and he was curious. Who were these young men, and what were they doing in our neighborhood?

The missionaries stopped, wondering

where the voice had come from. My father then climbed out of the tree to talk to them. Impressed by their message and manner, he invited them into his home.

My father’s previous experience with religion had left him troubled, but the message of the restored gospel spoke to his heart. He had lived through some tough times, and he knew he needed to change. He listened closely as the

As my father was up in the tree pruning, he noticed two young men walking toward him on the street.



missionaries taught him, my mother, my grandmother, and me.

I was only 11 years old, but the truths they taught also resonated with me—and with my mother and grandmother. As a result, we were all baptized a few months after we first met the missionaries.

The seeds of faith that the missionaries planted in our hearts were soon nourished by fellowshipping from friends at church, additional gospel teaching, and good experiences with strong Church leaders. Because of the warm welcome we received, the seeds of our faith “fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold” (Luke 8:8).

The fruits of our faith that we enjoy today—nearly 25 years later—include a firm commitment to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, the blessings of the temple, and a full and happy life with a new generation of family members united for all eternity.

We will always be grateful for two faithful missionaries who put an inspired promise to the test. ■

Yamila Caminos, Buenos Aires, Argentina



From Fear to Feasting

I have been active in the Church all my life. I served a full-time mission, married in the temple, and helped raise four wonderful daughters. As the years passed, however, I noticed that some of my friends had given up their Church membership. Some family members were using social media to question and criticize Church leaders. And I was beginning to have my own doubts about the Church for the first time in my life. My doubts caused me to fear the future. At times, I felt overcome with hopelessness.

During this difficult time, I forced myself to attend stake conference. As my stake president spoke, he said, “If we are to survive the difficult times ahead, we need to move from casual feasting to urgent feasting upon the word of God. We need to make regular and focused scripture study a priority in our lives. If we do, I promise that we will not fear.”

The word “fear” caught my attention. I realized that I had allowed my gospel

I set up a small desk with a comfortable chair and began my gospel study with a prayer.

study to become casual. As a result, fear took hold of my life. I decided to give my stake president’s counsel a try.

I went home and created a space for gospel study. In the corner of a room, I set up a small desk with a comfortable chair. I put a few pictures of the Savior on the wall. I gathered my scriptures, some pencils, and a notepad. I began my study with a prayer.

After a week or two, I developed a daily routine. I would first listen to a general conference talk and then study a particular gospel topic. Then I would read a few chapters of the Book of Mormon and finish my study with heartfelt prayer to my Heavenly Father.

Despite various distractions, I rarely missed a day of gospel study for six months. I gained a greater understanding of many gospel topics and strengthened my relationship with my Heavenly Father through regular and sincere prayer.

My testimony was again becoming something I could lean on. My doubts faded because of the new witnesses I had received of the restored gospel. I found myself worrying less because I was trusting God more. I felt fear and despair leaving me. I also lost interest in time-wasting activities and noticed that I was becoming more generous and gentle to others.

As I heeded my stake president’s counsel, God was able to transform me. I was healed and restored by the Master Himself as I feasted upon His word. ■

Matt Maxwell, Utah, USA



We had worked hard all day long. We were hungry. Maybe finding the money was a blessing for our service.



But I'm Hungry!

One rainy day on my mission in Colombia, my companion and I had an hour left before we had to be home. We were hungry and tired from walking all day. We hadn't found anyone to teach.

We also had no money with us, and we hadn't gone grocery shopping. We knew we would get home and have nothing to eat. I tried to push away these negative thoughts and focus on the work.

"Look what I found!" My companion suddenly exclaimed.

She had found some money on the ground. From the expression on her face, I could tell she was thinking what I was. We could buy something to eat!

But after a moment, my companion said, "No, this money is not ours!"

"But I'm hungry!" I thought.

"Whoever it belongs to, we're not going to find them at this time of night," I told her.

She suggested that we pray. I knew that was right, but a part of me thought it was crazy. We had worked hard all day long. We were hungry. Maybe finding the money was a blessing for our service.

Then I remembered my mother. When I was young, she taught my sisters and me to always be honest. She was an example to us and prayed that we would have courage to be honest. I knew that if she were there, she would be sad if I did not make the right decision.

So we prayed. We asked Heavenly Father to help us find the owner. Several minutes later, a young man came along, searching for something.

He had tears in his eyes and looked upset. My companion and I went up to him and found out that we had what he was looking for.

We returned his money to him, and he thanked us repeatedly. He said he needed it to pay for college. Without it, he would lose his enrollment. My eyes filled with tears, and I repented of my previous desires to spend the money. We got his contact information, and we were able to teach him and five other people. That night I thanked my companion for her good example.

I know that God blesses us when we are honest. We didn't have anything to eat that night, but I do not remember going to bed hungry. Finding the money was a blessing, after all. ■

Isadora Marques Garcia, São Paulo, Brazil

Our Furnace Ran on Faith

When my husband, Mark, and I lived with our five small children on the east coast of the United States, we lived in a house that had an oil furnace. To check the oil level, we would put a measuring stick into the tank. And if the oil was low, we would call the heating oil company to come fill the tank.

During an unusually cold January, we were having financial problems. I even took a part-time job in the evenings at a restaurant to supplement our income, but we still had trouble making ends meet. It finally came down to the choice of paying tithing or paying to heat our house. We measured the oil and it came to two inches (5 cm). That would last only a day or two. But we decided to put our faith in the Lord and pay our tithing.

The next day, Mark measured the oil again. It was still at two inches. Mark measured it again the following day, and it was still at two inches. The heat was coming on, but the oil was not going down. The next two days, the oil remained at two inches. I remember crying tears of joy at night when I heard

the heat come on. Our furnace was not running on oil; it was running on faith.

I felt like the widow who fed the prophet Elijah and found that her “barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail” (1 Kings 17:16). When payday finally came, Mark once again measured the oil. This time it measured at one inch (2.5 cm). Now the oil was going down, but we had money to fill the tank.

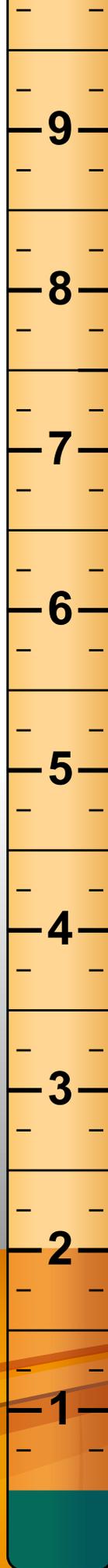
Our family had tested the Lord’s promise found in Malachi 3:10: “And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

To any who doubt the blessings of paying tithing, I encourage them to accept the Lord’s invitation to “prove him now herewith.” Paying tithing unlocks the windows of heaven, and through obedience and faithfulness to the Lord’s laws and commandments, we are blessed in many ways.

Our family will never forget when our oil furnace ran on faith instead of oil. ■

Lois Mansius, Texas, USA

We measured the oil in the furnace, and it came to two inches (5 cm). That would last only a day or two.





Learning to Skin a Skunk

Whenever I think about self-reliance, a phrase from my mission president comes to mind: “Skin your own skunks.” Yes, it’s an odd statement, but there’s a lot of truth in the idea that **there are hard things in our lives** that we can’t ask others to face for us.

So how do we “skin our own skunks” in regards to emotional self-reliance? How do we handle disappointments and **learn to cope with all our emotions?**

Thankfully, we aren’t left in the dark—resources abound. We can find a few of these in “14 Ways to Get Your Emotional Health Back on Track.” More importantly, **we can simplify life** as we keep the commandments (see page 44).

Learning to respond to everything life throws at us is a process. Being emotionally self-reliant doesn’t mean we’ll always feel the way we want to. It means that, through the grace of Jesus Christ and our own efforts, **we’ll be able to manage emotions in healthy and productive ways.** President M. Russell Ballard gives us some practical advice for achieving this balance (see page 48).

As we **strive for emotional self-reliance**, we might feel like a weak little sparrow (see page 46), but as we put in the effort and partner with Heavenly Father, we can be confident that one day we will “mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31), which is a fancy way of saying we’ll have the strength to skin our own skunks.

All the best,

Heather Johnson

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an amazing story to share? Or do you want to see articles about certain topics? If so, we want to hear from you! Submit your articles or your feedback at liahona.lds.org.

YOUNG ADULTS



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BEST ADVICE . . .

Young adults share the best advice they've ever received about taking care of their emotional and mental health:

"Make time for yourself to exercise, clear your mind, and get rid of any toxic thoughts and feelings you have."

—Brianna Forrester, Washington, USA

"Don't be afraid to see a therapist. With the proper combination of spiritual and temporal treatments, I have been able to live my life and am awaiting a mission call so I can serve the Lord."

—Nate Seal, Utah, USA

"Have moderation in all good things while centering your life around Christ."

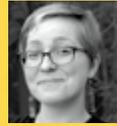
—Nan Crews, Louisiana, USA

"Remember to get enough sleep. It sounds funny, but it's actually super important!"

—Sydney Smith, California, USA

What's the best advice you've ever received about not being too hard on yourself? Submit your response at liahona.lds.org by January 31, 2019.

Lori Fuller is an editor for the *Friend* magazine. She loves finding new bands, listening to news on the radio, and cooking food from around the world. Sometimes she writes stuff.



Valerie Durrant is from California, USA, and has been married to her husband, Ryan, for four years. She recently became a mother to a baby boy. She loves yoga, painting, reading, and hiking.



Heather J. Johnson is a writer and editor. She loves water skiing and going on winter adventures in the mountains. She favors British literature and recommends the use of "y'all" in everyday conversation.



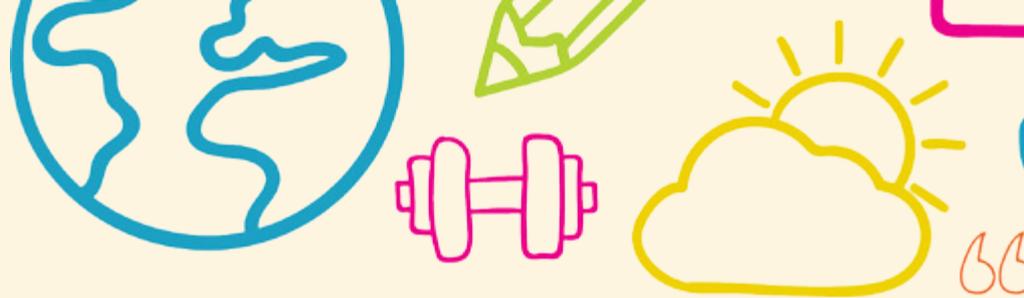
Dave Clarke loves spending time with his wife and daughter. When he's not crunching numbers as an accountant, he can be found spending time outside, running, biking, or watching basketball.



MORE FOR YOU

Check out YA Weekly in the Gospel Library app (under "Young Adults") for new digital content available every week, and follow us at [facebook.com/liahona](https://www.facebook.com/liahona) to find online-only articles and bonus content.





THE GOSPEL

An Eternal Life Hack

By Lori Fuller
Church Magazines

Have you ever thought about how keeping the commandments makes life so much easier?

Last month, some friends and I were catching each other up on our week. One friend shared that he was taking on the burden of his mom's alcoholism recovery. He was just younger than me, and that sounded like the worst task ever.

Later that night, the conversation moved to how expensive smoking is and how someone we knew had been going through a pack of cigarettes a day. (Do the math; it's so much money!) She was trying to quit and was going through withdrawals. Her son was really happy she was quitting, though. His dad had died of a drug overdose, which made any drug use that much scarier for this kid.

Finally, our conversation ended on coffee—how much people drank every morning (and afternoon and sometimes night) and how they missed their lattes now that they couldn't afford them daily.

As I drove home, thinking over all these conversations, I had the thought, "The Word of Wisdom is basically the biggest life hack ever." (If you don't know, a "life hack" is a way to make your life better, live more efficiently, etc. As someone online described it, a





life hack is what was formerly known as “a good idea.”) It’s as if God said, “Here’s a way to save you money, help you stay healthy, protect your kids, and avoid really tough emotional burdens, including your own and others’ addictions.” It’s almost as if God anticipated all the problems we’d be up against and gave us a way to avoid half of them. . . .



With any of God’s commandments, we have the choice to follow them or ignore them. But as I thought of the Word of Wisdom as a set of guidelines from God that both anticipates and protects us from so many challenges, I thought, “What if all of God’s commandments work that way?” What if a loving Heavenly Father, who has experienced this life and its challenges, has given a guidebook to help us navigate the world as painlessly as possible? And what if He gave that to us because He loves us and wants to protect us?

Want to be content with what you

have, to be happy and grateful? “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house” (Exodus 20:17).

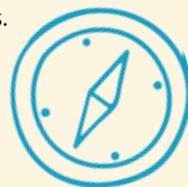
Want to avoid guilt, incarceration, crippling bail and court fees? Want to keep people’s trust and respect—and your job? “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15).

Want to stay close to God so that He can guide and direct you and help carry your burdens? “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

The list goes on and on. Every single commandment can protect us from heartache, make our lives easier, keep us out of trouble, or just help us find peace. And all with so very little personal cost or inconvenience. (And no hidden fees!)

I certainly don’t want to minimize God’s commandments as mere guidelines or helpful life hacks.

They’re much bigger than that. But they’re also really that simple.



Heavenly Father can’t protect us from everything. But as a loving parent, He would like to prepare us and protect us from the cost of our choices—by guiding us to make better ones.

Of course, we can keep the commandments and still have bad things happen. So why bother?

Because we’ll never know what we *are* being protected from through our obedience. Because it helps free us from a life of self-inflicted wounds. Because obedience helps us stay close to God. Because it puts us in position to repent when we choose wrong. Because we trust God to know how to bless and protect us.

The list goes on and on. It is so much longer than the list of reasons *not* to keep the commandments.

For better or worse, God lets me choose how obedient I want to be. *I* get to choose how much I open myself to the blessings He has for me. So why keep the commandments? Because I want my life wide open to the help God is trying to give. ■



We need to rely on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and put in our own effort as we aim to be emotionally self-reliant.

Teach Me to Fly

Achieving Emotional Self-Reliance in the Lord's Way

By Valerie Durrant

When we think of a baby bird learning to fly, we often picture its last heroic attempt: the fledgling flopping out of the nest, spreading its wings, and soaring into the sky. Before that final success, though, there were likely many failures that ended with the bird not soaring into the sky but rather plummeting to the ground.

Like a bird learning to fly, we too may fall down over and over as we set out to achieve emotional self-reliance on our own. But if we turn to the Lord for help and put in the effort, we can learn how to be resilient when life doesn't go quite as planned and to rely on Him when trials become too much for us to bear on our own.

Learning to Fly

If learning to fly is a painful process, why would a bird ever leave the nest in the first place? Because of its mother. For the first part of her babies' lives, the mother bird will bring food directly to them in the nest. But in time, she starts leaving food outside the nest so the fledglings must venture out of their comfort zone to obtain nourishment.

It's the same process we endure as we learn to become emotionally self-reliant—but we are not expected to be able to fly completely on our own just yet.

Similar to a mother bird allowing her babies to fall out of the nest, Heavenly Father allows us to go through trials and experiences that can be painful, frustrating, and discouraging. His plan of salvation is designed to help us become like Him, so every challenge we face can be an opportunity to learn and grow. Like the mother bird, Heavenly Father



still provides us with comfort and direction because only with His help can we achieve and maintain our emotional and mental health.

Flapping Our Own Wings

Even though Heavenly Father is our partner, we shouldn't expect Him to do everything for us. He wants us to use our agency and the resources He has given us on our path to emotional self-reliance.

For example, when we undergo heartache, anger, or loss, He wants us to counsel with Him, but we shouldn't just stop there—we need to do our best to act on the promptings He gives us; to keep the commandments; to attend the temple to seek peace, comfort, and answers; to be mindful of prophetic counsel; and to trust in His plan for us.

Heavenly Father has given us many tools to achieve emotional self-reliance, but if we have given it our all and still find ourselves stuck or struggling with our mental health, additional resources may

be necessary. There are certainly times when you may need to turn to a mental health professional or receive counsel from your bishop for further guidance in order to move forward.

Keep in mind, though, that if we ask for advice from others every time we run into a roadblock, we may lose invaluable opportunities to learn and grow on our own. Again, we need to put in an adequate amount of our own effort to move forward.

Following the Lord's Pattern

In Doctrine and Covenants section 9, Oliver Cowdery is chastised for trying to translate the Book of Mormon plates without taking any “thought save it was to ask [God]” (verse 7). He is then admonished to “study it out in [his] mind,” come to his own conclusion, and then “ask [God] if it be right” (verse 8).

When we follow this pattern, Heavenly Father is not abandoning us to rely completely on our own abilities and thoughts

as we care for our mental health. He is allowing us the opportunity to learn how to exercise our agency. Seeking out answers to our questions and finding solutions to our problems with His help is what will help us ultimately become like Him. With this in mind, we can ask Him to show us how we can become more balanced emotionally instead of simply asking Him to make us better.

As we exercise our agency over and over again in this manner whenever our emotional well-being is tested, we slowly become better and more confident. While we don't have to master flying just yet, we can rest assured that He is with us all along the way and rejoice in the fact that He is helping us become better bit by bit. Each day there is another opportunity to reach new heights—preparing us for the day when we will be able to fly on our own. ■

The author lives in California, USA.



**President
M. Russell
Ballard**

Acting
President of
the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

I have a few suggestions that I hope will be valuable to those of you concerned with balancing life's demands.

EIGHT SUGGESTIONS FOR **Balancing Life's Demands**

1. *First, think about your life and set your priorities.* Find some quiet time regularly to think deeply about where you are going and what you will need to do to get there. Jesus, our exemplar, often “withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed” (Luke 5:16). We need to do the same thing occasionally to rejuvenate ourselves spiritually as the Savior did. Write down the tasks you would like to accomplish each day. Keep foremost in mind the sacred covenants you have made with the Lord as you write down your daily schedules.
2. *Second, set short-term goals that you can reach.* Set goals that are well balanced—not too many nor too few, and not too high nor too low. Write down your attainable goals and work on them according to their importance. Pray for divine guidance in your goal setting.
3. *Third, through wise budgeting, control your real needs and measure them carefully against your many wants in life.* Far too many individuals and families have incurred too much debt. Be careful of the many attractive offers to borrow money. It is much easier to borrow money than it is to pay it back. There are no shortcuts to financial security. We never will have balance in our lives unless our finances are securely under control.

Remember to always pay a full tithing.



4. *Fourth, stay close to your spouse, children, relatives, and friends.* They will help you keep a balance in your life. Build relationships with your family and friends through open and honest communication.

A good marriage and good family relationships can be maintained through gentle, loving, thoughtful communication. Remember that often a glance, a wink, a nod, or a touch will say more than words. A sense of humor and good listening are also vital parts of good communication.

5. *Fifth, study the scriptures.* They offer one of the best sources we have to keep in touch with the Spirit of the Lord. One of the ways I have gained my sure knowledge that Jesus is the Christ is through my study of the scriptures. President Russell M. Nelson has asked members of the Church to prayerfully study the Book of Mormon every day.

6. *Sixth, we must schedule time on our daily calendars for sufficient rest, exercise, and relaxation* if we are to enjoy a healthy and balanced life. Good physical

appearance enhances our dignity and self-respect.

7. *Seventh, hold weekly family home evening.* We must not lose this special opportunity to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77), which will lead families to eternal life.

Satan is always working to destroy our testimonies, but he will not have the power to tempt or disturb us beyond our strength to resist when we are studying the gospel and living its commandments.

8. *My last suggestion is to pray often.* You can know the right decisions to make each day through constant, sincere prayer. When I am in tune spiritually, I find that I can balance everything in my life much more easily.

I realize that other suggestions could be added to these. However, I believe that when we focus on a few basic objectives, we are more likely to be able to manage the many demands that life makes on us. Remember, too much of anything in life can throw us off-balance. At the same time, too little of the important things can do the same thing. King Benjamin counseled

“that all these things are done in wisdom and order” (Mosiah 4:27).

Often the lack of clear direction and goals can waste away our time and energy and contribute to imbalance in our lives. Our main goal should be to seek “immortality and eternal life” (Moses 1:39). With this as our goal, why not eliminate from our lives the things that clamor for and consume our thoughts, feelings, and energies without contributing to our reaching that goal?

Just do the very best you can each day. Do the basic things and, before you realize it, your life will be full of spiritual understanding that will confirm to you that your Heavenly Father loves you. When a person knows this, then life will be full of purpose and meaning, making balance easier to maintain. ■

From an April 1987 general conference address.





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By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

What if I left?

When I first moved here, there were only two other young women in my branch. We became friends and I got to know them very well. But they stopped going to church.

One time when I went to the temple, I saw the mission president. I told him about my friends and asked what I could do to help them return to the Church. He told me to stay where I was, be strong, and pray for them.

Soon after that, I saw one of the girls, and I was so happy to see her. When I returned home that night, I prayed and felt strongly that I definitely needed to stay right where I was and keep going to church, keep going to seminary, and keep being an example to my friends. What if I left and never came back and one of my friends returned to church? Who would be their friend and help them return? Things are easier when we do them together.

Alyona,
Kharkiv Oblast, Ukraine

By Diane Thomas
Seminaries and Institutes

LIKE THE SAVIOR:

Growing in Four Important Areas

We don't know much about how Jesus Christ grew up, but Luke 2:52 gives us a big clue.

So, I'm supposed to . . . what?" I had listened. Really, I had. The instructor had checked my harness, had shown me exactly how to release the rope, had even looked me right in the eyes and said, "I will NOT let you fall!"

But at that crucial moment, there I stood: shaking and sweating, as I looked over my shoulder and down . . . way down, knowing I had to take that first step.

Off a cliff.

Now, perhaps you haven't been in my shoes, about to literally step off a cliff, hoping that you're prepared enough to rappel safely down. But you've likely been there spiritually. You know, when you've studied the scriptures on your own and you've heard teachers testify of true doctrine and principles. You feel the Spirit inviting you to act in ways that will help you become more like the Savior. You're excited to take this step and show the Lord how committed you are to His gospel.

Then you think, "How do I do that?"

And what seemed so clear and doable just a moment ago drops away. There you are, standing at the edge of a spiritual cliff, not sure if you have the right equipment or preparation to act on the truth you've received.

To become like Jesus Christ: How do you *do* that?

Start at the Beginning

The Savior began His mortal life the same way you and I did: as an infant. And in time, like us, Jesus began to grow up (see Doctrine and Covenants 93:11–17). He learned how to walk, talk, and laugh. He learned how to work, read, and get along with people.

In fact, the way the Lord "grew up" is recorded in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

If we want to become like the Savior, we can follow His example.

So let's look at this pattern and see for ourselves how becoming like Jesus Christ *is* possible!



There you are, standing at the edge of a spiritual cliff, not sure if you have the right equipment or preparation to act on the truth you've received.

"Increase in wisdom"

God created our minds to have an amazing capacity to evaluate, process, and implement knowledge. Facts, figures, skills, procedures—the amount of information we can accumulate is nearly limitless!

But like the Savior, we seek to increase in *wisdom*, not just information. Wisdom is being able to correctly use information, understand our choices, and make good decisions.

"The proper use of knowledge constitutes wisdom," taught Elder James E.

Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹ He also explained how the Savior gained wisdom: "He garnered knowledge by study, and gained wisdom by prayer, thought, and effort."² Alma taught his son Helaman, "O, remember, my son, and learn *wisdom* in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God" (Alma 37:35; emphasis added). Think about it: Faith, study, and obedience enhance our ability to obtain knowledge and increase in wisdom!

WISDOM

How could you apply the principles of faith and obedience to help you increase in wisdom? In what ways can increasing in wisdom help you become more like the Savior?

LEARN MORE:

See 2 Nephi 9:28–29; Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.

“Increase in stature”

Nephi was big and strong. He was what the scriptures call “large in stature” (1 Nephi 2:16). I am not. Nephi’s stature was designed to carry out very different activities than my stature because the Lord had different tasks for Nephi. Nephi had to build a ship, find food for his family, and help them travel through the wilderness.

Our physical bodies have what we

STATURE

In what ways is caring for your physical body related to caring for your spirit? What will you change or improve in how you care for your body?

LEARN MORE:

Read the general conference talk “Thanks Be to God” or watch the video “God’s Greatest Creation” by President Russell M. Nelson.

need in order to live in and enjoy mortal life.

Because of God’s divine design, a newborn child increases in stature over time. We don’t have to develop additional organs or limbs as we age—those elements were already created as a part of our bodies. There is no additional assembly required! But in order for us to serve God and those around us, we must maintain the health of our bodies.

Our physical bodies are the perfectly designed temple, or house, for our spirits (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19–20). President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God. It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit.”³

Our bodies might experience severe physical challenges, disabilities, and pain because we are having a mortal experience, but our Heavenly Father designed our bodies perfectly to successfully accomplish our opportunities in life.

“Increase in favor with God”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “the first great *truth* of all eternity is that God loves *us* with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength.”⁴

God loves *you*. Even when you’re having a bad hair day, He loves *you*—with all of your strengths, weaknesses, questions, and hopes. So how do you “increase in favor with God”? You show Him that you love Him back!

Jesus once told His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Your obedience demonstrates your love for God. Your willing obedience in small, daily activities can prepare you to respond, as His invitations come in the future, and accomplish even greater things.

FAVOR WITH GOD

How did the Savior demonstrate that He loved Heavenly Father? What does this teach you about Jesus? What effective, righteous action could you take today to show your love for God?

LEARN MORE:

See Mosiah 2:22, 41. “As we learn more about Jesus Christ, we develop greater faith in Him and we naturally want to follow His example.”

Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 87.

“Increase in favor with man”

Surprise! Having the most social media followers does *not* mean you have “favor with man.”

Jesus demonstrated a different way of influencing others—and who He allowed to influence Him. He “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

President Henry B. Eyring, Second

LEARN MORE:
Be a friend like Ammon was to King Lamoni. See Alma 17:19–18:41.

FAVOR WITH MAN

What are some ways you can be a better friend to those around you? How could following the Savior’s example of “going about doing good” increase your righteous influence with others?

Counselor in the First Presidency, once said, “I can still remember, as if it were today, friends who touched my life for good long ago. They are gone, but the memory of their love, example, faith, and testimony still lifts me.”⁵

You can increase your influence by being a friend who touches lives for good! *For the Strength of Youth* teaches you how: “Show genuine interest in others; smile and let them know you care about them. Treat everyone with kindness and respect, and refrain from judging and criticizing those around you . . . Make a special effort to be a friend to those who are shy or lonely, have special needs, or do not feel included.”⁶

Think about the individuals you honestly admire and respect—the ones you *favor*. What characteristics have they developed that remind you of Jesus Christ? Because as good as our friends may be, our very best Friend is Jesus Christ, and His example is the one we want to follow!

It’s All Connected

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). As you follow the Savior’s pattern of growth, you’ll find that the elements work together perfectly, and you *will* become more like Him. Your mind, body, and spirit will work together for your good, and you will be able to bless the lives of many others and “serve [God] with all your heart, might, mind and strength”! (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2). ■

NOTES

1. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 90.
2. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 112.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “We Are Children of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 127.
5. Henry B. Eyring, “True Friends,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2002, 29.
6. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 16.



By Kuinini Manumua

When I was a freshman in high school, the weightlifting coach asked me to join weightlifting.

“Mmm . . . no thanks,” I said. “Not my thing.”

But he kept at it. For weeks.

Finally, I tried it out. He was right: I really liked weightlifting. It was definitely weird at first; my body had never done anything like it before. But I grew to love the feeling of working out. I also loved my teammates and the competitions. And I started doing really well!

Now weightlifting is a huge part of my life. I practice every day for at least two or three hours, doing back squats, clean and jerks, and snatches. (And if you don't know what any of those things are, don't worry—neither did I!)

Like many things, weightlifting takes time and patience, and sometimes that can be difficult. Luckily, my family is always right there encouraging me, even when I complain about how sore I am (which is often). My dad always has



A WEIGHTLIFTER'S GUIDE TO STANDING

One scripture can make a big difference—even in weightlifting competitions.

ice packs and pep talks ready for me when I get home from practice. And my mom always sacrifices so I can go to competitions.

A few years ago, I went to one of those competitions in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. I was excited to compete against weightlifters from all over the country, but I was a little worried about being so far away from my family. To make it easier, my mom promised to text me scriptures and thoughtful messages every day.

The night before the competition, some kids threw a party. I thought it would be cool to go, so my roommate and I went to check it out. But right away I knew it wasn't my kind of party. There were teenagers drinking, smoking, saying bad words, and dancing inappropriately. I knew I shouldn't be there, but I was worried what my roommate might think. Or what the other competitors might think.

But then something popped into my head:

"Stand ye in holy places."

It was from my favorite scripture, and one my mom had sent me that morning: Doctrine and Covenants 87:8: "Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen."

I don't know why my mom sent me that scripture that day, but it's one I've loved my entire life. I've had it memorized since I was eight, and again and again it has reminded me to have courage, be obedient, and stand for what I believe in.

"Stand ye in holy places."

"I'm gonna go," I said to my roommate. I explained about the scripture my mom had sent me that morning. "This is not a place I should be standing."

My roommate told me she didn't want to be there, either. She was uncomfortable too but hadn't wanted to leave by herself and be seen as a loser. She thanked me for saying something, and we left.

The next morning, we found out that soon after we left, the kids who were at the party were caught and eliminated from the competition for drinking and doing drugs.

If I hadn't been prompted to remember my mom's verse, I might've been disqualified from the competition too. I ended up winning first place, so I'm really grateful I got to compete. (I think I thank my mom every single day for texting me.)

Winning a weightlifting competition is a pretty obvious and immediate blessing from keeping the commandments. But Doctrine and Covenants 87:8 doesn't say, "Stand ye in holy places so you can win weightlifting competitions." And John 14:15 doesn't say, "If you want immediate blessings, keep my commandments." The Lord blesses us because He loves us. And we try to be holy and obedient because we trust and love the Lord. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

STRONG



IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

JOHN 14:15



Young Women General President Sister Bonnie H. Cordon (center), Sister Michelle D. Craig, First Counselor (left), and Sister Becky Craven, Second Counselor (right).



Young Men General President Stephen W. Owen (center), Brother Douglas D. Holmes, First Counselor (left), and Brother M. Joseph Brough, Second Counselor (right).

IF YE LOVE ME

By the Young Women General Presidency

The 2019 annual youth theme is a call to action—a personal invitation from our Savior. Are you all in? Do you love Him? Are you willing to follow in His footsteps?

Our Savior Jesus Christ did something for us that we couldn't possibly do for ourselves. And what does He ask in return? He asks that we keep His commandments so we may be blessed to always have His Spirit to be with us (see Moroni 4:3).

The commandments are a gift of love. The Savior said simply, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," but *why*? Because He loves YOU! He wants *you* to be happy. He wants *your* life to be full of joy and endless possibilities. He wants *you* to be safe and protected from the evils of the world. He wants to pour blessings upon *you* that are so great "that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3 Nephi 24:10).

He wants *you* to return and live with Him again and be a partaker of *all* of Heavenly Father's promised blessings.

Always remember how much Heavenly Father loves His children. He has perfect love for you. You can show your love for Him by keeping His commandments. Your righteous actions will bring tremendous blessings to you and to those around you.

As our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, said: "We need you with us in the youth battalion of the Lord. It just won't be the same without you!" He invited you to "stand out [and] be different from the world" by living the standards in *For the Strength of Youth* and by keeping the commandments—to "look like, sound like, act like, and dress like a true disciple of Jesus Christ" ("Hope of Israel" [worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018], 8, HopeOfIsrael.Ids.org).

As you strive to obey the Lord and His



prophets, the power of the Holy Ghost will fill you with God's love and testify to you of your divine identity as a son or daughter of God. Those blessings grow as you strive to live righteously. The Lord and the prophet trust you. They love you. We promise that great confidence, self-assurance, and comfort come when you obey and keep the commandments.

KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

By the Young Men General Presidency

Have you ever thought, "How can I show Heavenly Father that I really want Him to answer my prayers and bless me?" The Savior Jesus Christ gave us a key when He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

In other words, we show our love to Heavenly Father by keeping His commandments.

Sometimes the answers to our prayers don't come when or how we expect, and we may be tempted to give up or stop being obedient. But if we are patient and listen, the Lord will answer in His own time and way. He always answers sincere prayers. He always blesses us for our obedience (see Mosiah 2:21–24).

The world teaches that love contains no responsibilities. But the opposite is actually true. Our love for God is demonstrated by our willingness and diligence in keeping His commandments.

The Savior taught, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The prophet Alma further declared, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). And through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord taught, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we

obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21).

Happiness, blessings, and guidance come through obedience. Heavenly Father wants you to be happy and free because He loves you, and that is why He gives commandments. To find the peace not found in this world, we must learn that submitting to Heavenly Father's will is the only way to happiness.

Heavenly Father wants you to find eternal happiness. His prophets want you to find joy beyond measure. We want you to find the peace we have found in following the Savior. Walk the path that He has shown (see "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220). Choose to be obedient. Your willing obedience will lead to true freedom and happiness. ■



IF WE LOVE HIM

2019 Mutual Theme Song

Words and Music by Nik Day

Energetically ♩ = 96-108

F Gm Dm B♭

5

1. Love is more than just a word; It's more than just a feel - ing in our souls.
2. He has gi - ven us di - rec - tion So that He can bless us with His grace.

F Gm Dm

8

— Love is why He came to earth, To be the hope we
— As we show Him that we love Him, Fol - low what He

B♭ F Gm

11

turn to When we feel a - lone. — We can love — like He loves
says, We'll be for - ev - er — changed. —

Dm B♭ F

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This notice must appear on each copy made.

14

— us — When we walk in His foot - steps. — If we love,

Gm Dm B \flat

17

— if we love — Him, — we will show — Him. —

F Gm Dm

20

⌘

We'll go — and serve our neigh - bor with an o - pen heart, Find

B \flat F Gm 7

23

— the hea - vy hands and try to lift them up, Live — the way He lived and do the

F B \flat F

26

things He taught if we love — Him. — If we love — Him. — If we love

26 Gm⁷ F B^b

29 1. — Him. — 2. 3. Him. —

29 F Gm Dm B^b F

34 To Coda ☉

If we love — Him. — When we love, —

34 Gm⁷ Dm⁷ B^b C

38 e - very - thing chang - es. — His — love sus - tains — us. — So we'll take

38 Dm B^b F C

42

— all the love — that He gave us, — That He gave — us, — And go

Dm C7

45

— and serve our neigh - bor with an o - pen heart, Find — the hea - vy hands and try to

F Gm Dm

48

lift them up, Live — the way he lived and do the things He taught if we love — Him. —

Bb F Gm Dm

52 D.S. al Coda

We'll go —

53 CODA rit.

Bb F Gm Dm Bb

rit.



Born in **American Fork, Utah,** on January 21, 1945

Worked as a **lawyer**



Sustained a member of the **Quorum of the Twelve Apostles** in April 2008

At 13, he helped after his mother's surgery by **baking bread.**



He kept doing so until he left for college.

Married Katherine Jacob in 1968 in the **Salt Lake Temple**



Has **5 children** and **16 grandchildren**



THE LAST WORD

The Sacrament and Becoming More Christlike

By **Elder D. Todd Christofferson**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The symbolism of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is beautiful to contemplate. The bread and water represent the flesh and blood of Him who is the Bread of Life and the Living Water (see John 4:10), poignantly reminding us of the price He paid to redeem us. As the bread is broken, we remember the Savior's torn flesh. As we drink the water, we think of the blood He shed in Gethsemane and on the cross and its sanctifying power (see Moses 6:60).

But figuratively eating His flesh and drinking His blood has a further meaning, and that is to internalize the qualities and character of Christ. . . . As we partake of the sacramental bread and water each week, we would do well to consider how fully and completely we must incorporate His character and the pattern of His sinless life into our life and being. Jesus could not have atoned for the sins of others unless

He Himself was sinless. Since justice had no claim on Him, He could offer Himself in our place to satisfy justice and then extend mercy. . . .

Partaking of the Savior's flesh and drinking His blood means to put out of our lives anything inconsistent with a Christlike character and to make His attributes our own. This is the larger meaning of repentance: not only a turning away from past sin but also "a turning of the heart and will to God" going forward (see Bible Dictionary, "Repentance"). God will show us our flaws and failings, but He will also help us turn weakness into strength (see Ether 12:27). If we sincerely ask, "What lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20) He will not leave us to guess, but in love He will answer for the sake of our happiness. And He will give us hope. ■

From an October 2017 general conference address.



IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY
COMMANDMENTS
JOHN 14:15

YOUNG ADULTS

**OVERWHELMED
WITH LIFE?**

*This month's section
is all about helping you improve
your emotional and
mental health.*

42



JOSEPH SMITH
**RECOLLECTIONS OF THE
PROPHET'S GOODNESS
AND CHARACTER**

28

YOUTH
**FOUR WAYS TO
BE LIKE JESUS CHRIST**

52

NEW MUTUAL THEME
**AN INVITATION FROM
THE SAVIOR**

58



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

the Friend



**A new
children's
section for
YOU!**



By President
Russell M. Nelson

Learn about Jesus

God sent His Son Jesus Christ to help us.
You can have power from Jesus Christ when you do these things:



Study “The Living Christ.”
It is a testimony about Jesus Christ from the prophets and apostles.



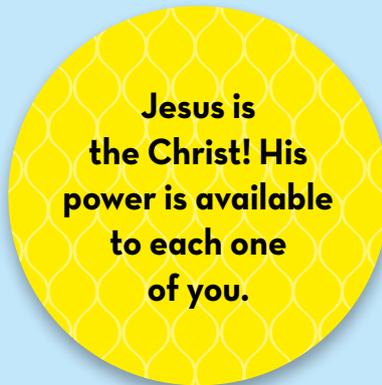
Learn about the Savior.
Several years ago I read and underlined *every verse* in the scriptures about Jesus Christ. When I finished, I told my wife, “I am a different man!”



Be willing to stand out,
speak up, and be different from the people of the world.



Try to look to Him in *every* thought (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:36). When you do, your doubts and fears will flee.



Make sacred covenants
and keep them.

From “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2017, 39–42.

HELP OUR GARDEN GROW!

When Jesus was on the earth, He was always kind to others. When we are kind, we're following Him. Just as many different plants, flowers, and vegetables grow in gardens, we can be kind in many different ways.

This year we're planting a kindness garden! When you show kindness to someone, write it on a cutout shape of a flower, cactus, leaf, plant, vegetable, or even a helpful garden bug! Then send it to us. The back cover will tell you how. Or make your own kindness garden and send us a photo of you "working" in it!

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

*John 15:12

Primary children from **Osun State, Nigeria**, made flowers to add to the kindness garden!



Testimony Plants

What does it even mean to have a testimony?

By Maryssa Dennis

Church Magazines
Based on a true story

Elisa walked into Primary and sat by her friend Armando.

“Welcome!” Sister Russo said. “Let’s start with a song.”

Elisa sang with her class. “Faith is like a little seed: if planted, it will grow” (*Children’s Songbook*, 96).

Sister Russo passed out paper and crayons. “Think about what we sang,” she said. “When you plant your seed of faith, it grows into a testimony. Now draw what your testimony would look like if it were a plant.”

Elisa stared at her blank paper. Everyone else started to draw. Elisa peeked at Armando’s drawing. His plant had a straight stem with lots of leaves. It looked like the basil growing on her apartment balcony. Maybe that’s what her testimony looked like too! She gripped her crayon and drew one like his.

“Please open your scriptures to Alma 32,” Sister Russo said.

They read about planting a seed in your heart and feeling it grow. Elisa looked at her testimony plant. *Did* she have a testimony? What did that even mean? She wanted to ask but felt too shy.

When class ended, Sister Russo came over to Elisa.

“You seem distracted. Is anything wrong?” Sister Russo asked.

Elisa glanced down at her drawing again. “I’m not



sure I have a testimony. I don’t really know what that means.”

Sister Russo gave Elisa a kind smile.

“That’s OK. Do you remember what faith is?”

Elisa nodded. “Believing in something we can’t see?”

“That’s right!” Sister Russo said.

“What are some things you believe in?”

That was an easy question. “I believe in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I know They love me.”

Sister Russo smiled. “You just shared your testimony! A testimony is what you believe about the gospel.”

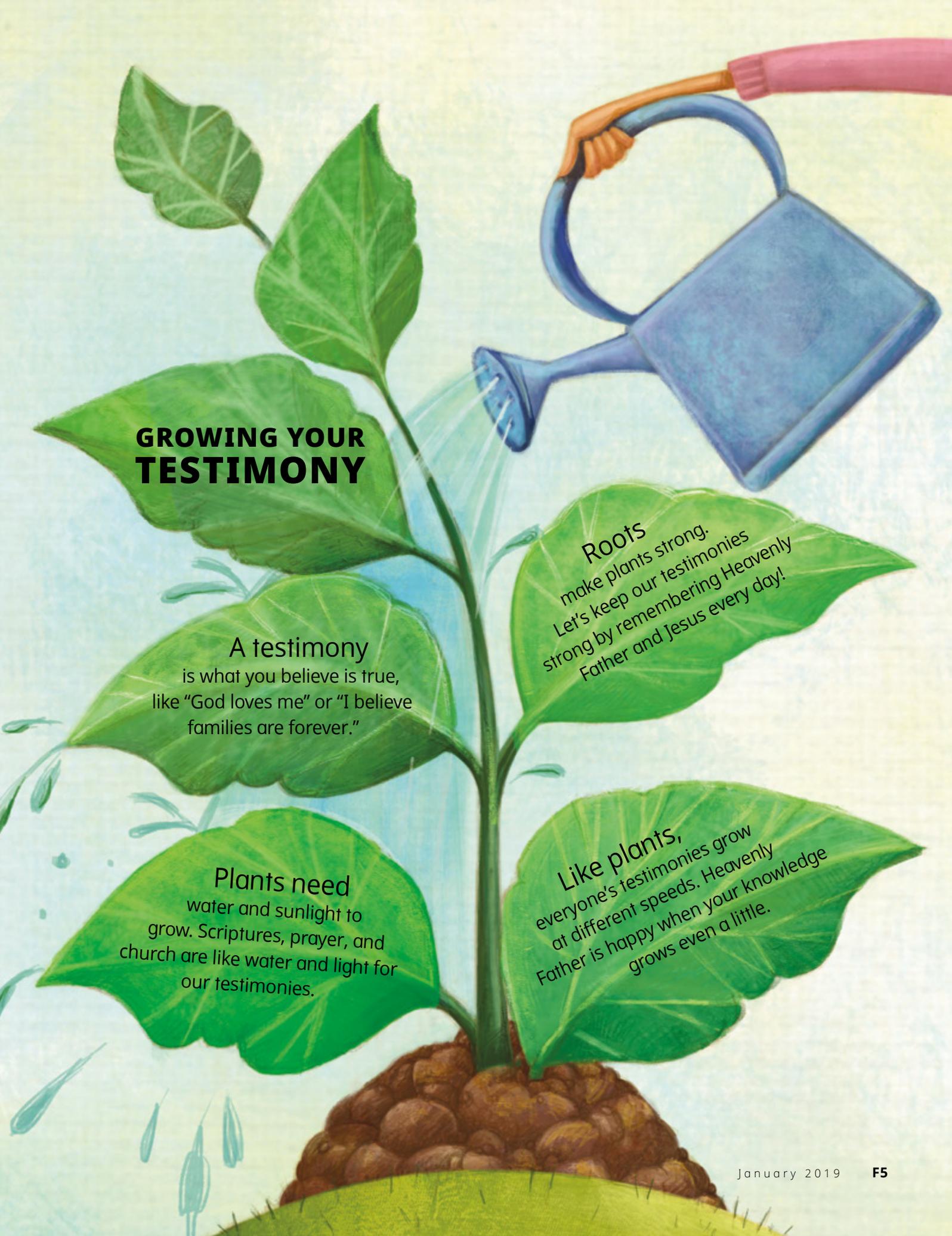
Elisa thought about it. “So I already have a testimony?”

“Yes!” Sister Russo held up her scriptures. “And remember what we read today? You nourish the seed by doing things like coming to church. Then your testimony will grow stronger.”

Elisa felt like she understood. “So that’s why we drew our testimonies as plants?”

“Exactly. Because plants grow little by little,” Sister Russo said. “Testimonies are the same way. They usually don’t come all at once. They grow a little at a time.”

Elisa felt better about the plant she had drawn. When she got home, she wrote “My Testimony Plant” next to her drawing. She hung it up by her bed. She knew her testimony was already growing. And she wanted to keep following Jesus so it could grow even bigger! ●



GROWING YOUR TESTIMONY

A testimony is what you believe is true, like "God loves me" or "I believe families are forever."

Plants need water and sunlight to grow. Scriptures, prayer, and church are like water and light for our testimonies.

Roots make plants strong. Let's keep our testimonies strong by remembering Heavenly Father and Jesus every day!

Like plants, everyone's testimonies grow at different speeds. Heavenly Father is happy when your knowledge grows even a little.

Seeds of Faith

The prophet Alma compared growing a testimony to planting a seed (see Alma 32). When you pray, read the scriptures, and help others, your faith will grow! Try this experiment to watch a seed sprout.

What You Will Need:



dry bean
(any kind)



paper towels
or tissues



clear, sealable
plastic bag

- 1 Place wet paper towels or tissues inside a plastic bag. Place the bean on top and seal the bag.
- 2 Leave the bag in a sunny place. After about a week, the bean should begin to sprout!
- 3 Let the plant keep growing for a while. When you see roots, plant the sprout in soil. Give it water and sunlight and see how big it grows!



Plant Match

Everyone's testimony grows differently. Can you match each plant with its shadow?



Hello
from the
Philippines!



I'm Paolo.

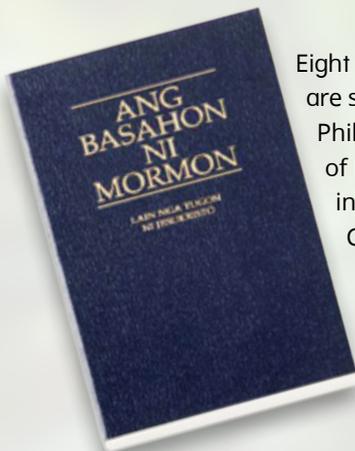
And
I'm Margo.



About a hundred million people live in the Philippines, along with a lot of interesting animals!



This year we're traveling around the world to learn about children of God. Join us as we visit the Philippines!



Eight major languages are spoken in the Philippines. This Book of Mormon is printed in a language called Cebuano.



How do you get to church? Some Filipino families ride jeepneys to get around!



This is a CTR ring in a Filipino language called Tagalog. Here's how to say "choose the right": *piliin ang tama.*

These are the temples in Cebu City and Manila. And guess what? A second temple is being built in Manila! And temples will also be built in two more cities, Urdaneta and Cagayan de Oro.



Filipino children play a game called *luksong tinik*, or "jumping over thorns." One or two children sit on the floor and stack their feet and hands on top of each other. Then other kids try to jump over without touching the stack.

Meet some of our friends from the Philippines!



"I always look forward to our evening family scripture reading. I feel good every time I read the scriptures."
Lanneah D., age 10, Central Luzon, Philippines



"When I was first learning to read, I felt sad because I could not read fast. My parents and sister helped me, and now I'm excited to read the scriptures."
Acumen D., age 7, Central Luzon, Philippines

Are you from the Philippines? Write to us! We'd love to hear from you!

Thanks for exploring the Philippines with us! See you next time!



The ICE-CANDY Mission Fund

By Mckenna Clarke

Based on a true story



“Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

Jared walked home from church in the hot sunshine with Mom and Dad. He thought about his Primary lesson. Since he couldn't hear very well, Jared had to pay close attention to the pictures his teacher showed and the words she wrote on the board.

That day they had learned that Jesus asked the disciples to be missionaries. Jared wondered what he could do to share the gospel, like Jesus asked. He knew he couldn't serve a mission yet. Then he had a great idea. Maybe he could start saving money for it!

When he got home, Jared ran right past Umber, his pet goat, and into the house. He got a big plastic jar and carefully cut a hole in the top. He wrote “Mission Fund” on the side. Then he went to his room and got his money from under his bed. One by one he dropped in each coin. But all his coins barely covered the bottom of the jar. How could he earn more money?

Jared thought and thought. He looked out the window at the bright sun. It was so hot in the Philippines. Jared and his friends ate coconut ice candy almost every afternoon after school. “That's it!” he thought. Maybe he



could make ice candy and sell it to other people who wanted to cool down.

Jared ran to find Mom. “Can you show me how to make ice candy?” Jared signed. They used sign language, a language where you talk with your hands. Mom smiled and nodded.

The next day, Jared and Mom walked to the big outdoor market and bought all the supplies. When they got home, Jared took out a big bowl and mixed coconut milk, condensed milk, vanilla, and shredded coconut. Mom and Jared used a funnel to pour the mix into small bags. They put all the bags in the freezer. “Great job!” Mom signed.

The ice candy took a long time to freeze. But the next day after school, it was finally ready! Jared climbed on a chair and got the white cooler off the top of the fridge. He put some towels in the bottom of the cooler and

layered the ice candy on top. He couldn’t wait to sell it.

Jared ran outside into the dusty street. His friends were playing with homemade kites and throwing their flip-flops at a tin can to knock it over.

At the side of the road, he set up a table with a big sign that said, “Ice Candy, 5 pesos.” His friend Jhonell ran over and pointed at the cooler. He gave Jared a five-peso coin, and Jared gave him some ice candy. They high-fived.

Soon more of Jared’s friends came to buy ice candy too. A few hours later when Mom called Jared for dinner, there were only a few ice candies left.

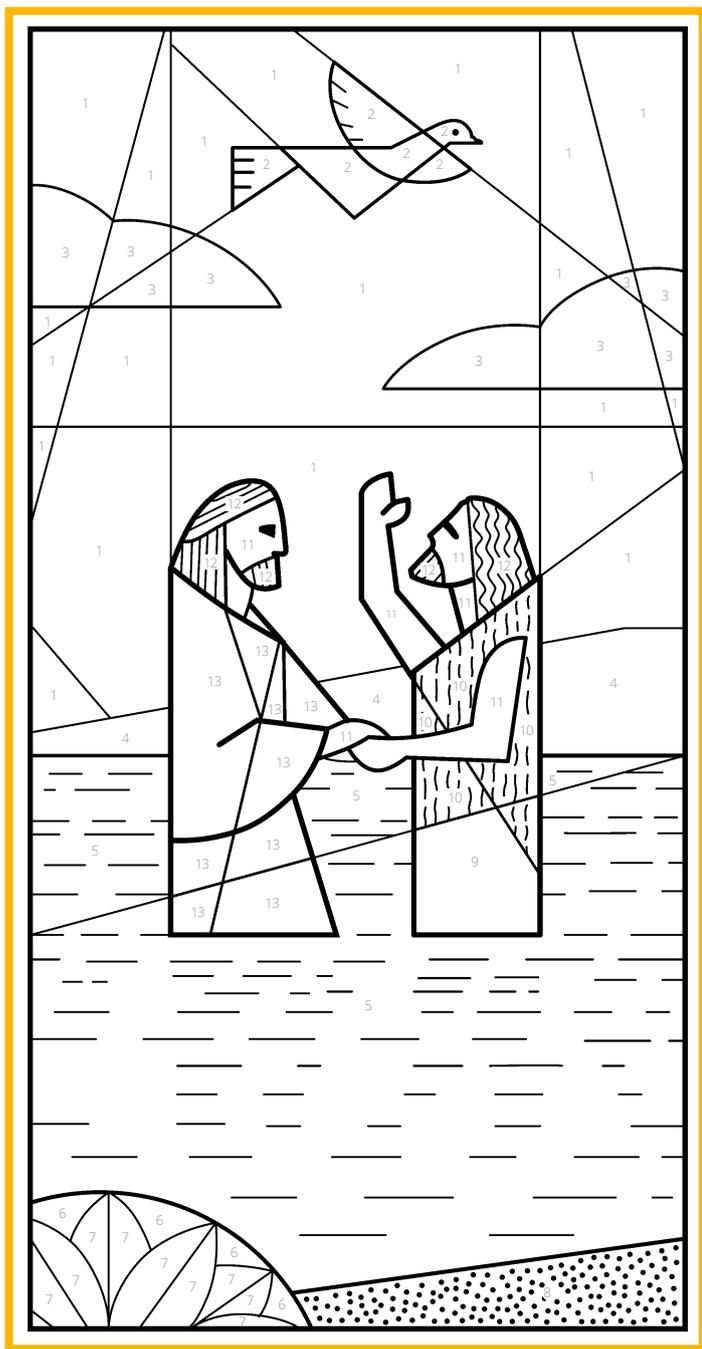
Jared picked up the almost-empty cooler and the coins. In one of his pockets, he put some of the coins for his tithing. He put the rest of the coins into his other pocket. He couldn’t wait to see his mission-fund bank fill up.

At home he dropped his mission-fund coins onto the pile at the bottom of the jar. There was still so much more space! But Jared felt warm inside as he thought about serving a mission someday. He decided that he would sell ice candy every day until his jar was full. It felt so good to earn money so he could be a missionary, as Jesus asked him to do. ●

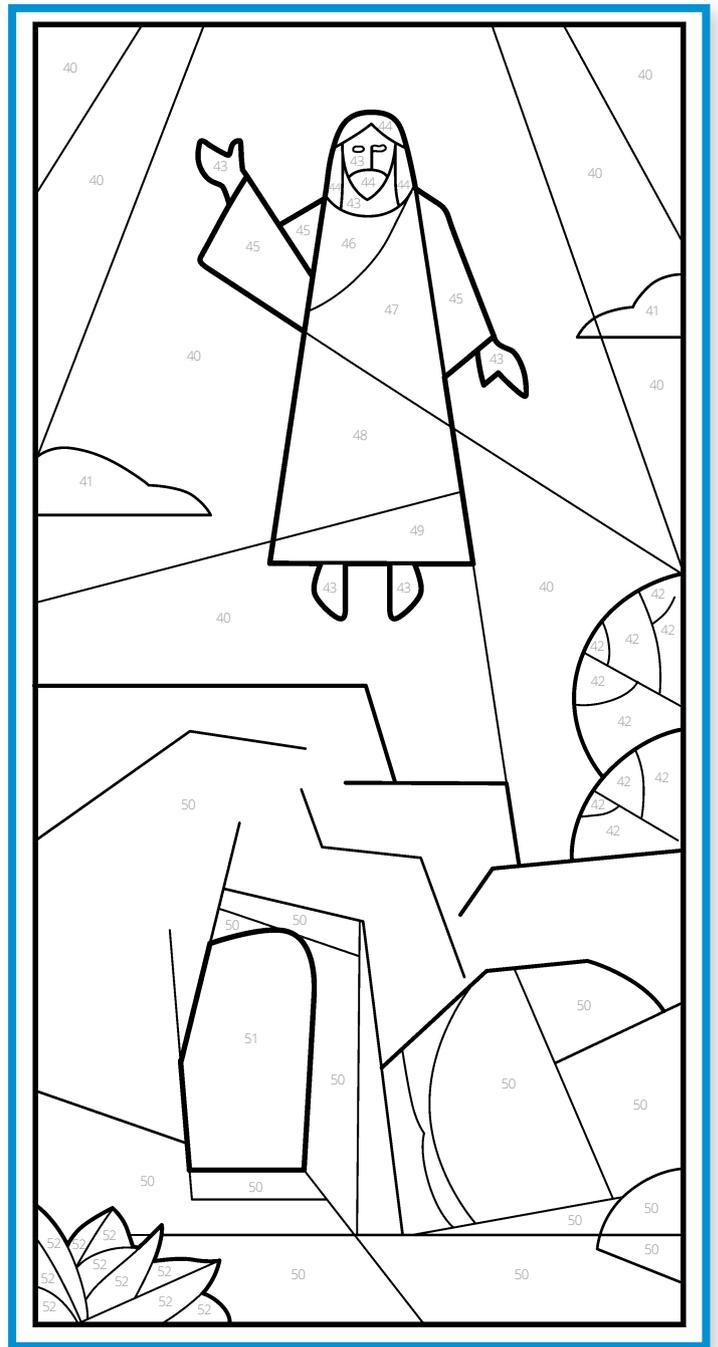
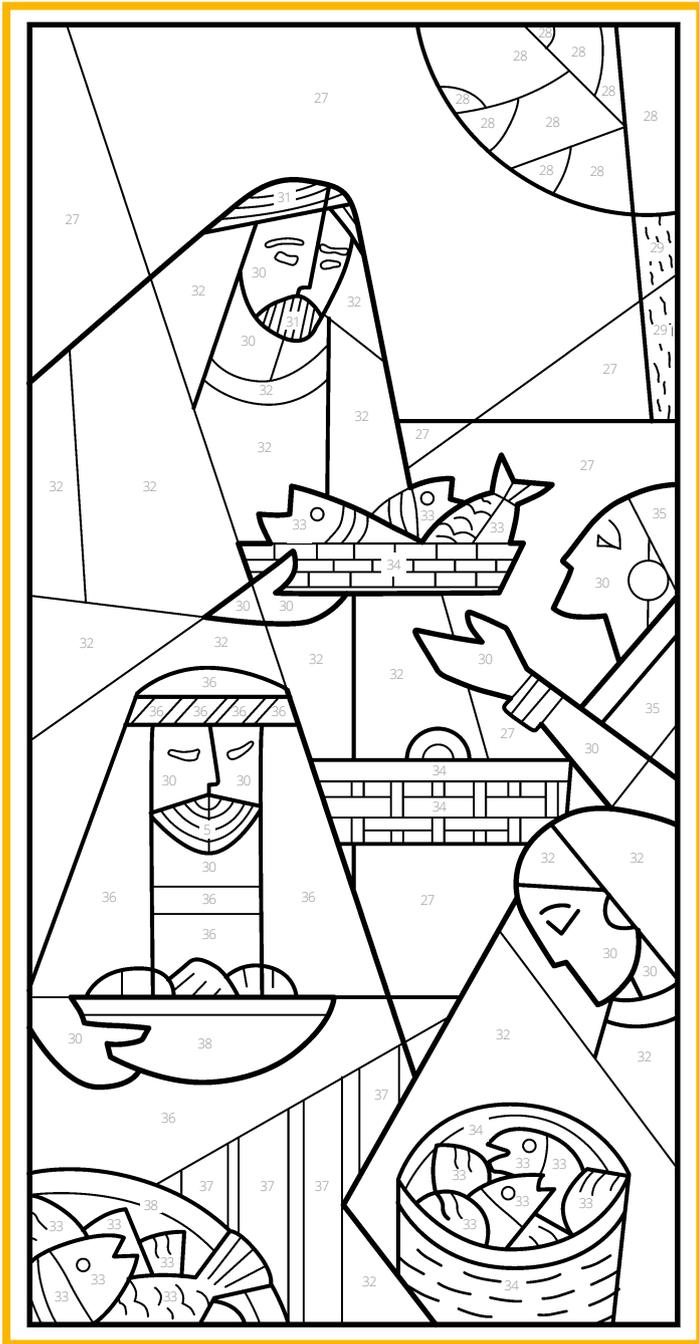
The author served as a missionary in the Philippines and now lives in Virginia, USA.



New Testament Reading Chart



This year you can get to know Jesus more and more as you read the New Testament!
Each week, you can get ready for your Primary lesson by reading the verses listed on page F14. Color in the spaces after you read.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JORGE COCCO SANT'ANGELO

NEW TESTAMENT READING CHART

These scriptures go along with the weekly reading for the 2019 curriculum.

1. Matthew 25:1-4, 8-13

2. Luke 1:30-38

3. Luke 2:40-49, 52

4. John 1:1-5

5. Matthew 3:11-17

6. Matthew 4:1-10

7. John 3:1-5, 14-17

8. Matthew 5:14-16

9. Matthew 6:5-8

10. Mark 4:35-41

11. Matthew 12:6-13

12. Matthew 13:1-9

13. Matthew 14:22-31

14. Matthew 16:13-19

15. Matthew 17:14-20

16. John 20:10-18

17. Luke 10:30-37

18. John 10:9-18

19. Luke 17:11-19

20. Mark 10:13-22

21. Matthew 21:12-17

22. Matthew 25:31-40

23. John 13:33-35

24. Mark 14:22-24

25. Luke 23:32-34, 39-43

26. John 20:24-29

27. Acts 9:1-6, 18-20

28. Acts 3:1-10

29. Acts 12:5-11

30. Acts 17:22-31

31. Acts 26:12-20

32. Romans 6:3-11

33. Romans 10:13-17

34. 1 Corinthians 2:11-14

35. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

36. 1 Corinthians 15:13-22

37. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

38. 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

39. Galatians 6:1-10

40. Ephesians 2:4-10

41. Ephesians 6:10-18

42. Colossians 2:2-7

43. 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13

44. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

45. Hebrews 1:2-10

46. Hebrews 7:1-6

47. James 3:1-10

48. 1 Peter 3:12-18

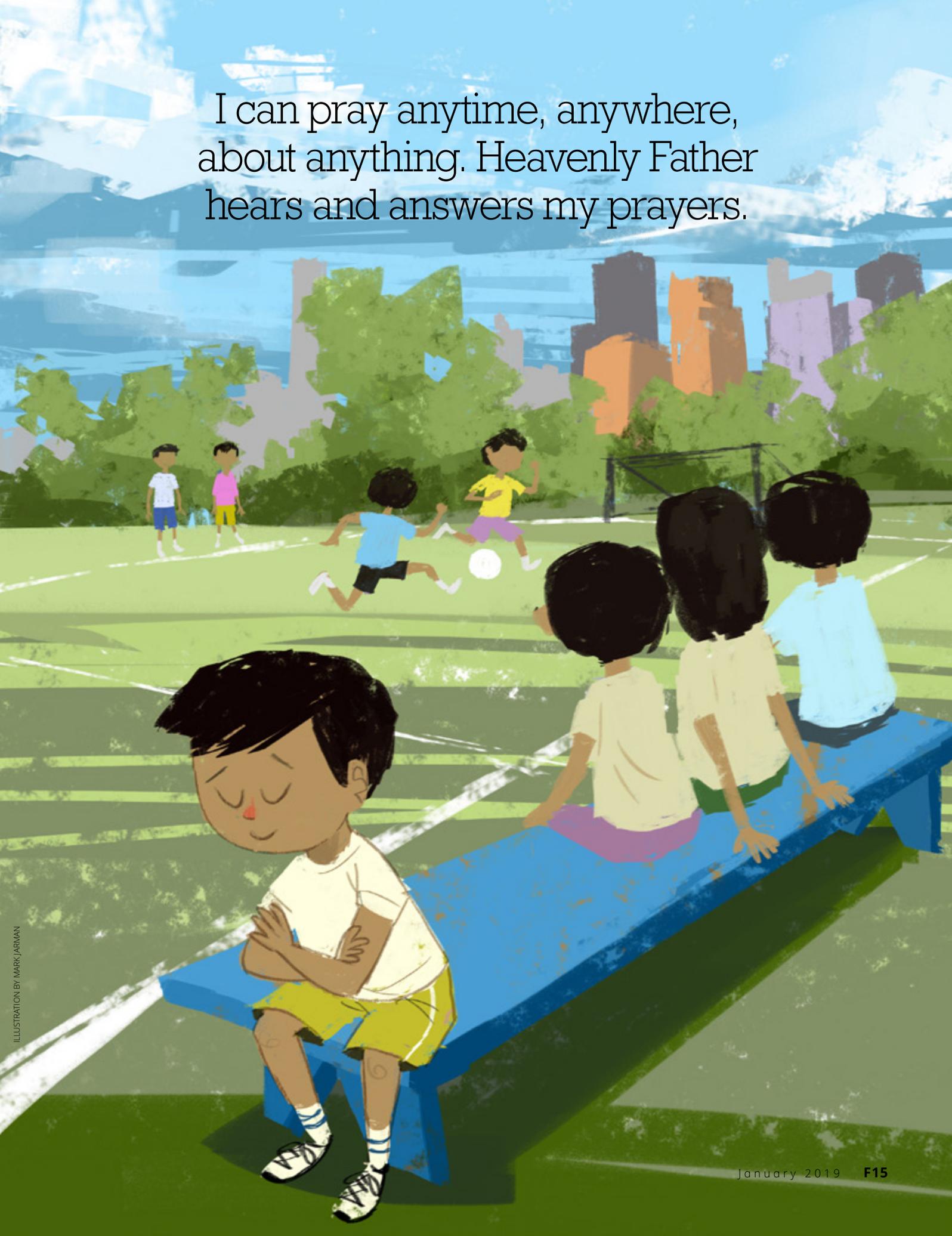
49. 1 John 5:2-5

50. Revelation 5:1-10

51. Luke 2:4-12

52. Revelation 12:7-11

I can pray anytime, anywhere,
about anything. Heavenly Father
hears and answers my prayers.



President Ballard Visits Texas, USA

The Apostles travel around the world to minister to people and teach them about Jesus Christ.

When a big storm called Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, Texas, USA, many people's homes were flooded or destroyed. President M. Russell Ballard flew there to help!



1

As soon as his plane landed, he went straight to the command center where the Church collected supplies and sent out Mormon Helping Hands volunteers.



2

Then he visited neighborhoods where many homes were flooded. Some of the streets were blocked, so he walked from house to house. He listened to people and shared Heavenly Father's love with them.



3

He met missionaries and other Church members who were helping.





4

He spoke in a devotional and three sacrament meetings so he could share Heavenly Father's love with lots of people!



Helping



Listening



Blessing



Sharing

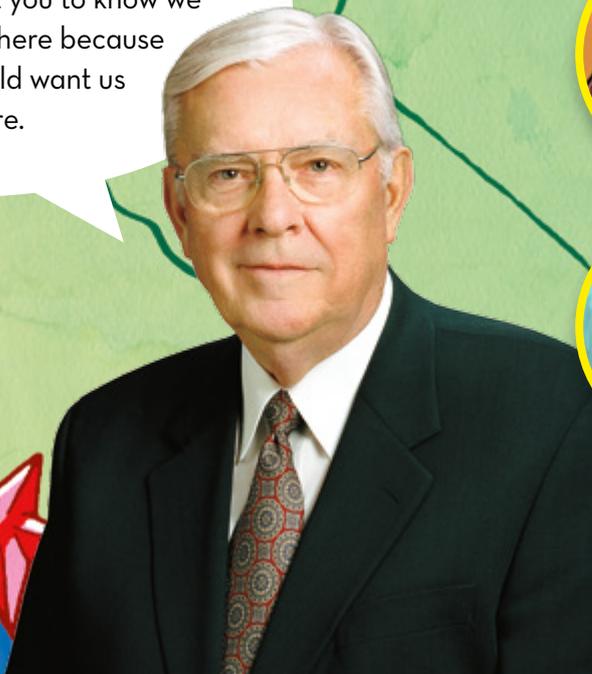


Being kind

5

When he met an elderly man whose home was damaged, President Ballard said:

I'm one of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . We want you to know we love you. And we're here because Jesus Christ would want us to be here.



How can you help someone today?

The Perfect Treasure to Share



By Eric B. Murdock
Based on a true story

“Tomorrow is very special,” Diego’s teacher said. “We’re going to have Show and Tell!”

Diego smiled. He loved Show and Tell! He couldn’t wait to show his friends something special.

After school, Diego told Mama the great news.

“What should I take?” he asked.

“Something special to you,” Mama said.

“I can bring Lobo!”

“I don’t think we can take a dog to school,” Mama said. “But there are other special treasures you can share.”

Soon Diego’s treasure hunt began! He found a stuffed monkey. Should he take him? But Diego kept looking.

He looked behind the kitchen chairs. He looked on the bookshelf. He wouldn’t stop





until he found something just right.

Then he looked by his bed. He found the perfect thing!

Diego ran to show Mama. He held his treasure tight.

“Mama!” he said. “Look! I found the best thing.”

He held up a small picture for Mama to see. It was a picture of Jesus as a little boy. Diego felt good when he looked at the picture. He wanted his friends at school to feel good too.

“That *is* a special thing for Show

and Tell,” Mama said. “What will you tell your class about Jesus?”

“That everyone can be happy,” he said. “Because Jesus loves everyone!” ●



Jesus Learned and Grew

By Marissa Widdison
Church Magazines

Jesus was born as a little baby. I was a baby once too!



Mary and Joseph helped take care of Jesus. Who helps me?

Jesus grew in the same ways I am growing. He grew in *wisdom*. That means He learned new things.





He grew in *stature*. That means His body got bigger.

He grew in favor *with God*. That means He learned about Heavenly Father. He learned to pray. He read the scriptures.



He grew in favor *with man*. That means He made new friends. He was kind to others. He helped his family.



I can help my mind and body grow. I can learn to follow God.
I can be a good friend. I will grow in good ways, as Jesus did! ●

Read about Jesus as a child in Luke 2:40–52.

I Am Growing



ILLUSTRATION BY APRYL STOTT

Dear Parents

We're happy to introduce the new *Friend!* This magazine will come along with your *Liahona*. If you don't have children in your home, we hope you'll share it with a grandchild, neighbor, or Primary child.

Here's what you'll find in the new *Friend* magazine:

- More than 20 pages of stories, songs, and activities
- New paper that makes it easy to color, draw, and cut
- A message from the First Presidency
- Stories about the global ministry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
- Stories about children from around the world
- Resources for family home evening and family scripture study

We'd love to hear your thoughts about:

- Your family's experiences using the new *Friend*.
- Your experiences sharing it with others.
- Any suggestions for improvement.

New *Friend*

**50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2393
Salt Lake City, UT 84105 USA
liahona@ldschurch.org**

With love,
The *Friend*

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- F15** Bright Idea Poster: Prayer
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President Ballard Visits Texas, USA
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- F23** Coloring Page: I Am Growing



Find the Liahona hidden inside!

ON THE *FRIEND* COVER
Illustrations by Melissa Manwill