

Ensign

A photograph of a man in a grey coat speaking to a group of people in a room. The man is standing in the center, looking to the right. He is wearing a white shirt, a dark tie, and a grey coat. In the background, there are other people, including a man in a blue suit on the left and a man in a dark coat on the right. In the foreground, there is a woman with blonde hair, seen from the back, looking towards the speaker. On a table in the foreground, there is a lit candle in a holder, a quill pen, and some books.

COVER STORY:
A New View of the
Prophet Joseph, p. 40

Dating versus
Hanging Out, p. 10

Worldwide
Leadership Training
Meeting, p. 81



House of Light, by David Koch

The Logan Utah Temple, as all temples, becomes a house of light because of priesthood ordinances performed there. “For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit. . . . And the Spirit giveth light to every man . . . that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. . . . And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you” (D&C 84:45–46, 48).

Ensign



10 Dating versus Hanging Out



22 Modesty Matters



34 The Profile of a Prophet

- 2 **FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE**
Voice of the Spirit
President James E. Faust
- 7 Hymn *Mary Margaret Hawkins*
- 8 The Experiment *Karen Case Ho-Ching*
- 10 Dating versus Hanging Out
Elder Dallin H. Oaks
- 17 Dating: He Says, She Says
Kimberly Webb
- 22 Modesty Matters
- 27 Family Home Evening: For the Fun of It
- 30 **LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT**
True Friendship and Self-Respect
Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen
- 34 **GOSPEL CLASSICS**
The Profile of a Prophet
President Hugh B. Brown
- 40 Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration
- 45 Faith, Hope, and Elijah *Joyce Fink*
- 48 **THE FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL**
The Fall of Adam and Eve
- 50 A Chilly Morning in Queens
Amie Jane Leavitt
- 53 Six Ways to Keep Your Marriage Strong
Wendi Lyn Jensen
- 56 **LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT**
Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice
Elder David F. Evans
- 58 A Greater Love *Eve Burch*
- 61 **VISITING TEACHING MESSAGE**
Exercising Charity and Nurturing
Those in Need
- 62 **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**
How can family members avoid conflict
over division of assets when a loved
one dies?
- 65 **LATTER-DAY SAINT VOICES**



81 Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: Supporting the Family

- 70 **RANDOM SAMPLER**
- 72 **NEWS OF THE CHURCH**
- 81 **WORLDWIDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING MEETING: SUPPORTING THE FAMILY**
- 82 Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan
Elder David A. Bednar
- 88 A Solemn Responsibility to Love and Care for Each Other *Elder L. Tom Perry*
- 93 Parents Have a Sacred Duty
Bonnie D. Parkin
- 98 Heavenly Homes, Forever Families
President Thomas S. Monson
- 104 The Family: A Proclamation to the World

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Voice of the Spirit

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

I feel deeply my responsibility to teach sacred things. I am so aware that the world is changing and will be vastly different from the one I have known. Values have shifted. Basic decency and respect for good things are eroding. A moral blackness is settling in. In many ways our young people are the hope of the future, like valuable diamonds that shine better against a dark background.

I turn to a scriptural text found in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Give ear to the voice of the living God.”¹ The voice of the Spirit is available to all. The Lord said, “The Spirit enlighteneth every man [and every woman] . . . that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.” He further said that “every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.”² Some people are seeking to find the abundant life. Paul made it clear that it is “the spirit [that] giveth life.”³ Indeed, the Savior said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”⁴

Joy Is a Gift

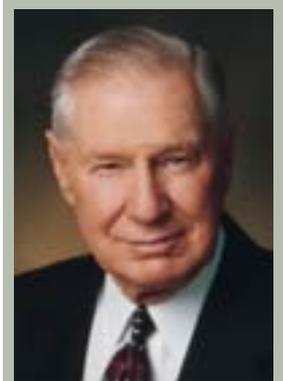
One might ask, then what are the fruits of the Spirit? Paul answered this by saying they

are “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”⁵ The joy we seek is not a temporary emotional high, but a habitual inner joy learned from long experience and trust in God. Lehi’s teaching to his son Jacob declares, “Men are, that they might have joy.”⁶ To achieve this great objective, we must “give ear to the voice of the living God.”

I wish to testify as a living witness that joy does come through listening to the Spirit, for I have experienced it. Those who live the gospel learn to live “after the manner of happiness”⁷ as did the Nephites. All over the world, in the many countries where the Church is established, members could add their testimonies to mine. Abundant evidence verifies the promise of peace, hope, love, and joy as gifts of the Spirit. Our voices join in a united petition for all of God’s children to partake of these gifts also.

Voices of the World

But we hear other voices. Paul said, “There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world”⁸ that compete with the voice of the Spirit. The



I wish to testify as a living witness that joy does come through listening to the Spirit, for I have experienced it.

Spirit's voice is ever present, but it is calm. Said Isaiah, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."⁹ The adversary tries to smother this voice with a multitude of loud, persistent, persuasive, and appealing voices:

- Murmuring voices that conjure up perceived injustices.
- Whining voices that abhor challenge and work.
- Seductive voices that offer sensual enticements.
- Soothing voices that lull us into carnal security.
- Intellectual voices that profess sophistication and superiority.
- Proud voices that rely on the arm of flesh.
- Flattering voices that puff us up with pride.
- Cynical voices that destroy hope.
- Entertaining voices that promote pleasure seeking.
- Commercial voices that tempt us to "spend money for that which is of no worth, [and our] labor for that which cannot satisfy."¹⁰
- Delirious voices that spawn the desire for a "high." I refer not to a drug- or alcohol-induced high, but to the pursuing of dangerous, death-defying experiences for nothing more than a thrill. Life, even our own, is so precious that we are accountable to the Lord for it, and we should not trifle with it. Once gone, it cannot be called back.

Bombarded with Messages

Today we are barraged by multitudes of voices telling us how to live, how to gratify our passions, how to have it all. At our fingertips we have software, databases, television channels, interactive computer modems, satellite receivers, and communications networks that suffocate us with information. There are fewer places of refuge and serenity. Our young people are bombarded with evil and wickedness like no other generation. As I contemplate this prospect, I am reminded of the poet T. S. Eliot's words: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"¹¹

It may be harder for our rising generation to be faithful, perhaps in some ways even more challenging than pulling a handcart across the plains. When someone died in the wilderness of frontier America, that person's physical remains were buried and the handcarts continued west, but the mourning survivors had hope for their loved one's eternal soul. However, when someone dies spiritually in the wilderness of sin, hope may be replaced by dread and fear for the loved one's eternal welfare.

Many in the younger generation have been conditioned by the world to want it all and to want it now. They do not want to save or work. Such self-centered, impatient desires make them susceptible to temptation. The Book of Mormon identifies four categories of enticements that Satan appeals to:

- Getting gain.
- Gaining power over the flesh.
- Gaining popularity in the eyes of the world.
- Seeking the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world.¹²

Satan's tactic is to "turn their hearts away from the truth, that they become blinded and understand not the things which are prepared for them."¹³ He creates a smoke screen that obscures our vision and diverts our attention.

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) stated: "If we are faithful in keeping the commandments of God His promises will be fulfilled to the very letter. . . . The trouble is, the adversary of men's souls blinds their minds. He throws dust, so to speak, in their eyes, and they are blinded with the things of this world."¹⁴

Hearing Righteous Voices

How are we possibly going to select which voices we will listen to and believe? The implications for us as individuals are staggering. To spiritually survive, we must do at least these four things.



*As tiny drops
of water
shape a
landscape, so our
minute-by-minute
choices shape our
character.*



First, we must exercise moral agency wisely. Amaleki tells us how we can make proper choices: “There is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh from the devil.”¹⁵ Every moment demands that we choose, over and over again, between that which comes from the Lord and that which comes from the devil. As tiny drops of water shape a landscape, so our minute-by-minute choices shape our character.

Second, we must have a purpose. The late prime minister David Ben-Gurion of Israel once made a statement about Leon Trotsky, one of the architects of the Russian Communist revolution. Trotsky, he said, was no leader. He was brilliant, but he was no leader because he had no purpose.¹⁶ Everyone in life needs to have a purpose. As members of Christ’s Church, we are to

consider the end of our salvation.¹⁷ Someone has said, “You must stand up for something, or you will fall for everything.”

The more righteous part of the Nephites had to focus their attention in order to hear the voice that preceded the Savior’s appearance among them. “They heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.”¹⁸ They heard the voice a second time and did not understand. When they heard the voice the third time, they “did open their ears to hear it; and

I suggest a simple solution for selecting the channel to which we attune ourselves: follow the voice of the Spirit. This solution is peaceful in a world enamored of that which is loud, incessant, and fast paced.

their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.”¹⁹ If we are to hearken to the voice of the Spirit, we too must open our ears, turn the eye of faith to the source of the voice, and look steadfastly towards heaven.

Third, we must strengthen our testimony. We all need to study the plan of salvation and learn of our relationship to God. As we walk by faith, we will have confirmed in our hearts spiritual experiences which will strengthen our faith and testimony.

Fourth, we must search the scriptures, which are “the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.”²⁰ The Lord also said of His word, as found in the scriptures, “For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you.”²¹

I suggest a simple solution for selecting the channel to which we attune ourselves: listen to and follow the voice of the Spirit. This is an ancient solution, even eternal, and may not be popular in a society that is always looking for something new. It requires patience in a world that demands instant gratification. This solution is quiet, peaceful, and subtle in a world enamored of that which is loud, incessant, fast paced, garish, and crude. This solution requires you to be contemplative while your peers seek physical titillation. (This may seem foolish in a time when it is not worth remembering much of the trivial tripe to which we are exposed.) This solution is one unified, consistent, age-old message in a world that quickly becomes bored in the absence of intensity, variety, and novelty. This solution requires us to walk by faith in a world governed by sight.²² With the eye of faith we are to see eternal, unseen, spiritual verities, while the masses of mankind depend solely on temporal things which can be known only through the physical senses.

We need to learn how to ponder the things of the Spirit and to respond to its promptings—to filter out the static generated by Satan. As we become attuned to the Spirit, we “shall hear a word behind [us], saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”²³ Harkening to the “voice of the living God” will give us “peace in this world, and eternal life in the

world to come.”²⁴ These are the greatest of all the gifts of God.²⁵ ■

NOTES

1. D&C 50:1.
2. D&C 84:46–47.
3. 2 Corinthians 3:6.
4. John 6:63.
5. Galatians 5:22–23.
6. 2 Nephi 2:25.
7. 2 Nephi 5:27.
8. 1 Corinthians 14:10.
9. Isaiah 32:17.
10. 2 Nephi 9:51.
11. “Choruses from ‘The Rock,’” *The Complete Poems and Plays* (1930), 96.
12. See 1 Nephi 22:23.
13. D&C 78:10.
14. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (2002), 30–31.
15. Omni 1:25.
16. See Academy of Achievement, “Interview: Shimon Peres,” Internet, <http://www.achievement.org>.
17. See D&C 46:7.
18. 3 Nephi 11:3.
19. See 3 Nephi 11:4–5.
20. D&C 68:4.
21. D&C 18:35.
22. See 2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7.
23. Isaiah 30:21.
24. D&C 59:23.
25. See D&C 14:7.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. Following are some examples:

1. Turn on a radio, and tune it to different stations. Point out how some stations come in clearly and some have static. Compare the static to voices of the world and the clear reception to being in tune with the voice of the Spirit. Share some of President Faust’s counsel on listening to the Spirit.
2. To discuss how to better hear the Spirit’s voice, talk with the family about some of the 11 voices President Faust mentions that can mask our reception of the Spirit or about the 4 ways he teaches “to spiritually survive.” Ask family members to share experiences they have had in recognizing and following the voice of the Spirit.
3. Ask family members to read the following scriptures that President Faust cites: John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6; D&C 50:1; 84:46–47. Invite them to find the common theme in these verses. Read parts of the article that describe the blessings that can come from following the voice of the Spirit. Testify of the power of the Spirit in your own life.



HYMN

BY MARY MARGARET HAWKINS

I sat in front of you
In Relief Society
This morning as we sang:
“More holiness give me”

You were graciously in tune.
I turned and was startled
To see who you were:
“More faith in my Savior”

I was faltering in my
Search for the harmony.
My voice quivered and slid:
“More strivings within”

Smiling, assured, you sat there,
A familiar sister-friend
Whom I had pitied:
“More used would I be”

Timid in my weakness,
Your confident alto
Was my steady cue:
“More patience in suffering”

But His grace had sanctified
Your soul’s dark wrenching
And left you peace-brilliant:
“More blessed and holy”

You kept me secure through the
Counterpoint; I was grateful
Not to be alone:
“More sorrow for sin”

Now yours was the sure song,
A still-sustaining testament
Echoing God’s mercy:
“More, Savior, like thee.”



THE EXPERIMENT

One student constantly disrupted my class—until we came up with an idea.

BY KAREN CASE HO-CHING

After graduating from BYU–Hawaii, I began teaching at Kahuku Elementary School. My first class was a combination of fifth- and sixth-graders. One student spent most of his time in special education but came to my class for a couple of hours each day. He was quite disruptive and had no friends. He ate by himself in the cafeteria and walked around the playground alone during recess. He was never chosen to play on a team, and the other students laughed at him and picked on him.

One day he disrupted my class with several irrelevant comments, and the other students were laughing at him. I told him I wanted him to write down all his “inventive” ideas and suggested to the class that he might write a special movie script someday and hire some of them to work for him. That quieted their laughing, and it started him writing.

After he left for his special-education classes that

day, we decided to try an experiment. The students would go out of their way to be nice to him. They would even sit with him in the cafeteria and invite him to join them on the playground. No one would tease or laugh at him.

As the days went by, his shock turned to great joy. The students found that he was a very good athlete, so they always chose him first when picking teams. I watched him walking on the playground with his arm over another student’s shoulder. His attitude changed in the classroom.





When he made irrelevant comments, no one laughed. He began completing his assignments, just as the other students did. Soon he begged me to let him stay in my classroom the whole day. He didn't want to go to his special-education classes. I told him the only way he could do that was to listen, not be disruptive, and complete all his assignments. He promised, and we got special permission to try this. He did well.

One day I was called into the principal's office because one of my boys had been in a playground scuffle. He explained to us that students from other classes were teasing his new friend and classmate. When the principal began to explain that this was no excuse, I told her about our experiment. She was very familiar with our special student, having had him in her office every week for the past five years. I suggested that we send word out to all the classes to leave him alone because my students would defend him, even if it meant we would be in her office every week.

The school psychologist came to my class to observe. She could not believe the difference in him and in his IQ scores, which are not supposed to vary by more than two points either way. His scores had soared. She wanted to know what had happened to make these changes. I simply introduced her to a very special group of children who had tried a life-altering experiment.

Every month our school held an awards assembly at which one boy and one girl from each class were honored. None of the other students knew who would be honored until the names were read, but the school notified their parents so they could be at the assembly. In January of that

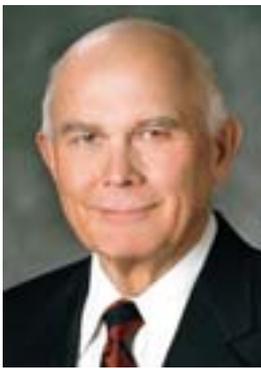
school year, our special student was honored because of the great progress he had made. When his name was announced, there was a collective gasp in the auditorium. Other teachers looked at me as if I didn't know what I was doing. Then, one by one, each of my students stood up and started clapping. The whole auditorium erupted in applause, and an astonished little boy turned to me with tears in his eyes and asked, "Me?" With tears running down my face, I nodded yes.

His parents met me after the assembly. They were overcome with emotion for their son and his accomplishments. They said they had waited each week for the call from the school to come and pick up their son. But the call never came. One day when they did receive a call from the school, it was an invitation to celebrate his accomplishments. They told me he had been a normal child until he started kindergarten. But he was placed in the lowest groups, was ignored, and seemed to always be getting in trouble. The problems escalated each year, and he was placed in the special-education program.

Our family moved shortly after this. When I had a chance to visit Hawaii a few months later, I drove through his neighborhood and found him playing basketball with other children from our class. He was laughing and happy. He showed me how he could make a basket from almost any point on the court. He was far different from the frustrated little boy who had walked into my room less than a year before.

This young man became captain of the football team in high school and graduated with many friends, taking only regular classes—all because a group of children had decided to see the worth of one soul. ■

DATING versus HANGING OUT



My single young friends, we counsel you to channel your associations with the opposite sex into dating patterns that have the potential to mature into marriage.

BY ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

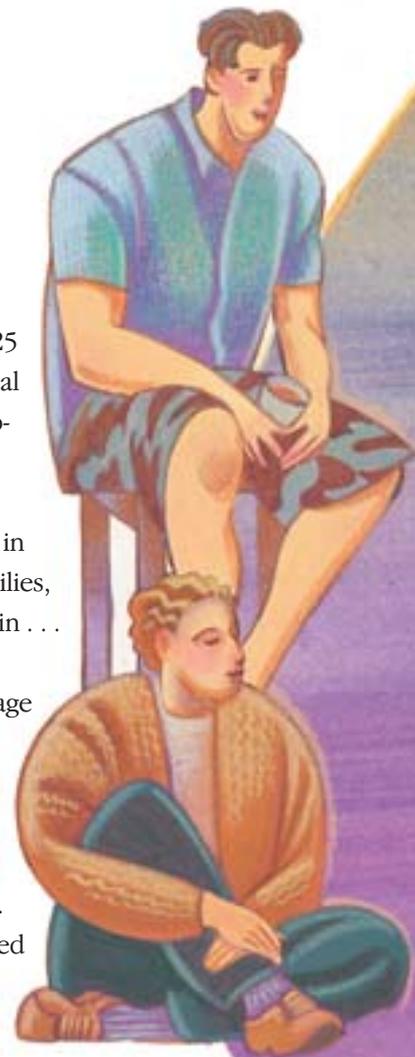
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

On May 1, 2005, Elder Dallin H. Oaks spoke to young single adults at a Church Educational System fireside telecast from Oakland, California. Following is an excerpt from that address.

In his address at the BYU spring 2005 commencement exercise, Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy referred to an article in a recent issue of *Time* magazine. It states that the years from 18 to 25 have become “a distinct and separate life stage, a strange, transitional never-never land between adolescence and adulthood in which people stall for a few extra years, [postponing] . . . adult responsibility.” The article describes these transitional individuals as “permanent adolescents, . . . twentysomething Peter Pans.”¹ Putting this analysis in terms more familiar to his audience of BYU graduates and their families, Elder Tingey spoke of “the indecision some college graduates have in . . . accepting the responsibilities of marriage and family.”²

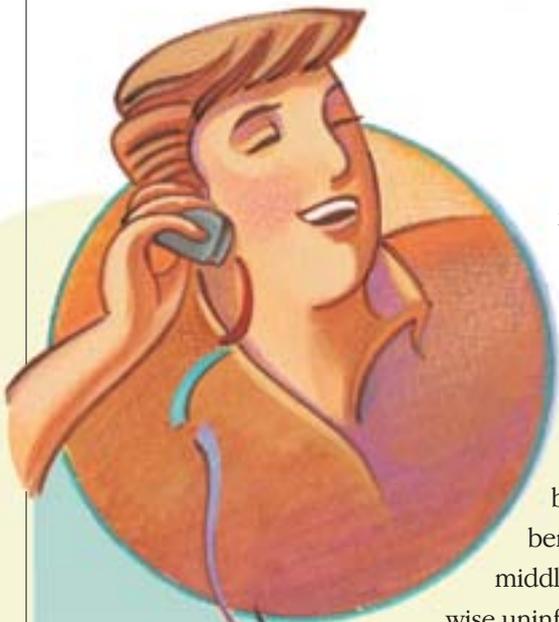
This tendency to postpone adult responsibilities, including marriage and family, is surely visible among our Latter-day Saint young adults. The average age at marriage has increased in the last few decades, and the number of children born to LDS married couples has decreased. It is timely to share some concerns about some current practices in the relationships of young LDS singles in North America.

Knowledgeable observers report that dating has nearly disappeared





ILLUSTRATED BY DILLEEN MARSH



Men, gather your courage and look for someone to pair off with. Start with a variety of dates with a variety of young women, and when that phase yields a good prospect, proceed to courtship.

from college campuses and among young adults generally. It has been replaced by something called “hanging out.”³ You young people apparently know what this is, but I will describe it for the benefit of those of us who are middle-aged or older and other-

wise uninformed. Hanging out consists of numbers of young men and young women joining together in some group activity. It is very different from dating.

For the benefit of some of you who are not middle-aged or older, I also may need to describe what dating is. Unlike hanging out, dating is not a team sport.

Dating is pairing off to experience the kind of one-on-one association and temporary commitment that can lead to marriage in some rare and treasured cases.

What has made dating an endangered species? I am not sure, but I can see some contributing factors:

1. The cultural tides in our world run strongly against commitments in family relationships. For example, divorce has been made legally easy, and childbearing has become unpopular. These pressures against commitments obviously serve the devil’s opposition to the Father’s plan for His children.

That plan relies on covenants or commitments kept.

Whatever draws us away from commitments weakens our capacity to participate in the plan. Dating involves commitments, if only for a few hours. Hanging out requires no commitments, at least not for the men if the women provide the food and shelter.

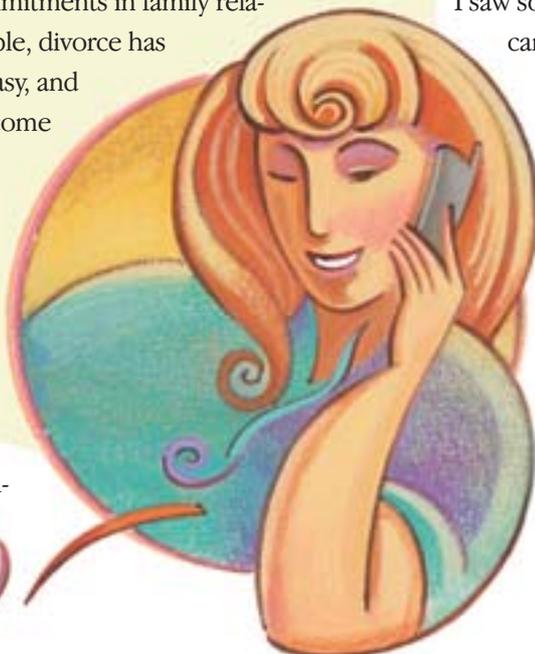
2. The leveling effect of the women’s movement has contributed to discourage dating. As women’s options have increased and some women have become more aggressive, some men have become reluctant to take traditional male initiatives, such as asking for dates, lest they be thought to qualify for the dreaded label “male chauvinist.”

3. Hanging out is glamorized on TV programs about singles.

4. The meaning and significance of a “date” has also changed in such a way as to price dating out of the market. I saw this trend beginning among our younger children. For whatever reason, high school boys felt they had to do something elaborate or bizarre to ask for a date, especially for an event like a prom, and girls felt they had to do likewise to accept. In addition, a date had to be something of an expensive production.

I saw some of this on the BYU campus during the ’70s. I remember seeing one couple having a dinner catered by friends on the median strip between lanes of traffic just south of the BYU football stadium.

All of this made dating more difficult. And the more elaborate and expensive the date, the fewer the dates. As dates



become fewer and more elaborate, this seems to create an expectation that a date implies seriousness or continuing commitment. That expectation discourages dating even more. Gone is the clumsy and inexpensive phone call your parents and grandparents and I used to make. That call went something like this: “What’re ya doin’ tonight? How about a movie?” Or, “How about taking a walk downtown?” Cheap dates like that can be frequent and nonthreatening, since they don’t seem to imply a continuing commitment.

Simple and more frequent dates allow both men and women to “shop around” in a way that allows extensive evaluation of the prospects. The old-fashioned date was a wonderful way to get acquainted with a member of the opposite sex. It encouraged conversation. It allowed you to see how you treat others and how you are treated in a one-on-one situation. It gave opportunities to learn how to initiate and sustain a mature relationship. None of that happens in hanging out.

My single brothers and sisters, follow the simple dating pattern and you don’t need to do your looking through Internet chat rooms or dating services—two alternatives that can be very dangerous or at least unnecessary or ineffective.

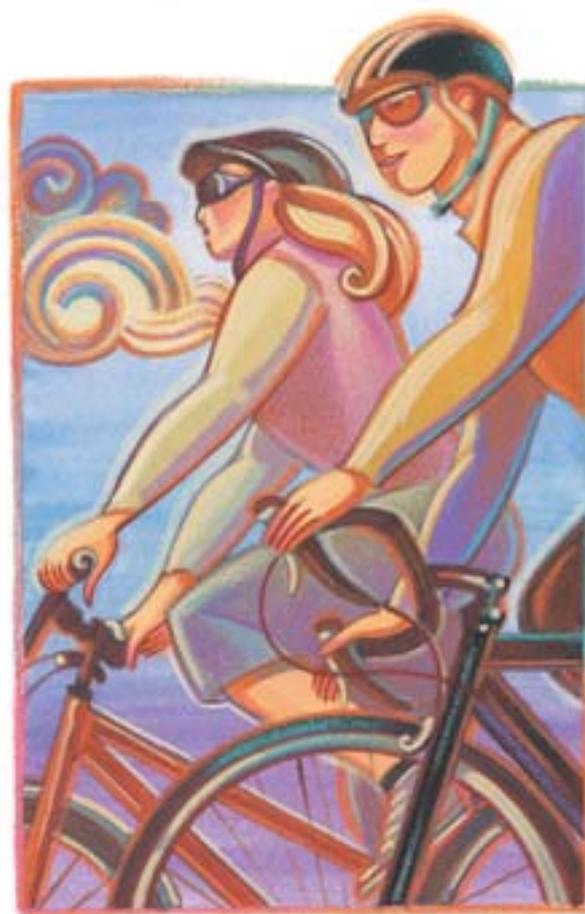
There is another possible contributing factor to the demise of dating and the prominence of the culture of hanging out. For many years the Church has counseled young people not to date before age 16. Perhaps some young adults, especially men, have carried that wise counsel to excess and determined not to date before 26 or maybe even 36.

Men, if you have returned from your mission and you are still following the

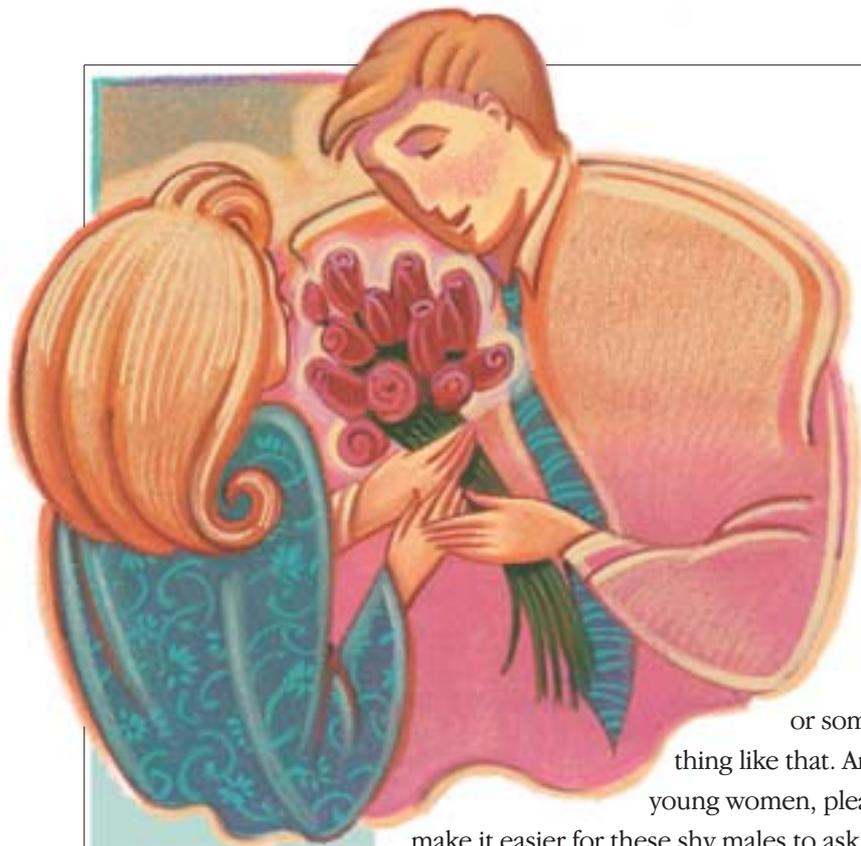
boy-girl patterns you were counseled to follow when you were 15, it is time for you to grow up. Gather your courage and look for someone to pair off with. Start with a variety of dates with a variety of young women, and when that phase yields a good prospect, proceed to courtship. It’s marriage time. That is what the Lord intends for His young adult sons and daughters. Men have the initiative, and you men should get on with it. If you don’t know what a date is, perhaps this definition will help. I heard it from my 18-year-old granddaughter. A “date” must pass the test of three *p*’s: (1) planned ahead, (2) paid for, and (3) paired off.

Young women, resist too much hanging out, and encourage dates that are simple, inexpensive, and frequent. Don’t make it easy for young men to hang out in a setting where you women provide the food. Don’t subsidize freeloaders. An occasional group activity is OK, but when you see men who make hanging out their primary interaction with the opposite sex, I think you should lock the pantry and bolt the front door.

If you do this, you should also hang up a sign, “Will open for individual dates,”



Simple and more frequent dates allow both men and women to “shop around” in a way that allows extensive evaluation of the prospects.



Dating is pairing off to experience the kind of one-on-one association that can lead to marriage.

or something like that. And, young women, please make it easier for these shy males to ask for a simple, inexpensive date. Part of making it easier is to avoid implying that a date is something very serious. If we are to persuade young men to ask for dates more frequently, we must establish a mutual expectation that to go on a date is not to imply a continuing commitment. Finally, young women, if you turn down a date, be kind. Otherwise you may crush a nervous and shy questioner and destroy him as a potential dater, and that could hurt some other sister.

My single young friends, we counsel you to channel your associations with the opposite sex into dating patterns that have the potential to mature into marriage, not hanging-out patterns that only have the prospect to mature into team sports like touch football. Marriage is not a group activity—at least, not until the children come along in goodly numbers.

Up to this point I have concentrated primarily on the responsibilities of single men. Now I have a few words for single women.

If you are just marking time waiting for a marriage prospect, stop waiting. You may never have the opportunity for a suitable marriage in this life, so stop waiting and

start moving. Prepare yourself for life—even a single life—by education, experience, and planning. Don't wait for happiness to be thrust upon you. Seek it out in service and learning. Make a life for yourself. And trust in the Lord. Follow King Benjamin's advice to call "on the name of the Lord daily, and [stand] steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come" (Mosiah 4:11).

Now, single sisters, I have an expert witness to invite to the stand at this time. It is my wife, Kristen, who, as an adult, was single for about 35 years before we married. I am asking her to come up and tell us what is in her heart.

Sister Kristen Oaks: Thank you, Elder Oaks. I was married in my middle 50s, and I feel like I'm becoming the poster girl for "old."

Before I start, I feel to tell you how much you are loved by your Heavenly Father. We are in Oakland, and I've just been to the visitors' center across the way with President Robert Bauman of the mission. We saw the *Christus* and the video *Special Witnesses of Christ*, and they went into my heart.

This is your time. Make it count by dedicating your time to your Heavenly Father.

I love what President Boyd K. Packer says about the Atonement. The Atonement is not something that happens at the end of our lives. It is something that happens every day of our lives. And so I say to our single sisters, make it count.

It can be very painful to be single for such a long time, especially in a church of families. I know how it feels. On my 50th birthday my brother-in-law was reading the newspaper. He said, "Hey, it says here in the paper that at age 50 your chances for getting killed by

terrorists are better than your chances for getting married.” I knew that dating was tough when he said that, but don’t give up. It isn’t a terrorist activity.

I would also say to you, be balanced. As a single woman, I had to go forward. I got a doctorate and became so involved in my profession that I forgot about being a good person. I would say to everyone in this room, always remember that your first calling is as a mother or as a father. Develop those domestic talents, talents of love and talents of service. As a single, I had to go searching for service projects, and now I have one every night across the table. I’m so thankful for that.

In closing, I think about the painful times in our lives. They will happen whether you are single or whether you are married. You may have a child who is very ill or experience the death of someone close to you or have a period of life that is very lonely. You may lose a child or have a situation you have no control over, such as a lingering disease. I would ask you to consecrate that to Heavenly

Father. In Helaman 3:35 we read that if we yield our hearts unto God, all our actions serve to sanctify us, and so any time becomes a blessed time.

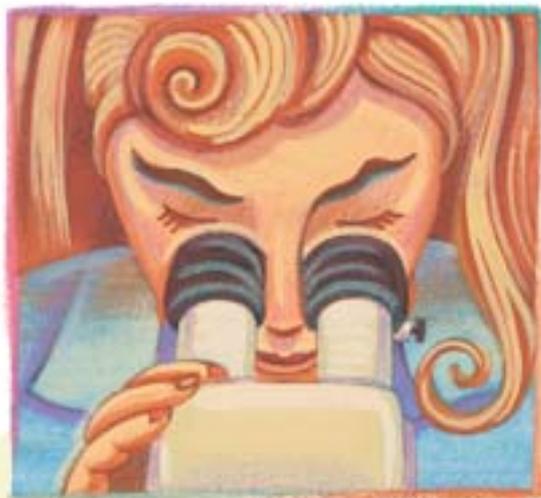
You are my favorite group in the world. You are most dear to me because I know what it feels like to be in your shoes. I was in them for a very long time.

I want you to know that this is the Church of the living God, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is His Church. I’m so thankful that we have a living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. And most of all, I know that we have a Heavenly Father who loves us, as He was my best friend when there was no one else to love me. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

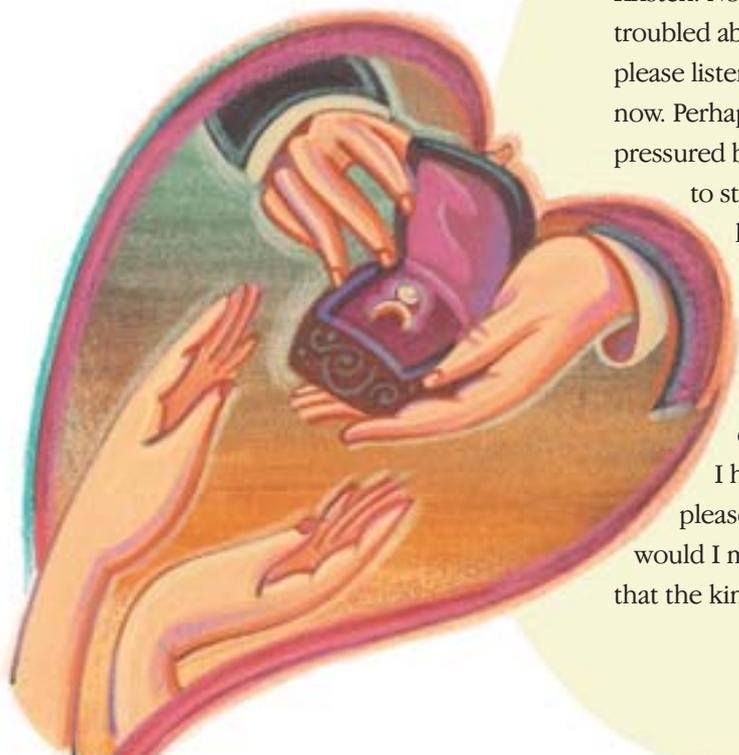
Elder Dallin H. Oaks: Thank you, Kristen. Now, brothers and sisters, if you are troubled about something we have just said, please listen very carefully to what I will say now. Perhaps you are a young man feeling pressured by what I have said about the need

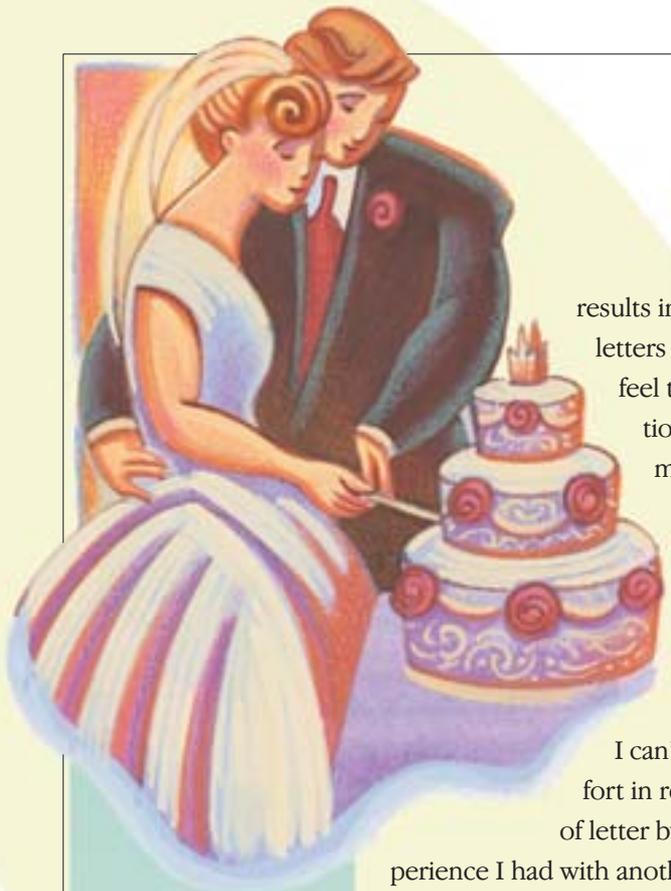
to start a pattern of dating that can lead to marriage, or you are a young woman troubled by what we have said about needing to get on with your life.

If you feel you are a special case, so that the strong counsel I have given doesn’t apply to you, please don’t write me a letter. Why would I make this request? I have learned that the kind of direct counsel I have given



Prepare yourself for life by education, experience, and planning. Don't wait for happiness to be thrust upon you. Seek it out in service and learning.





It's marriage time. That is what the Lord intends for His young adult sons and daughters.

results in a large number of letters from members who feel they are an exception, and they want me to confirm that the things I have said just don't apply to them in their special circumstance.

I will explain why I can't offer much comfort in response to that kind of letter by telling you an experience I had with another person who was troubled by a general rule. I gave a talk in which I mentioned the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). Afterward a man came up to me in tears saying that what I had said showed there was no hope for him. "What do you mean?" I asked him.

He explained that he had been a machine gunner during the Korean War. During a frontal assault, his machine gun mowed down scores of enemy infantry. Their bodies were piled so high in front of his gun that he and his men had to push them away in order to maintain their field of fire. He had killed a hundred, he said, and now he must be going to hell because I had spoken of the Lord's commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

The explanation I gave that man is the same explanation I give to you if you feel you are an exception to what I have said. As a General Authority, I have the responsibility to preach general principles. When I do, I don't try to define all the exceptions. There *are* exceptions to some rules. For example, we believe the commandment is not violated by

killing pursuant to a lawful order in an armed conflict. But don't ask me to give an opinion on your exception. I only teach the general rules. Whether an exception applies to you is your responsibility. You must work that out individually between you and the Lord.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught this same thing in another way. When he was asked how he governed such a diverse group of Saints, he said, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves."⁴ In what I have just said, I am simply teaching correct principles and inviting each one of you to act upon these principles by governing yourself.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that the things that have been said this evening will be carried into your hearts and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost with the same intent that they have been uttered, which is to bless your lives, to give comfort to the afflicted, and to afflict the comfortable.

This is the Church of Jesus Christ. He suffered and He died in the terrible agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary in order to give us the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. I pray that the Lord will bless each of us as we seek to keep the commandments of the Lord, to set our sights ever higher, and to accomplish in our day-to-day decisions what I've called the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, restored in these latter days, with the power of the priesthood and the fulness of His gospel. Of that I bear witness. ■

NOTES

1. Lev Grossman, "Grow Up? Not So Fast," *Time*, Jan. 24, 2005, 44, 42.
2. Brigham Young University commencement address, Apr. 21, 2005.
3. See Bruce A. Chadwick, "Hanging Out, Hooking Up, and Celestial Marriage," in *Brigham Young University 2002–2003 Speeches* (2003), 1–8.
4. Quoted in John Taylor, "The Organization of the Church," *Millennial Star*, Nov. 15, 1851, 339.

DATING

“He Says”

“She Says”

What can single Church members do to find success in their dating?

BY KIMBERLY WEBB
Church Magazines

You pick up the phone, ready to dial. Are you nervous to ask for a date? Don't be.

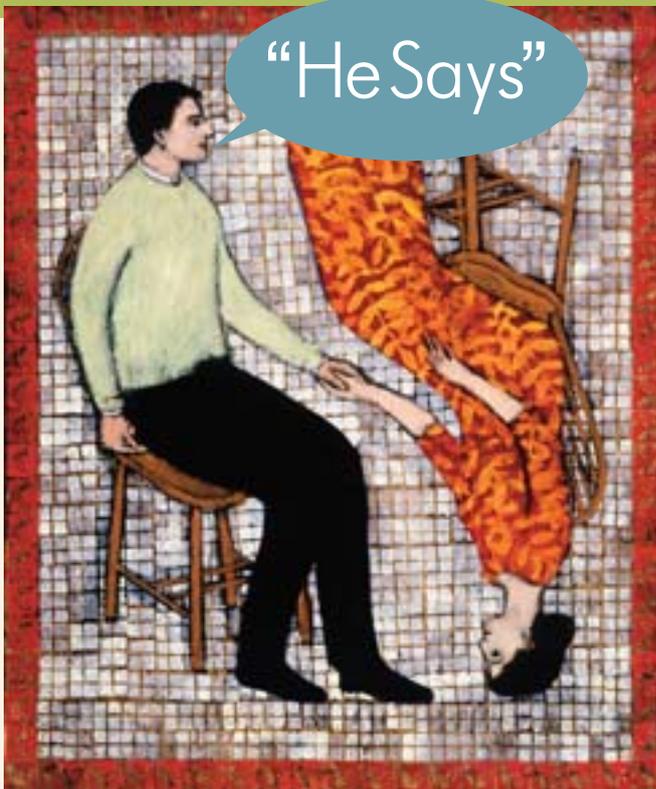
A lot of single adults are in your shoes. Many Latter-day Saint singles are trying to reduce the time they spend hanging out. Group activities are important in helping singles meet and build friendships, but moving beyond hanging out toward courtship and marriage is also essential.

Dating may not be acceptable in some cultures, but wherever possible, Latter-day Saints are striving to date more regularly.

The *Ensign* interviewed North American single Church members to find out what they thought would help their dating experience go more smoothly. Here are some of their responses.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE BUNDERSON

TO THE WOMEN



EITHER OR EITHER, BY BRIAN T. KERSHINSNIK

Communicate Interest

Honest communication can build trusting friendships. At times, honesty includes having the courage to express interest.

One young single adult, Dan, says if interest "is not communicated, you are communicating a *lack* of interest." Jeff adds, "Guys need a solid hint."

Joseph says a brush on the arm or a pat on the shoulder often catches men's attention because it signifies that the woman doesn't feel a barrier between them. And most men notice a woman who maintains eye contact, asks about their lives, and makes an effort to prolong the conversation. "It's important for a guy to know who is interested in going out with him so he knows where to concentrate his efforts," Joseph says.

Sometimes outgoing women are more comfortable showing interest and reserved women can feel overlooked, but each woman can prayerfully step out of her comfort zone and show interest in a manner consistent with her personality. For example, Kim took action by sending Todd a friendly e-mail. "My shyness often deters guys," she says. "I didn't want him to have to wonder what I was thinking."

A more subtle approach is catching someone's eye and "smiling so he knows you wanted him to see you," Shane says. Do this a few times so it won't be dismissed as coincidental, "then make yourself available. Wander past the refreshment table by yourself, for example."

Michael says it helps if a woman socializes after church and occasionally separates herself from her friends. This gives men a window of opportunity to approach her. Men sometimes avoid singling out a woman surrounded by friends, another single adult says, because they don't want to be impolite toward the other women in the group.

It's important that women be sensitive to men's fear of rejection, Will says. "Some men feel a little intimidated or shy and may beat around the bush." If a woman is interested, "it's important that she help him feel as comfortable as possible." Women may lighten the situation by encouraging small talk or by using gentle humor, being careful not to tease.

Women as well as men have a responsibility to try to date, Brandon points out. Even if men primarily extend date invitations, women have more control in expressing interest than they may realize. They can initiate new friendships and, in some cases, help spark new dating relationships.

Have Reasonable Expectations

Men often wonder if women expect creative, elaborate dates. To dispel that idea, women can thank men for simple dates and follow up with an e-mail, note, or treat to say they would enjoy another similar outing.

Women can also express thanks without implying that they *expect* to go out again, Will says. "Interest comes and goes. It's good to be flexible enough that you can give him some space." Even if he's interested, "it may take him some time to be decisive. Steps need to be taken, and relationships need time to grow."

Megan recognizes that a date is simply "a few hours with a guy who may or may not be interested." She believes that if a man is interested, he will express that by continuing to ask her out. Until then, she tries not to jump to conclusions. Similarly, Christa says, "I've learned to not

overanalyze a date or have a million expectations. My goal is to have fun and be myself.”

Women can have more fun dating by being open to going out with a variety of men. It’s OK to be selective, but at the same time, it may be unrealistic for women to expect always to be asked out by men they are most interested in, says one single adult. Women “might be surprised how much fun they can have” if they are sometimes willing to accept dates from men they didn’t notice at first.

Accept and Offer Rejection with Kindness

If a man seems unresponsive to a woman’s signs of interest, he may have other current interests, or maybe he just got out of a serious dating relationship, Jeff explains. “You never know.” Whatever the reasons for lack of response, “don’t take rejection too personally,” Joseph says. “We’re not supposed to be right for everyone.”

Men and women should try to be open-minded, but once it’s clear that rejection is necessary, turning down dates is a matter of honesty. “I would rather be rejected in a nice way than led on,” says one young man.

What *is* the “nice” way?

“I think if a woman said she was busy a few times in a row, I would get the hint,” Russ says. “If a girl is interested, she’ll make time for you.”

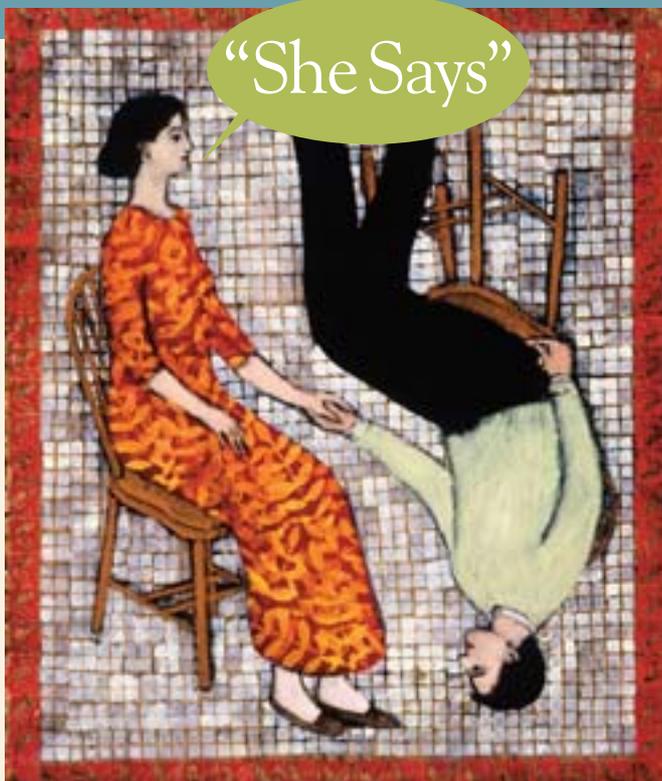
Other men prefer a more direct approach. “The kindest way to be rejected is directly, yet in a friendly way,” Dan says. “Be honest, explain your feelings, but do it with kindness.”

Single adults can communicate with sincere kindness by remembering to respect each other’s uniqueness. The same character traits that one woman may find incompatible in a dating partner will attract a more compatible woman later on. “Remember that the person you’re rejecting is someone else’s future spouse,” says one single adult.

“Even in dating, we are striving to possess Godlike attributes,” Will says. “That means there can be rejection with kindness.”



TO THE MEN



“She Says”

Honor Women

“There is nothing more attractive than a priesthood holder who is worthy and acts accordingly by honoring his priesthood and respecting women,” Sandra says.

Delaying appropriate physical affection until attraction has grown in other important areas shows integrity, as does avoiding suggestive media and humor. Women deserve to be valued for who they are, not simply for attractiveness. They are more likely to feel safe and accepted around men who treat *all* women respectfully, not just those they are dating.

Women also appreciate men who strengthen them against the temptation to “conform to worldly trends,” Sharon says. Men can show admiration for women who dress modestly and uphold Church standards.

Men can honor women by exercising their capacity to lead, Tiffany says. “I believe I speak for most women when I say we want men who still open doors for us and stand when a lady enters the room.” Even more important, women notice men who are proactive, sometimes evidenced by “asking women out and inviting them to dance.” This quality “is what we are hoping and looking for in our husbands,” Tiffany says. “The fathers of our children need to be willing to lead.”

Demonstrate Courage

“We know it’s scary to ask someone out,” Whitney says. “It’s putting yourself on the line, and we appreciate it.”

Men can show courage by clearly “asking for a date,” Mary says. When a man explains what the outing will be, the woman doesn’t have to wonder if it’s a date or a group activity.

Whitney respects men who ask women for dates without fearing that the women will jump to conclusions. “Maybe the first time you take a girl on a date she’ll think you like her, but if you ask out another girl the next weekend,” expectations will change, dates will become more common, and the dating atmosphere will be more relaxed, Whitney says.

Sylinda is impressed when men ask out women they’re not sure they’re interested in. “Magic doesn’t need to strike before you go on a date,” she says. “Time and effort often need to be invested before that happens.” Besides, women don’t expect men to know if they’ll be interested after one or two dates—often women don’t know yet either.

Respect Her Time

“A date doesn’t mean you have to fall in love,” Sarah says. “It simply shows that you respect a woman enough to set her apart from the crowd for an evening.”

Women are flattered when men plan purposeful time for them, Rebecca says. But if a man drops by unannounced or extends a last-minute invitation, a woman can be caught in a stressful situation: she may have to say no even if she’s interested or procrastinate pressing responsibilities in order to say yes. “Let the girl know she’s important enough for you to prepare for the date,” says one young woman.

Well-planned dates don’t have to be elaborate. “We’re not looking for flashy, unique, over-the-top kinds of outings,” Whitney says. Sandra believes single dates are valuable mainly because “people act differently in groups than they do alone. I like to just talk to people.” That can happen while going for a walk, eating lunch, or playing another round of miniature golf.

Women appreciate being asked on dates because repeated invitations indicate who might be interested in

courtship. Without dates, “you never know if the guy is truly interested in you or if you are just a friend of convenience,” says one young woman. “Hanging out limits our opportunities to meet someone who could turn out to be an eternal companion.”

Women don’t expect every date to turn into courtship, but time spent together invites that possibility. Men can show consideration by asking women who interest them on dates and by avoiding excessive time with friends they don’t intend to pursue.

Accept Rejection Constructively

To men who experience repeated rejection, Tiffany suggests two things. First, “check your approach. Make sure you’re not overly eager or too slow.” Being too eager may cause a woman to lose interest because she feels pressured, while being too cautious may encourage her to move on. Next, “check to see if you may be asking the wrong girls out. Think of how many of your lady friends you may be overlooking.”

Rebecca agrees. “If a guy asks out the right type of women, he won’t be repeatedly rejected. Men can cultivate an understanding of the type of women they’re compatible with.”

Shane waits until he has had an interesting conversation with a woman and discovered common interests or perspectives before asking her out. “I try to get to know the girl better so she’ll trust me enough to feel comfortable,” he says. That may happen over time or during one good conversation.

Rebecca says, “A man can evaluate such things as his compatibility with a woman intellectually, spiritually, and physically. He can consider whether his values concerning career, education, and other goals seem compatible with hers.” And he can find out if their interests seem complementary. “If he’s still unsure or continues to experience rejection, he may consider asking trusted

friends for feedback regarding his approach and selection of women to ask out.”

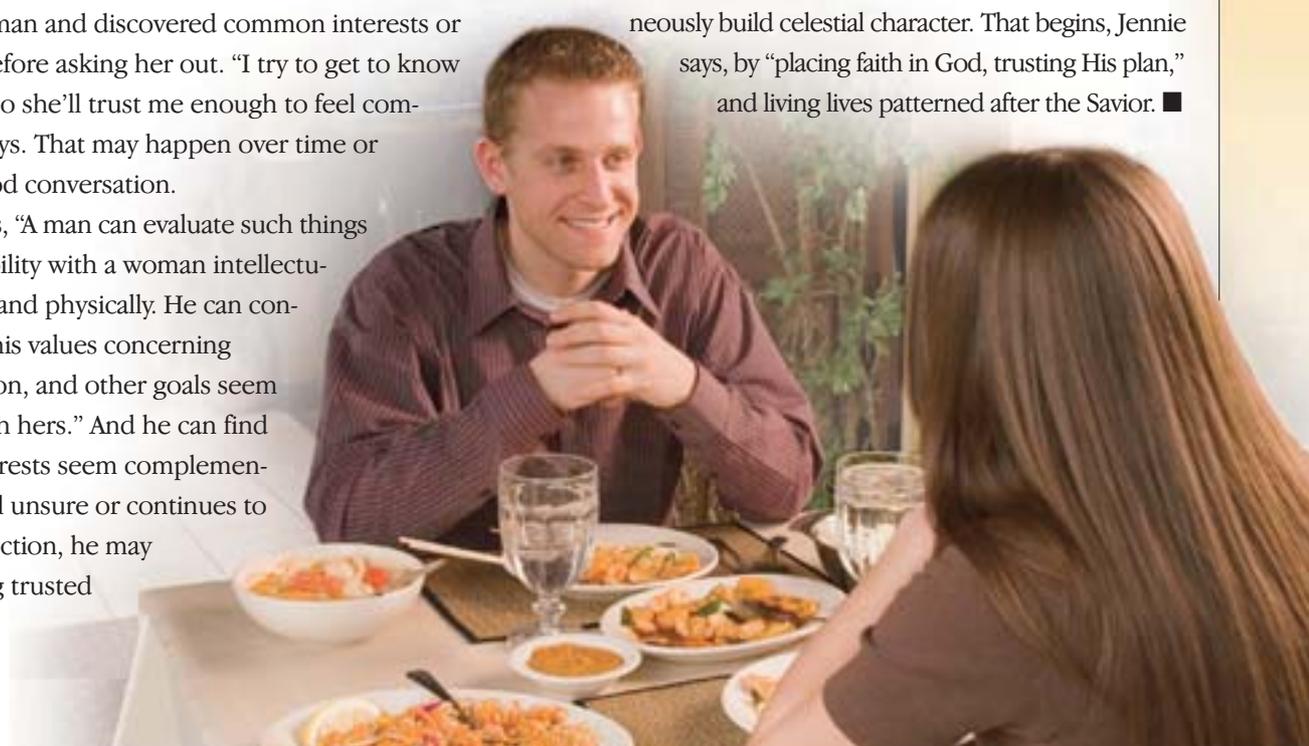
Sandra adds, “Maybe it’s not you she’s turning down—she may not even know you yet! It may be the way you present yourself.” Men can contemplate what types of women they hope to attract and make sure their image is consistent with their inner selves.

TO MEN & WOMEN

Be a Friend

Kindness is paramount when facing the selection and rejection necessarily associated with dating. “Take risks in order to make a friend,” Jennie says. “We all need friendship.” She suggests trying to avoid competitive feelings and adopting a willingness to serve. It’s possible to form lasting friendships—through both dating and group activities—and maintain friendly feelings toward one another, “whether or not you marry them in the end.”

Celestial marriage is the end goal of courtship. So as men and women navigate the waters of dating, they can simultaneously build celestial character. That begins, Jennie says, by “placing faith in God, trusting His plan,” and living lives patterned after the Savior. ■



Modesty Matters

Dressing modestly is a challenge in today's world. Here, Church members share their responses to the following questions: How do you ensure that your clothing is modest? How have you promoted modesty in your family, ward, or stake (or branch or district)? What insights have you gained about the importance of modesty?



moment on, I was not only prepared for the changes I was about to make, but I looked forward to making them.

Chelsea Anderson, Ohio

Whom Did I Want to Be?

An event some years ago changed my attitude toward modesty. As I got ready to go to a Mutual activity, I put on some short shorts; it never occurred to me that they were inappropriate. The activities planned for that Tuesday included having the missionaries give us some practical advice about missionary work. One of the last empty seats was next to me. For a brief moment the elders began to argue, as discreetly as they could, over who had to sit next to me. Though they never said so specifically, I understood they were uneasy because of the way I was dressed.

At that moment, notwithstanding my embarrassment, I began to understand what it meant to be modest. I realized that I was making virtuous young men feel uncomfortable—and that I could also be making unvirtuous men feel *too* comfortable. I began to better understand what type of person I wanted to be with and, more important, what type of person I wanted to be. From that

A Modesty Fashion Show

In October 2004 the Young Women and Young Men organizations in our stake had an event called “Modesty in Dress,” based on the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. It consisted of a fashion show divided into three parts: casual wear, sportswear, and formal wear. We asked each of the young men and young women to select three changes of clothing, and we helped them choose which clothes were suitable. We invited their leaders and parents to this activity. We emphasized scriptural verses about the body being a temple (see 1 Corinthians 6:19–20) and the counsel of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. The activity had a positive effect; the young people in our stake are more concerned now about grooming and dressing in an appropriate way.

Teresa de Jesús Contreras de Ramírez, Mexico

Modesty Tips

Modesty is definitely a challenge in today's world, especially for teenage girls. I know—I am one. But you *can* be modest all the time and still wear what's in style. Here are some tips I have found helpful:



MODEST AND FASHIONABLE

When I was younger I wanted to dress just like my peers at school. I unwillingly obeyed my mother's wishes for me to be modest. Today I am grateful to my mother for the clear line she drew and for her example. I now have my own testimony about the importance of modesty. It truly is possible to dress both modestly and fashionably.

Roberta Eggenberger,
Switzerland





TESTIMONIES OF MODESTY

My understanding of why I should dress modestly came gradually after I joined the Church. I now look with great respect upon modestly dressed people whose eyes shine with the light of chastity. Dressing modestly is not always easy, but if we make the effort, God is bound to help us.

Olga Khripko,
Ukraine

I believe we show our humility and respect to our Heavenly Father when we look decent and clean and are appropriately covered.

Sharlene Cherry,
Philippines



- Buy several long tank tops in different colors that you can tuck into your pants so your tummy won't show with a shorter shirt.

- Sew a strip of fabric onto the bottom of shorter shirts.

- If a shirt is mostly cotton, buy a size larger than you normally would so when you wash it, it won't be too tight or too short.

- Buy long boy's shorts when they are available during the summer.

- If the top part of a dress is immodest, consider cutting off the top and altering the dress to make a fancy skirt; then find a nice top to match.

- Start shopping early for the prom and other special events so you won't be tempted to buy something immodest at the last minute.

A lot of girls give up on being modest because they think it is just too hard. But I can tell you that it can be done!

Jami Elsmore, Nevada



A PROTECTION AGAINST TEMPTATION

“Modesty in dress and manner will assist in protect-

ing against temptation. It may be difficult to find modest clothing, but it can be found with enough effort. . . . You can be attractive without being immodest. . . . Draw some rigid parameters, a line in the sand, as it were, beyond which you will not go.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stay on the High Road,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2004, 114.

A Daily Reminder

I have a picture of the Savior and a picture of the London England Temple in my wardrobe. When I open it to get my clothes, I am always reminded to keep myself clean and modest so that I can one day go to the temple and worship there.

Carolyn Bailey, England

Tight Fit Is Also Immodest

Many people think immodest dress relates only to an insufficiently covered body. But a tight fit is also immodest, even when the body is fully covered. This applies to men as well as women. Many do not realize that tight clothing draws attention to the anatomy, which distracts from the purpose of education, business, leadership, or worship. Adequate ease in the fit of our clothes allows the viewer’s attention to go to the other person’s face for more effective communication.

Judith Rasband, Utah

The Body Is a Temple

Bahia, Brazil, where I live, has a very hot climate, which makes it a little hard for people to dress modestly. But I feel something special when I dress in a way that invites the Spirit to be with me. I know that the body is a temple of God and that it should be treated with respect.

Stephan Cerqueira Levita, Brazil

A Matter of Prayer

After a discouraging day of prom-dress shopping with two of my daughters, we returned home in weary tears. We had not found one modest dress. I encouraged my daughters to take their desires to the Lord in prayer. They looked at me quizzically, not at all certain that a wardrobe concern was prayer-worthy. I promised them

that Nephi’s conviction in 1 Nephi 3:7 applies to the mundane as well as the monumental: “I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” My daughters agreed to pray about the problem, and within a week we found beautiful dresses in unexpected places

that we could alter to be perfectly appropriate.

We continue to make modesty a matter of prayer. I have learned to follow small promptings from the Spirit, even if it means

driving a distance, searching through sample racks, or making substantial alterations. I want my daughters to know that I value modesty enough to go out of my way.

Jerie Jacobs, California

A Panel Discussion

One possibility for promoting modesty among young women is a panel discussion with the young men. This approach drew together the young people of our ward in serious consideration of this gospel principle.

Some of the priests we invited to participate were less than enthusiastic at first because they did not want to offend the young women who would be their audience. To help set the young men at ease, we met beforehand to talk about what they could say about modesty and how to present their ideas properly.

We felt the Spirit during the panel discussion. The young women joined in the discussion and listened closely to what the young men had to say. One of the panel members told them, “Could we start by not seeing





BEAUTY WITHIN

I did not understand the concept of modesty before I was a member of the Church. Within a few months of my baptism, I learned that a piece of clothing would not make me more beautiful—rather, beauty comes from within. I am striving to serve the Lord in the way He asks us.

Roseangela Barreto, Brazil

any immodesty at Church meetings?” The young women responded very positively to the advice from their friends.
John Wilkinson, Utah

The Body Is a Gift

During my last year of high school, I decided I had to strengthen my testimony before I left for college. I studied all I could about the Savior’s life and His atoning sacrifice. As I did so, the reality of His love struck me so powerfully that it brought me to tears. I realized that I am indeed a beloved daughter of God. As the magnitude of this sank deep into my very being, I realized that dressing modestly is not just to prevent the boys from thinking bad thoughts. It is a way to show our appreciation for one of the most wonderful gifts God has given us: a body.

May I suggest that Church members be taught to be modest because they love and respect themselves and the Lord and they want to honor His gift. I never had a strong testimony of modesty until I learned to love Heavenly Father and the Savior more deeply.
Brenda Petty, Idaho

Try Shopping Online

Coming out of the Los Angeles California Temple one day, I was dismayed to notice that some bridesmaids were wearing immodest dresses. I then saw that the bridesmaids in another group were wearing dresses that were modest yet very pretty. I asked where they had found such lovely dresses, and they enthusiastically chorused, “Online.” The Internet can be a good source of modest clothing. ■
Anne Elwell, California



YOUR DRESS IS A REFLECTION OF WHO YOU ARE

“Prophets of God have always counseled His children to dress modestly. The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside. Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way you and others act. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you. . . .

“Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire. Young women should wear clothing that covers the shoulder and avoid clothing that is low-cut in the front or the back or revealing in any other manner. Young men should also maintain modesty in their appearance. All should avoid extremes in clothing, appearance, and hairstyle. Always be neat and clean and avoid being sloppy or inappropriately casual in dress, grooming, and manners. Ask yourself, ‘Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord’s presence?’ ”

For the Strength of Youth (*pamphlet, 2001*), 14–16.



Family Home Evening

FOR THE FUN OF IT

President Joseph F. Smith, introducing the concept of family home evening in 1915, said that formality and stiffness should be avoided. With the family home evening program now well established among Latter-day Saints, families plan lessons from formal to fun, as their needs suggest.

This article features examples that show how having fun together can make a great family home evening.

Planning Fun Activities

Frank and Ellen Sorenson of Illinois wanted their children to know their grandparents and great-grandparents who had died.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT CASEY

HAVE A GOOD TIME



“If you have any doubt about the virtue of family home evening, try it. Gather your children about

you, teach them, bear testimony to them, read the scriptures together and have a good time together.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 212.

“We often make a birthday cake in their honor and celebrate their lives in a family home evening,” says Ellen. “After relating memories, reading from personal histories, or looking at pictures, we play the ancestor’s favorite song or eat his or her favorite food. Sometimes we play a quiz game, giving hints about a relative living or dead and then guessing his or her identity. We’ve celebrated

Grandpa Wilson’s birthday with his favorite dessert—strawberry shortcake. We’ve retold Grandpa Sorenson’s silly jokes and observed my father’s Croatian heritage by roasting lamb on a spit over a fire. We have increased our love for these ancestors and our commitment to the gospel plan that binds us to them.”

Vida H. Liddell of Utah describes playing a Book of Mormon game complete with a homemade papier-mâché Liahona. “We made a life-size game board on the floor of our house. Taking turns, each player tried to answer a question about the Book of Mormon. If that player knew the answer, he or she could look upon the Liahona, spin its pointer, and move as the Liahona indicated. Everyone played until they reached the

kitchen, where we had refreshments. Two slices of pound cake formed the ‘golden plates.’ We used spray cans of whipped topping to write on our ‘plates’; then we ‘berried’ them by covering them with berries. It was fun for the youngest children as well as the

teenagers and parents.”

Diane Adamson, a grandmother from Utah, describes a time when her extended family got together for a family home evening: “I had gathered supplies that could be used to create dioramas of Lehi’s dream: cardboard bases cut to size, play dough in various colors, aluminum foil, straws, cotton swabs, ribbon, cotton balls, tissue paper, plastic foam cups, index cards, scissors, and tape. Together, we read aloud the story of Lehi’s dream from 1 Nephi 8. Each small group went to work, and an hour later we had six very different imaginative depictions of the elements of Lehi’s dream.”

Enjoying Time Together

Andrew and Janeen Nuttall of Colorado decided to recognize their children’s acts of kindness. Janeen says: “Our family can get pretty busy, and sometimes the good things our children do go unnoticed. One Monday night, we decided to have an ‘awards night.’ Throughout the week I listed all of the things each of our children accomplished that were noteworthy. At the end of the lesson, I had each child come up one by one, and I told them the wonderful things I had seen in them. I was surprised when the rest of the family chimed in and added their own positive comments about the person being spotlighted. I told them how much we all loved them and that we are glad they are part of our family. The grins on the faces of our children were priceless. It was such a positive experience that we have continued to have occasional surprise ‘awards nights.’”

David and Janis Rowberry of Nevada enjoy singing together as a family in

their family home evenings. Janis says: “Singing good music opens our hearts to accept love. It’s a way to make our home a heaven on earth and bring us closer to the Savior.”

Chris and Jenny Robinson of Virginia have used role-playing games with their young children. Jenny says: “We role-play sitting quietly in Church meetings and giving talks in Primary. We



also role-play other situations, such as eating in a restaurant and using our best table manners. We pretend to stand in line, wait our turn, and raise our hands to answer a teacher. We role-play clapping our hands at the end of a performance to show our appreciation. We all enjoy this activity, and it has helped our children become more confident.”

Just Having Fun

Marian Pond of Colorado remembers a time when her husband decided to be spontaneous rather than skip a family home evening: “My husband, Stan, came home later than usual one Monday evening, and our children greeted him with squeals of ‘Daddy’s home!’ and ‘Now can we have family home evening?’ He found me on the couch with our three-month-old twins. Evidence of an overwhelming day welled in my eyes. We both knew we weren’t ready with a lesson for family home evening.

“‘Not a problem,’ Stan reassured me. I could tell that my husband had decided we would simply play together and have fun. With energy and laughter, he asked the children

to ‘skedaddle’ and see who could get ready for bed the fastest. They returned giggling and snuggled around the twins and me on the couch.

“Stan asked seven-year-old Sara to lead the opening song. Lisa, who was five, said the prayer. For our lesson, Stan picked out a common object in our home and made a humorous but insightful comparison between it and our family, which left everyone laughing. Four-year-old Anna led the closing song, and little Molly said the closing prayer and asked a blessing on the refreshments. ‘But I didn’t make any,’ I said. Again Stan had the situation under control. He led our little band to the kitchen and retrieved a bag of Bing cherries from the freezer. Ceremoniously, he placed five frozen cherries on each of our saucers, and we proceeded to enjoy pretending we were true gourmets.

“The recollection of this family home evening always brings a smile and helps me remember that sometimes just having fun together can make a great family home evening.” ■



TRUE FRIENDSHIP AND SELF-RESPECT



David and Jonathan's friendship exemplifies Alma's charge to the Saints to have "their hearts knit together in unity and in love."

BY ELDER LYNN A. MICKELSEN

Of the Seventy

T rue friendship helps give meaning to life. It is an anchor for the soul. Based on the pure love of Christ, it is security and trust between two individuals and is "stronger than the cords of death" (see D&C 121:43–44) because it transcends this mortal existence. Unfortunate is the person who has no true friend.

The Old Testament contains the inspiring story of David and Jonathan, who achieved true friendship despite difficult circumstances.

Although David may not have seemed the logical choice to be king of Israel, the Lord chose him to succeed King Saul. Young David developed the attributes that qualified him for this honor as he responsibly tended his father's flocks, learning to obey faithfully both the mortal direction and the spiritual promptings he received. He was trustworthy, unselfish, fearless, and confident, and he had unwavering faith in the God of Israel. These attributes were clearly evident in his astonishing victory over Goliath.

Jonathan, the son of King Saul, had also proven himself courageous and faithful. Traditionally he would have been heir to the throne instead of David, so it would have been natural for him to see David as

his enemy. Yet when David returned from the battlefield and appeared in King Saul's court "with the head of [Goliath] in his hand[,] . . . the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 17:57; 18:1).

Jonathan's love for David is even more remarkable when contrasted with Saul's bitter contempt. Although at first Saul rewarded David for killing Goliath, his jealousies and insecurities became apparent as word of Israel's newest hero spread. Saul heard the Israelite women singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). Out of jealousy, Saul tried to kill David with a javelin—the first of his many attempts to take David's life.

Jonathan helped David escape while he tried to soften Saul's heart (see 1 Samuel 19:4–5). Jonathan's loyal defense of his friend angered Saul, who tried to kill Jonathan, his own son, in a fit of rage (see 1 Samuel 20:32–33). In spite of this, Jonathan continued to secretly assist David at the peril of his own life.

Why did the friendship of David and Jonathan grow while Saul became David's enemy? The answer to this question is a lesson for all who seek to develop the kind of true friendship and Christlike love that is



Jonathan loyally defended his friend David, even when his own life was threatened.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflection, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Ask family members to choose someone from the scriptures they would want as a best friend and explain why. Tell the story of David and Jonathan. Have family members each pick a section of the article and find words that amplify the meaning of true friendship. Challenge them to develop these attributes in their own friendships.

2. Quote the two great commandments (see Matthew 22:37, 39) and ask family members to list the three people we should love. How does love of self affect love of God and love of neighbor? Read the story of Saul and discuss how insecurities and self-centeredness limit our ability to love others. Testify of how understanding the Atonement and appreciating our divine worth help us deepen our friendships.

illustrated in this dramatic Old Testament story.

Charity “Seeketh Not Her Own”

The Savior said the first and great commandment is to “love the Lord thy God.” The second, He explained, is also a commandment to love: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39; see also vv. 36, 38).

David and Jonathan’s friendship exemplifies Alma’s charge to the Saints to have “their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

Unfortunately, many people concentrate so intensely on their personal lives that they have neither the time nor the energy to reach out to others. They develop self-centeredness, a trait that led Saul to focus on his own insecurities instead of rejoicing with the rest of Israel in David’s accomplishments.

The Israelite women who sang about David’s and Saul’s military successes apparently made no mention of Jonathan, even though he was an accomplished warrior in his own right (see, for example, 1 Samuel 14:1–15). The lack of praise for Jonathan did not harm his friendship with David, because in a true friendship there is no egotism or self-centeredness, only charity. Charity, as the Apostle Paul and Mormon both declare, “seeketh not her own” (1 Corinthians 13:5; Moroni 7:45). This is the kind of love the Savior expects of His followers.

The Importance of Self-Respect

Charity and love for one’s neighbor are best developed when one has a healthy sense of self-respect. Self-respect comes from obedience to the laws of God. Those with a strong sense of self-respect have a greater capacity to forget themselves and love others. Conversely, those who are

insecure about their self-worth often become more self-centered and less capable of building strong, loving friendships.

Self-respect develops as we come to understand our divine heritage. When we have the assurance that we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father, we not only understand our own worth but we also see the great worth of others. We need not feel threatened when others are praised and we are not, nor should we feel prideful when we are praised and others are not, because we feel our kinship as brothers and sisters, children of Heavenly Father.

Consider the tender testimony of a sister missionary: “When I came to know that we are truly children of our Father in Heaven, my soul filled with love for all of God’s family. I felt indescribable joy each time I would tell our investigators of our divine origin, and my bosom would burn within me, confirming the truth of that doctrine each time we would explain why we call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister.’”

Our self-respect and our love for others deepen as we gain understanding of the Atonement. The infinite love of the Father for us as His children is expressed in the sacrifice of His Son, through which each individual is blessed. “The worth of souls is great in the sight of God; For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of *all men*, that *all men* might repent and come unto him” (D&C 18:10–11; emphasis added). Our knowledge that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) should help us to assume the same attitude toward all of His children.

Becoming “Full of Love”

Knowingly disobeying God’s commandments destroys our self-respect and limits our capacity to love. Saul was



King Saul “was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him” (1 Samuel 18:12).

unwilling to befriend David as Jonathan did because his own disobedience had caused him to fall out of favor with God, and he knew it. “Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul” (1 Samuel 18:12). In contrast, Jonathan did not feel threatened by David, for he did not worry about his own place in the kingdom.

Achieving this selfless love is not easy. The natural man tends to be more like Saul than Jonathan. Nevertheless, “through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” we can overcome any selfish tendencies and become “full of love” (Mosiah 3:19). We can “cleave unto charity” (Moroni 7:46), which is the kind of love the Savior acted with when He accomplished the Atonement and “[laid] down his life for his friends” (John 15:13; see also Ether 12:33–34).

Charity is a gift from Heavenly Father “which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48). It comes directly and exclusively from Him, and we are required to pray “with all the energy of [our] heart” to receive it (Moroni 7:48).

When the resurrected Savior questioned Peter about the extent of his love, He taught Peter—and the rest of us—that love in its purest form overflows to the benefit of others: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

Centuries later, the Lord looked into the heart of Thomas B. Marsh (1799–1866), then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and gave similar counsel: “I know thy heart, and have heard thy prayers concerning thy brethren. Be not partial towards them in love above many others, but let thy love be for them as for thyself; and let thy love abound unto all men, and unto all who love my name” (D&C 112:11). Imagine what would happen in our families, in the Church, and in our communities if our love “abounded unto all.”

True friendship strives for unity of purpose, will, desire, heart, and mind. There must be complete trust and transparency, with no hidden agendas. True friendship transcends love as the world understands it. Based on charity, it is patient and kind. As David and Jonathan demonstrated so memorably, it does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud. It is not rude, selfish, or easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs; it does not delight in evil but rejoices in truth. It can bear anything; it always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. It never fails (see 1 Corinthians 13:4–8; Moroni 7:45–47).

Our goal in mortality should be to establish this kind of friendship with each other and with the Savior, thus helping to secure our place with the Eternal Father. ■

THE Profile OF A PROPHET

BY PRESIDENT HUGH B. BROWN (1883–1975)

Hugh B. Brown was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 24, 1883, to Lydia Jane and Homer Manly Brown. When he was 15, his family moved to Canada. On June 17, 1908, he married Zina Young Card, daughter of Charles O. Card (founder of Cardston, Alberta, Canada) and granddaughter of Brigham Young, in the Salt Lake Temple. They were the parents of six daughters and two sons. President Brown practiced law, first in Canada and later in the United States. He served overseas as a major in the Canadian army during World War I. From 1946 to 1950 he was a professor of religion and coordinator of veterans' affairs at Brigham Young University. In 1953, while working as president of Richland Oil Development Company of Canada, Ltd., he was called to serve as an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles. On April 10, 1958, he was ordained an Apostle, and on June 22, 1961, he was sustained as a counselor to President David O. McKay. He served in the First Presidency until President McKay's death on January 18, 1970, when he resumed his position in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He died on December 2, 1975.

I should like to be for a few minutes a witness in support of the proposition that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in our day and that this is His Church, which was organized under His direction through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I should like to give some reasons for the faith I have and for my allegiance to the Church. Perhaps I can do this more quickly by referring to an interview I had in London, England, in 1939, just before the outbreak of [World War II]. I had met a very prominent English gentleman, a member of the House of Commons, formerly one of the justices of the Supreme Court of England. In my conversations with this gentleman on various subjects, "vexations of the soul" he called them, we talked about business and law, about politics, international relations and



Only by the whisperings of the Holy Spirit can one come to know the things of God. By those whisperings I say I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

war, and we frequently discussed religion. He called me on the phone one day and asked if I would meet him at his office and explain some phases of the gospel. He said: "I think there is going to be a war. If there is, you will have to return to America, and we may not meet again." His statement regarding the imminence of war and the possibility that we would not meet again proved to be prophetic. When I went to his office, he said he was intrigued by some things I had told him. He asked me to prepare a brief on Mormonism . . . and discuss it with him as I would discuss a legal problem.

He said: "You have told me that you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet. You have said to me that you believe that God the Father and Jesus of Nazareth appeared





to Joseph Smith. I cannot understand how a barrister and solicitor from Canada, a man trained in logic and evidence, could accept such absurd statements. What you tell me about Joseph Smith seems fantastic, but I think you should take three days at least to prepare a brief and permit me to examine it and question you on it.”

I suggested that we proceed at once and have an examination for discovery, which is briefly a meeting of opposing sides in a lawsuit where the plaintiff and defendant, with their attorneys, meet to examine each other’s claims and see if they can find some area of agreement, thus saving the time of the court later on. I said perhaps we could see whether we had some common ground from which we could discuss my “fantastic” ideas. He agreed to that quite readily.

I can only give you, in the few minutes at my disposal,

a condensed and abbreviated synopsis of the three-hour conversation which followed. In the interest of time I shall resort to the question-and-answer method rather than narration. I began by asking, “May I proceed, sir, on the assumption that you are a Christian?”

“I am.”

“I assume you believe in the Bible—the Old and New Testament?”

“I do!”

“Do you believe in prayer?”

“I do!”

“You say that my belief that God spoke to a man in this age is fantastic and absurd?”

“To me, it is.”

“Do you believe that God ever did speak to anyone?”

“Certainly. All through the Bible we have evidence of that.”

“Did He speak to Adam?”

“Yes.”

“To Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Joseph, and on through the prophets?”

“I believe He spoke to each of them.”

“Do you believe that contact between God and man ceased when Jesus appeared on the earth?”

“No, such communication reached its climax, its apex at that time.”

“Do you believe that Jesus was the Son of God?”

“He was.”

“Do you believe, sir, that after Jesus was resurrected a certain lawyer, who was also a tent maker by the name of Saul of Tarsus, when on his way to Damascus, talked with Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, resurrected, and had ascended into heaven?”

“I do.”

“Whose voice did Saul hear?”

“It was the voice of Jesus Christ, for He so introduced Himself.”

“Then, . . . I am submitting to you in all seriousness

that it was standard procedure in Bible times for God to talk to man.”

“I think I will admit that, but it stopped shortly after the first century of the Christian era.”

“Why do you think it stopped?”

“I can’t say.”

“You think that God hasn’t spoken since then?”

“I am sure He hasn’t.”

“There must be a reason; can you give me a reason?”

“I do not know.”

“May I suggest some possible reasons: perhaps God does not speak to man anymore because He cannot. He has lost the power.”

He said, “Of course that would be blasphemous.”

“Well, then, if you don’t accept that, perhaps He doesn’t speak to men because He doesn’t love us anymore. He is no longer interested in the affairs of men.”

“No,” he said, “God loves all men, and He is no respecter of persons.”

“Well, then, if He could speak and if He loves us, then the only other possible answer, as I see it, is that we don’t need Him. We have made such rapid strides in science, we are so well educated, that we don’t need God anymore.”

And then he said, and his voice trembled as he thought of impending war: “Mr. Brown, there never was a time in the history of the world when the voice of God was needed as it is needed now. Perhaps you can tell me why He doesn’t speak.”

My answer was: “He does speak. He has spoken, but men need faith to hear Him.”

Then we proceeded to prepare what I may

call a “profile of a prophet.” . . . We agreed, between us, that the following characteristics should distinguish a man who claims to be a prophet.

A. He will boldly claim that God [has] spoken to him.

B. Any man so claiming would be a dignified man with a dignified message; no table-jumping, no whisperings from the dead, no clairvoyance, but an intelligent statement of truth.

C. Any man claiming to be a prophet of God would declare his message without any fear and without making any weak concessions to public opinion.

D. If he were speaking for God, he could not make concessions although what he taught would be new and contrary to the accepted teachings of the day. A prophet bears witness to what he has seen and heard and seldom tries to make a case by argument. His message and not himself is important.

E. Such a man would speak in the name of the Lord, saying, “Thus saith the Lord,” as did Moses, Joshua, and others.

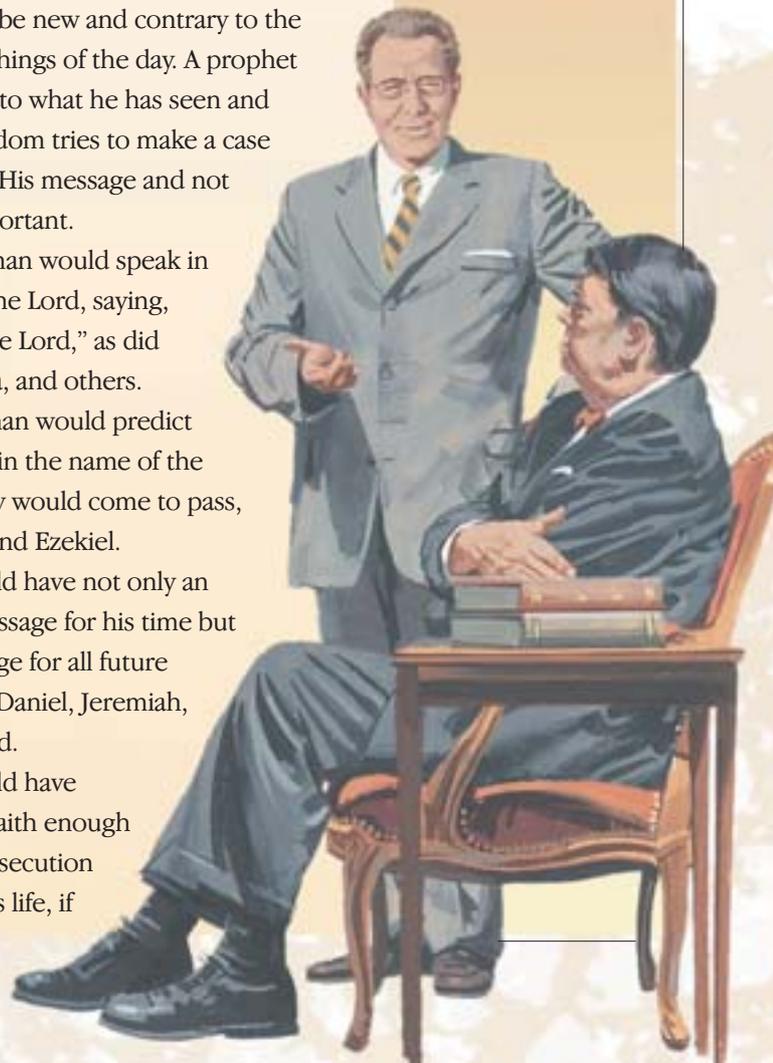
F. Such a man would predict future events in the name of the Lord, and they would come to pass, as did Isaiah and Ezekiel.

G. He would have not only an important message for his time but often a message for all future time, such as Daniel, Jeremiah, and others had.

H. He would have courage and faith enough to endure persecution and to give his life, if

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*My answer was:
“He does speak.
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He sat and listened intently. Then he said: "Mr. Brown, I wonder if your people appreciate the import of your message."

need be, for the cause he espoused, such as Peter, Paul, and others did.

I. Such a man would denounce wickedness fearlessly. He would generally be rejected or persecuted by the people of his time, but later generations, the descendants of his persecutors, would build monuments in his honor.

J. He would be able to do superhuman things, things that no man could do without God's help. The consequence or result of his message and work would be convincing evidence of his prophetic calling. "By their fruits you shall know them" [Matthew 7:20].

K. His teachings would be in strict conformity with scripture, and his words and his writings would become scripture. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Now, I have given but an outline which you can fill in and amplify and then measure and judge the Prophet Joseph Smith by the work and stature of other prophets.

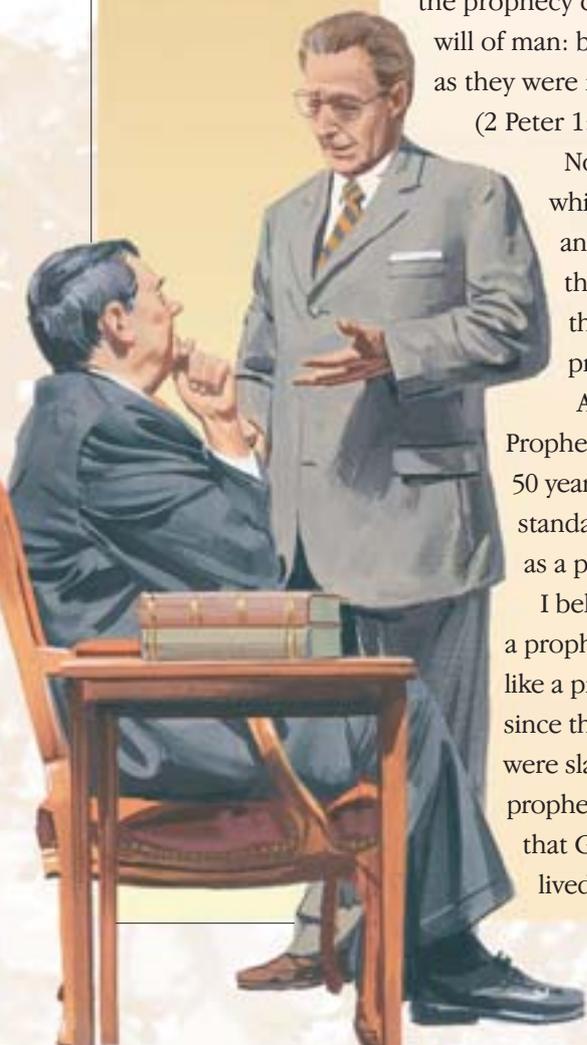
As a student of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith for more than 50 years, I say to you . . . , by these standards Joseph Smith qualifies as a prophet of God.

I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God because he talked like a prophet. He was the first man since the Apostles of Jesus Christ were slain to make the claim which prophets have always made, [namely,] that God had spoken to him. He lived and died like a prophet. I

believe he was a prophet of God because he gave to this world some of the greatest of all revelations. I believe that he was a prophet of God because he predicted many things which have come to pass, things which only God could bring to pass.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, declared, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" [Revelation 19:10]. If Joseph Smith had the testimony of Jesus, he had the spirit of prophecy, and if he had the spirit of prophecy, he was a prophet. I submit to you, and I submitted to my friend, that as much as any man who ever lived he had a testimony of Jesus, for, like the Apostles of old, he saw Him and heard Him speak. He gave his life for that testimony. I challenge any man to name one who has given more evidence of the divine calling of Jesus Christ than did the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I believe the Prophet Joseph Smith was a prophet because he did many superhuman things. One was translating the Book of Mormon. Some people will not agree, but I submit to you that the Prophet Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon did a superhuman work. I ask you . . . to undertake to write a story on the ancient inhabitants of America. Write as he did without any source of material. Include in your story 54 chapters dealing with wars, 21 historical chapters, 55 chapters on visions and prophecies, and, remember, when you begin to write on visions and prophecies you must have your record agree meticulously with the Bible. You write 71 chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and, here too, you must check every statement with the scriptures or you will be proven to be a fraud. You must write 21 chapters on the



ministry of Christ, and everything you claim He said and did and every testimony you write in your book about Him must agree absolutely with the New Testament.

I ask you, would you like to undertake such a task? I would suggest to you too that you must employ figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narrations, exposition, description, oratory, epic, lyric, logic, and parables. Undertake that, will you? I ask you to remember that the man that translated the Book of Mormon was a young man who hadn't had the opportunity of schooling that you have had, and yet he dictated that book in just over two months and made very few, if any, corrections. For over 100 years, some of the best students and scholars of the world have been trying to prove from the Bible that the Book of Mormon is false, but not one of them has been able to prove that anything he wrote was not in strict harmony with the scriptures. . . .

Joseph Smith undertook and accomplished other superhuman tasks; among them I list the following: He organized the Church. (I call attention to the fact that no constitution effected by human agency has survived 100 years without modification or amendment, even the Constitution of the United States. The basic law or constitution of the Church has never been altered.) He undertook to carry the gospel message to all nations, which is a superhuman task still in progress. He undertook, by divine command, to gather thousands of people to Zion. He instituted vicarious work for the dead and built temples for that purpose. He promised that certain signs should follow the believers, and there are thousands of witnesses who certify that this promise has been fulfilled.

I said to my friend, “. . . I cannot understand your saying to me that my claims are fantastic. Nor can I understand why Christians who claim to believe in Christ would persecute and put to death a man whose whole purpose was to prove the truth of the things they themselves were declaring, namely, that Jesus was the Christ.



I could understand them for persecuting Joseph if he had said, “I am Christ,” or if he had said, “There is no Christ,” or if he had said someone else is Christ. Then Christians believing in Christ would be justified in opposing him. But what he said was, “He whom ye claim to serve, declare I unto you. . . . I testify that I saw Him and talked with Him. He

is the Son of God. Why persecute me for that?” . . .

Perhaps some of you are wondering how the judge reacted to our discussion. He sat and listened intently; he then asked some very pointed and searching questions, and at the end of the period he said: “Mr. Brown, I wonder if your people appreciate the import of your message. Do you?” He said, “If what you have told me is true, it is the greatest message that has come to this earth since the angels announced the birth of Christ.”

This was a judge speaking, a great statesman, an intelligent man. He threw out the challenge: “Do you appreciate the import of what you say?” He added: “I wish it were true. I hope it may be true. God knows it ought to be true. I would to God,” he said, and he wept as he said it, “that some man could appear on earth and authoritatively say, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’”

As I intimated, we did not meet again. I have brought to you very briefly some of the reasons why I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. But undergirding and overarching all that, I say to you from the very center of my heart that by the revelations of the Holy Ghost I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. While these evidences and many others that could be cited may have the effect of giving one an intellectual conviction, only by the whisperings of the Holy Spirit can one come to know the things of God. By those whisperings I say I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I thank God for that knowledge. ■

An excerpt from the edited and published version of a speech delivered at Brigham Young University on October 4, 1955; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling modernized.

Joseph Smith

Prophet of the Restoration



The world in general would not have noted the birth of a baby boy to a struggling farm family in rural Vermont on December 23, 1805. The event was little noticed on earth, but not so in the heavens. This birth had been long ago prophesied, even down to the name of the baby—Joseph (see 2 Nephi 3:15).

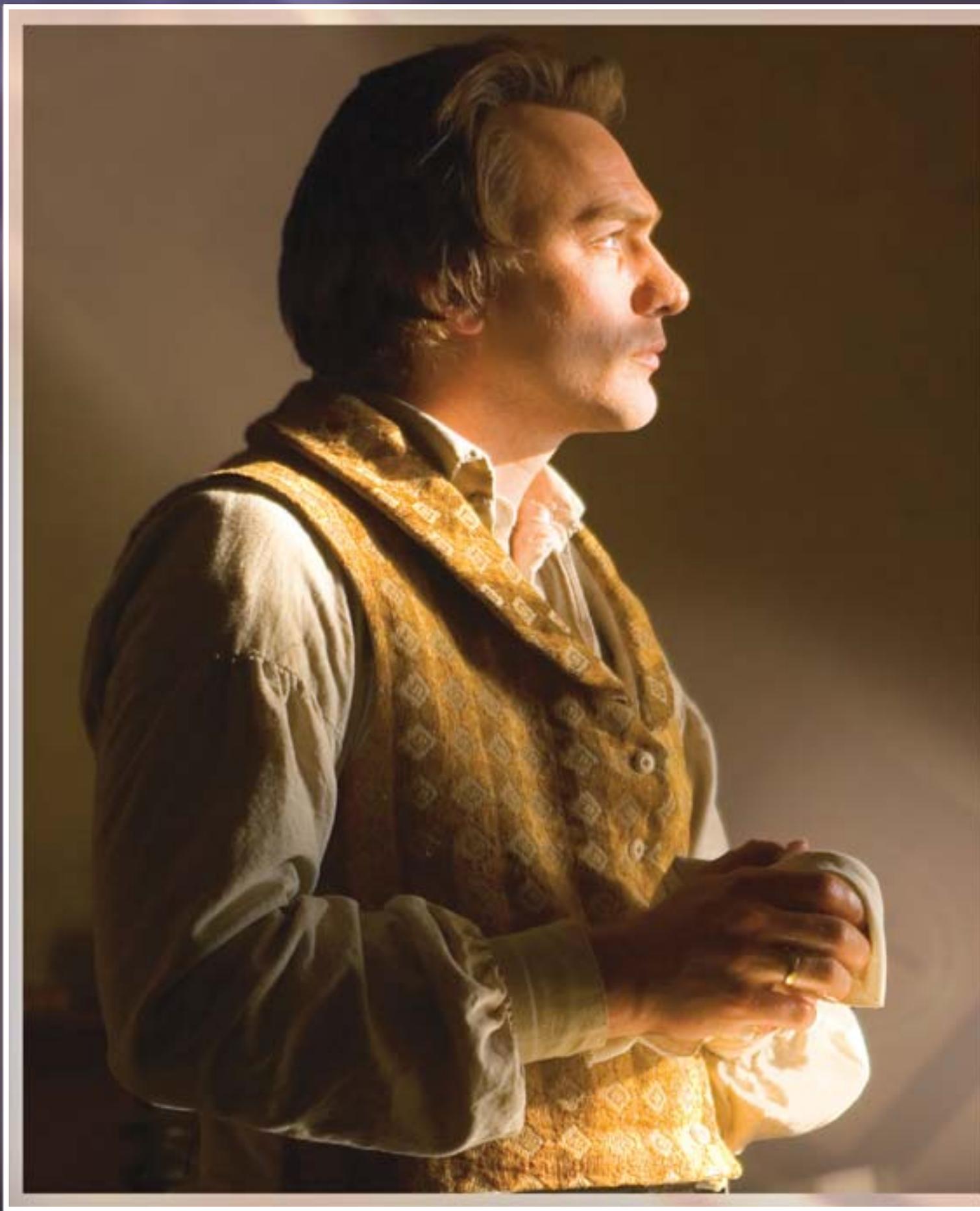
This obscure boy was only 14 when the heavens opened to him in a vision of God the Father and His Son, and young Joseph later learned that his name “should be had for good and evil among all nations” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

Today his name lives for good in the hearts of millions. His story is told in a new movie, *Joseph Smith The Prophet of the Restoration*. These scenes are taken from that film, which is now being shown in many Church visitors’ centers around the world.

Young Joseph being comforted by his father before painful surgery (above); carried on the back of his older brother Alvin (right); receiving direction during the appearance of Moroni in his room (opposite page); studying the Bible (inset, opposite page).







The film shows the Prophet Joseph's contemplative, spiritual side (left) as well as key events in his life.



Courting his wife Emma (inset, above left); rejoicing with Emma after the birth of their child (above); rebuking prison guards for their foul talk (left); retrieving the golden plates from the Hill Cumorah (lower left); suffering in Liberty Jail (below).



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH; RIGHT BOTTOM: PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUIKE

Producing

JOSEPH SMITH THE PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

How do you tell in 68 minutes the story of someone whose accomplishments were larger than life? In this case, with long-range planning, intense preparation, prayer—and the kind of help that film production companies ordinarily do not get. Those involved in filming *Joseph Smith The Prophet of the Restoration* can attest that there was help with the project beyond what they could have accomplished on their own—help, for example, with casting lead actors and with two perfect days for scheduled filming in the middle of a run of bad weather.

The result is a film that depicts the Prophet Joseph Smith as a man with human qualities but with extraordinary ability to respond to divine direction and to lead others according to that direction.

Production of the film required careful coordination and planning. For example:

- Filming took place over several months in Nauvoo; Upstate New York; the historic Upper Canada Village

near Ottawa; Lincoln's New Salem Village near Springfield, Illinois; the Mississippi River; Manchester, England; and the Church's Motion Picture Studio near Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

- The film has a principal cast of about 40 individuals. A crew of more than 100 took part in the production, and some scenes included up to 300 local actors as extras. In addition, many locals were hired to help with makeup, hairdressing, and so on, for on-location shooting.
- Wardrobes were extensively researched to create costumes authentic to the early 1800s.
- The film was produced under the direction of the First Presidency and through the Church's Audiovisual Department. It premiered on December 17, 2005, one week before the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth, in the Legacy Theater of the Joseph Smith Memorial Building on Temple Square. ■

Behind-the-scenes work for the production included extensive support from the film crew, makeup artists, and hairdressers (left and below right); spreading snow for a winter scene in Nauvoo (right); and creation of a cramped jail cell on a studio stage (below).



PHOTOGRAPH OF FILMSTRIP © ULTIMATE SYMBOL

Left to right: Elijah,
Hope, Joshua, and
Faithe Christensen.



Faithe, Hope, & Elijah

BY JOYCE
FINK

The Christensens see the medical blessings in the lives of their children as a testimony of Heavenly Father's love.

Watching the children of Todd and Pamela Christensen running through a water sprinkler and splashing in a pool, you would never guess that three of the four children have rare heart defects—unless, of course, you notice the scars on the chests of the twins, Faithe and Hope, and their youngest brother, Elijah.

Faithe and Hope are aptly named. Because of them, their parents have learned many lessons on the principles of faith and hope. The lessons started when Todd was a recent graduate from Boise State University and Pamela was expecting the twins.

**Right: Nine-month-old
Faithe and Hope as
babies in Australia.
Below: Faithe and
Hope today.**



Todd thought he had a job lined up with the Idaho Department of Commerce, but it didn't work out. His only job offer came from a prospective employer in Australia who wanted to hire him for nine months. Every time the Christensens prayed about finding a job, the employer from Australia called with a better offer. Finally Todd accepted the position when he was promised a year of employment.

That was November 1, 1996. The twins were born in Idaho on December 29 that same year. While performing a routine checkup the day after their births, the doctor detected a heart murmur in Hope. She was diagnosed with truncus arteriosus, a rare form of the "blue baby" syndrome that requires open-heart surgery within four or five months.

Their doctor knew that the Christensens were moving to Melbourne, Australia, in less than a month. He told Todd that if he had to choose one hospital in the entire world that had the best medical care for truncus surgery and the doctors with the best record for performing it, he would name Australia's Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

"We never had any worries or concerns in our minds that we would lose our children," says Pamela. "You can't deny the comforting of the Spirit."

"As a father of about 12 hours, I just lost it and cried," Todd recalls. "It was a testimony to me of our Father in Heaven's love for His children."

The Best Medical Care

The family soon moved to Australia and received medical treatment for Hope. While Hope was in surgery, a nurse looked at Faithe and asked if she had been tested for the same heart condition. The pediatrician had previously told Todd and Pamela that the babies were fraternal twins with no risk of sharing the problem, but when Faithe was tested, it was discovered that she had the same condition as her sister, only on the opposite side of the heart. Faithe underwent surgery 21 days later.

Todd gave each baby a blessing before the surgeries. "I remember blessing Faithe that she would be strong and be able to help her sister. I remember blessing Hope and having the strong impression that she would be able to run and have strength throughout her entire life and that there would be medical techniques that would provide for her needs."



Left: Joshua hides behind Faithe as Elijah, lying down, and Hope play with their dog, Basil.

Below: Joshua feeds baby Elijah.



“The whole time we were there, we never had any worries or concerns in our minds that we would lose our children,” Pamela adds. “You can’t deny the comforting of the Spirit.”

Blessed by the Priesthood

After 12 months in Australia, the family moved to Tacoma, Washington. Because the work of the Melbourne surgeon had been so skillful, Faithe went three years beyond the initial prognosis of when she would require more surgery. She had corrective surgery at the end of June 2004. Hope had undergone similar surgery the year before.

After a healthy son, Joshua, was added to the family, the Christensens again heard the diagnosis of truncus arteriosus when their second son, Elijah, was born in January 2003. He had surgery at the end of May that same year only days before Hope’s second surgery.

The Christensens were able to share their feelings of peace, prayer, and faith with hospital personnel. One doctor acknowledged their belief in a higher power. “I can understand that,” he said. “My hands are guided at times.”

“The many, many priesthood blessings that these children have received because of this [condition] are very

evident,” Pamela says. “Not in miraculous healings, but in the fact that Faithe and Hope run and aren’t weary. They’re vibrant and alive. Kids with this condition can be so tired and exhausted that walking up and down stairs can leave them breathless and their hearts beating irregularly.”

She adds, “Their quality of life is just astounding considering the ticking time bomb that’s inside their chests.”

Hope in the Future

In spite of ongoing surgeries for their children, the Christensens remain upbeat and positive and hope that medical advances will help their children someday. Many changes have already occurred in the years between the twins’ surgeries and Elijah’s surgery.

In the meantime, the tender little spirits of Faithe, Hope, and Elijah act as missionaries to nurses and doctors, who often comment about how happy and active they are.

“They’ve been blessed with physical trials,” Pamela says, “but they’ve also been given a larger portion of the spirit of love and happiness in their lives to help overcome the trial they have been given.” ■

The Fall

of Adam and Eve



A series examining doctrines unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Most Christian churches teach that the Fall was a tragedy, that if Adam and Eve had not partaken of the forbidden fruit, they and all their posterity could now be living in immortal bliss in the Garden of Eden. But truth revealed to latter-day prophets teaches that the Fall was not a tragedy—without it Adam and Eve would have had no posterity. Thus, the Fall was a necessary step in Heavenly Father’s plan to bring about the eternal happiness of His children.

No Death, No Posterity, No Progress

“If Adam had not transgressed,” Lehi taught his son Jacob, “he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. . . .

“And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

“But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:22–25).

After Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were opened, and Eve expressed gladness at the opportunity their transgression made possible: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11).

Partaking of the fruit brought mortality, with its many opportunities to choose between good and evil, and

enabled Adam and Eve to have children. Thus the Fall opened the door for Heavenly Father's children to come into the world, obtain physical bodies, and participate in "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8). "Therefore this life became a probationary state," a time to learn and grow, to repent and overcome weakness, "a time to prepare to meet God" (Alma 12:24).

Transgression, Not Sin

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) said: "I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. . . . This was a transgression of the law, but not a sin . . . for it was something that Adam and Eve had to do!"¹

Regarding this distinction, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: "This suggested contrast between a *sin* and a *transgression* reminds us of the careful wording in the second article of faith: 'We believe that men will be punished for their own *sins*, and not for Adam's *transgression*' (emphasis added). It also echoes a familiar distinction in the law. Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited. These words are not always used to denote something different, but this distinction seems meaningful in the circumstances of the Fall."²

Even though Adam and Eve had not sinned, because of their transgression they had to face certain consequences, two of which were spiritual death and physical death. Physical death came to Adam and Eve at the end of their earthly lives, but spiritual death occurred as they were cast out of the Garden of Eden, being cut off from the presence of God (see Alma 42:9).



All descendants of Adam and Eve inherit certain effects from the Fall, but because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ we are accountable only for our own sins.

Original Sin

The result of our first parents' transgression, explained President Smith, "was banishment from the presence of God and bringing . . . physical death into the world. The majority . . . [of Christians] maintain that every child born into this world is tainted with 'original sin,' or partakes of Adam's transgression in his birth. The second Article of Faith contradicts this foolish and erroneous doctrine."³ All descendants of Adam and Eve inherit certain effects from the Fall, but because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ we are held accountable only for our own sins. Children who die before the age of accountability are "alive in Christ"

(Moroni 8:12) and have no need of repentance or baptism (see Moroni 8:8–11).

Commandments in the Garden

The Lord gave Adam and Eve commandments in the Garden of Eden, two of which were to multiply and replenish the earth (see Genesis 1:28) and to not partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 2:17). These two commandments were designed to place Adam and Eve in a position where they had to make a choice. President Smith taught: "The Lord said to Adam that if he wished to remain as he was in the garden, then he was not to eat the fruit, but if he desired to eat it and partake of death he was at liberty to do so."⁴ Faced with this dilemma, Adam and Eve chose death—both physical and spiritual—which opened the door for themselves and their posterity to gain knowledge and experience and to participate in the Father's plan of happiness leading to eternal life. ■

NOTES

1. *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:114–15.
2. "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72.
3. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 1:82.
4. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:81.



A Chilly Morning in Queens

BY AMIE JANE LEAVITT

I went to New York to see the sights but came home with a testimony of family history.

In September 2000, I was on my first trip to New York City. My plans included all of the typical tourist activities a young person would want to do—see a Broadway play, shop in Chinatown, stroll through Central Park, and eat cheesecake and pizza. I was fortunate to have a place to stay with friends in Queens, across the East River from Manhattan. From the moment I arrived, the name Queens sounded oddly familiar to me. What was it about the name that seemed so important for me to remember?

The week went along as anticipated. My friend and I made our way through the crowded city streets at twilight. As we rode the rust-red 7 train in Jackson Heights through the aromas of fried *arepas* and grilled meats, Queens and its familiarity kept popping into my mind. Then suddenly I remembered. Years earlier, while I was taking a family history class at Brigham Young University, my mother and I had

found a brown envelope in a box of old family papers. In it we discovered a deed to a cemetery plot purchased in 1867 by my great-great-grandfather John Edward Reiss. This cemetery was located in Queens, New York.

A Dead-End Line?

My mother, a convert to the Church, had diligently gathered information about her ancestors for 30 years. Since many of the family members who would have had valuable knowledge had already passed away, our information on several of the pedigree lines had stopped. This was one of those lines. All we really knew about the Reiss family was that my great-great-grandfather John Edward Reiss and his grandfather emigrated from Germany and had eventually settled and died in Ashley, Pennsylvania. The cemetery plot deed told us they had been in Queens, New York.

After calling my mother and retrieving as much information as possible from the deed, I tried to figure out what to do next. Since I had never done any actual family history research, I was worried that I would not be able to find any leads with only the name of the cemetery. Despite my pessimism, I decided to give

it a try. I picked up the phone and dialed information. Stunned, I listened as the operator gave me the cemetery's address and phone number without any hesitation. I never imagined it would be so easy.

Martin and Elisa

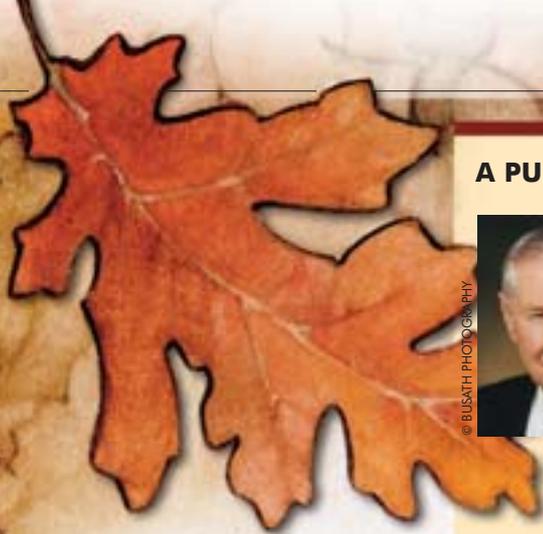
On a sunny but chilly autumn morning on my last day in New York, my friend and I hailed a cab outside my friend's apartment and gave the driver the address of the cemetery. On the way, our Spanish-speaking driver asked why we were going there. My friend explained in Spanish that we were hoping to find the burial plots purchased by my great-great grandfather. The cab driver seemed intrigued and continued to ask questions as we drove. After sharing with us the importance of family in his Hispanic culture, he told us how amazed he was that I would do something like this for ancestors I had never even met.

Upon arriving at the cemetery, I went into the main office and explained my quest to the woman behind the counter. Since the family plot of eight graves had been purchased well over 100 years ago, I anxiously considered the amount of time it might take her to uncover any information. I waited, knowing that my flight was set to leave in a few hours and the taxi's meter was still running outside. I was pleasantly surprised when she walked over to a card-file drawer and—as if this information had just been entered yesterday—jotted down some notes and returned to the counter within a few minutes.

"There are two people buried here," she stated.

An indescribable feeling came over me. "What?" I replied. "Do you have any information on them?"





A PULL FROM OUR ANCESTORS



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“The process of finding our ancestors one by one can be challenging but also exciting and rewarding. We

often feel spiritual guidance as we go to the sources which identify them. Because this is a very spiritual work, we can expect help from the other side of the veil. We feel a pull from our relatives who are waiting for us to find them so their ordinance work can be done. This is a Christlike service because we are doing something for them that they cannot do for themselves.”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Phenomenon That Is You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 55–56.

“Hold on a minute,” she answered. “Let me go look in another book in the back.”

Soon she returned with the names and burial dates for the two individuals. One was Martin Reiss, with no information except his name, since his body had been transferred here in 1867 from another cemetery. The other was Elisa Reiss, who had died at the age of three. Since it was a law in New York that only direct-line descendants could be buried in a family plot, I knew they must be the children of my great-great-grandfather John Edward Reiss. She continued, “There aren’t markers on the grave sites, so they might be a little difficult to find.”

At the Cemetery

With map in hand, our driver was beaming with enthusiasm as he drove the oak-lined William Avenue through the older part of the cemetery toward my family’s plot. Once there, we followed the map’s directions, searching for the proper locale among crumbling monuments. I was excited—after all, this was my family. But to see that our cab driver, a complete stranger, was so interested was truly remarkable. Once we found the site of the graves—a little area along William Avenue—the driver told us how sad he felt that the graves of these two children had no markers. We agreed.

As we walked through crunchy autumn leaves and acorns on the lane near our plot, I could imagine the solemn sight of John Edward Reiss coming here some 133 years before in a horse-drawn wagon to bury his tiny daughter Elisa. This image filled me with emotion. I was walking in the same steps as my great-great grandfather.

It had been 133 years ago and our family now lived far to the west, but a member of John’s posterity had returned here in search of information and had found it. I truly felt the Holy Ghost had guided me to this sacred spot.

From Queens to Utah

As I returned home to Utah that day, I thought about finding Martin and his sister Elisa. I realized that family history work isn’t just for the older generation. I had found family members—even though I didn’t think I could. My mother had been frustrated for years, but all along, the answer lay in a brown envelope tucked away in her box of old family papers. The

envelope had been transported by my great-grandmother Elizabeth Reiss Kendrick to homes in Pennsylvania and Ohio and finally to California. Then my mother brought it with her to Utah when she attended BYU as a young college student. It wasn’t just a coincidence that these few documents—the only link to these family members who had passed away so many years previously—would fall into the hands of my mother when she embarked on her quest to find her ancestors. Nor was it just a coincidence that I had the opportunity of being in the right place at the right time on my very first trip to New York.

I was bringing home with me the names of Martin and Elisa Reiss, whom we hadn’t even known existed. They would be added to our family history and, through the temple ordinances, be reunited with their family.

As the Lord tells us in Luke 15: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not . . . go after that which is lost, until he find it? . . . And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost” (vv. 4, 6). ■

SIXWAYS

TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE **STRONG**

BY WENDI LYN JENSEN

Most marriages have ups and downs, but these six ideas can help keep your marriage on the upswing.

My husband and I were at his parents' home talking with his mother about his younger sister, who was contemplating marriage. She had been wondering if you were supposed to have "fireworks" or "tingles" when you were with the person you intended to marry. As we were talking, our seven-year-old son came in and wanted help with a yo-yo. My husband became a big kid and proceeded to show our son many yo-yo tricks. I laughed as I watched him and realized there were still some "tingles,"

but that our marriage—any marriage—was like the yo-yo with its ups and downs. And it takes both partners working together to make it through the "down" times.

Every situation is different, and my husband and I are far from perfect, but we've found a few things that help us remain focused on making our marriage work.

1. Attend the temple together. There is nothing quite like sitting in an endowment session, looking across the aisle, and seeing your spouse, all in white, smiling at you. Going to the temple is a great way to build spiritual unity. After you complete a session, it is hard to be negative or to find fault with your spouse. The eternal perspective comes into view, and you are reminded of the covenants you have made. We have found that when we attend the temple, we are more likely to do the things that keep the Spirit of the Lord strong in



our home. We need all the help we can get to fight off the forces of Satan, and going to the temple helps us invite the Lord's Spirit into our marriage.

2. Help each other in Church callings.

Some callings require more time away from family than others, putting a strain on family relationships. My husband and I have made it a point to serve together. We support each other in our callings and share some responsibilities. Each of us is willing to watch the children when the other has an activity or meeting. We try to be positive about each other's callings and to offer helpful ideas.

I am currently serving in Young Women, and my husband is a counselor in the bishopric. He comes and listens to some of my lessons and helps me prepare for certain activities. I keep track of his meetings so I can have dinner ready for him. I also allow myself to be flexible when bishopric responsibilities come up. When we support each other in our callings, we both know what the other is doing and we feel closer to each other.

3. Watch what you say. Words can be cruel. They can damage and tear your marriage apart very quickly. When you allow yourself to become angry, you may say things you wish you could take back. But once spoken, words are very hard to erase from your partner's mind.



My husband and I do not yell at each other. This is not to say that we don't have disagreements. But when we are upset, we usually take a while to work things out in our own minds before discussing the situation with each other. If we were to talk immediately, we might say something mean or cruel just because we are caught up in the heat of the moment. When we take time to analyze what made us upset, we don't dwell on unimportant words or acts that may have triggered the disagreement but really have nothing to do with the root of the problem.

4. Lean on each other. Every family will face some sort of difficulty. They come in all forms—sudden unemployment, a rebellious teenager, a vehicle accident, a very sick child. Whatever the problem, it is important to lean on each other and strengthen each other.

When our second child was almost two, he went into res-

piratory failure due to an infection and was put in intensive care. This was hard on all of us. My husband couldn't afford to take a whole week off from work, so we decided it would be best for him to continue working while I stayed at the hospital during the day. I became very worn out, both physically and emotionally. But my husband would hurry in after work to relieve me so that I could shower, have a nap, and spend

a few minutes with our oldest son, who was staying with grandparents. This did wonders for my well-being. I made sure I was the one to stay at the hospital at night so my husband could get a good night's sleep and be alert at work. It would have been easy to turn on each other because of the stress we were under, but by leaning on each other we grew closer and were able to deal with having a very sick child.

5. Be a couple. Getting married and leaving the single life can be quite an adjustment. It takes sacrifice and love to make marriage work. One thing that has helped us is to remember we are a couple. This means we both have had to sacrifice and give up certain things. All too often married couples try to continue with the separate activities they participated in while they were single without giving

much regard to their partner. My husband loves to play softball and basketball, and he would participate in one or the other every night if he could. But he realizes that leaving me with the children while he focuses on his own interests is not fair to me.

We have to compromise in marriage. Each partner needs to realize that being a couple should take priority over individual interests. This is not to say that once you get married, you have to give up all individual hobbies and interests. But



they need to be pursued carefully, so that they don't cause contention or frustration in the marriage relationship.

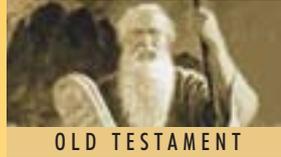
In addition to separate interests, the busyness of life can sometimes prevent you from being a couple. A marriage relationship can quite easily become secondary to children, work, callings, or household duties. My husband and I try to have at least one date every week. Sometimes we go out to dinner or some other activity, but other times we just put the kids to bed

and watch a video together. Making time for each other is not easy, but it is vital to a marriage.

6. Remember why you fell in love. During the down times it may be difficult to remember why you married your spouse. Those are the times, though, when you most *need* to remember. Stop and think about the things that made you fall in love. When I find myself being critical of my husband, I think about his smile, his musical abilities, or perhaps our first kiss. Anything positive about him helps me remember that this is the man I want to spend eternity with.

Yes, marriage could be like a yo-yo, but if we work on this most important relationship we can avoid many of the down times. One yo-yo trick is to let it “sleep”—the yo-yo just spins in place at the bottom of the string. All too often married couples let their marriages “sleep.” They don't try hard enough to get back to the “up” side of things. It is a constant struggle, one that takes daily effort, but the rewards are eternal. And if you work at it, no matter how long you've been married, you can still have the “tingles.” ■





OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE



I testify that the Lord knows our hearts and He knows our needs, and if we will choose to be obedient, He will provide blessings in ways we can hardly imagine.

BY ELDER DAVID F. EVANS
Of the Seventy

As I have read the Old Testament, I have been impressed with the teaching that blessings come as we follow the Lord by obeying His prophets. One of the most striking examples of this principle is found in 1 Samuel, where the prophet Samuel declares to King Saul: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

This lesson was impressed upon me forcefully in the spring of 1998 when, together with my wife, I was called to preside over the Japan Nagoya Mission. While most mission presidents are called during the late fall and early winter and then depart around the first of July, we found ourselves in President Thomas S. Monson’s office on April 28. We were to leave in just seven weeks. During the interview President Monson asked about the health of my father and mother. Mother was well, but my father was suffering from the debilitating effects of Alzheimer’s disease. His health had been declining for

many years, and he now had to receive constant care in an Alzheimer’s facility.

As we discussed my father’s condition, I indicated to President Monson that I did not think Dad would be able to comprehend the call or understand that our family would be leaving for three years. We discussed the fact that when I said good-bye to my father, it would probably be the last time I would see him in this life. It was a tender discussion with one of the Lord’s prophets.

President Monson formally extended the call and then gave me instruction for which I will be forever grateful. He told me to go to the care facility and explain the call to Dad as fully and normally as I would to anyone else. I was puzzled, because I did not think Dad would be able to understand. However, the next day I went and did as President Monson had told me.

My mother was also in the room as I told Dad about the call and our visit with President Monson. Dad just sat in his chair with his head slumped to the side, as he did so often. Near the conclusion of my visit, I said to him, “Dad, do you feel good about this?” At that question, he lifted up his head,



The prophet Samuel admonished King Saul to obey the voice of the Lord.

looked directly at me, and said, “Yes, I do.” It is my testimony that he was blessed, at least for that moment, with the ability to clearly understand and clearly respond. Then he slipped back to his former condition.

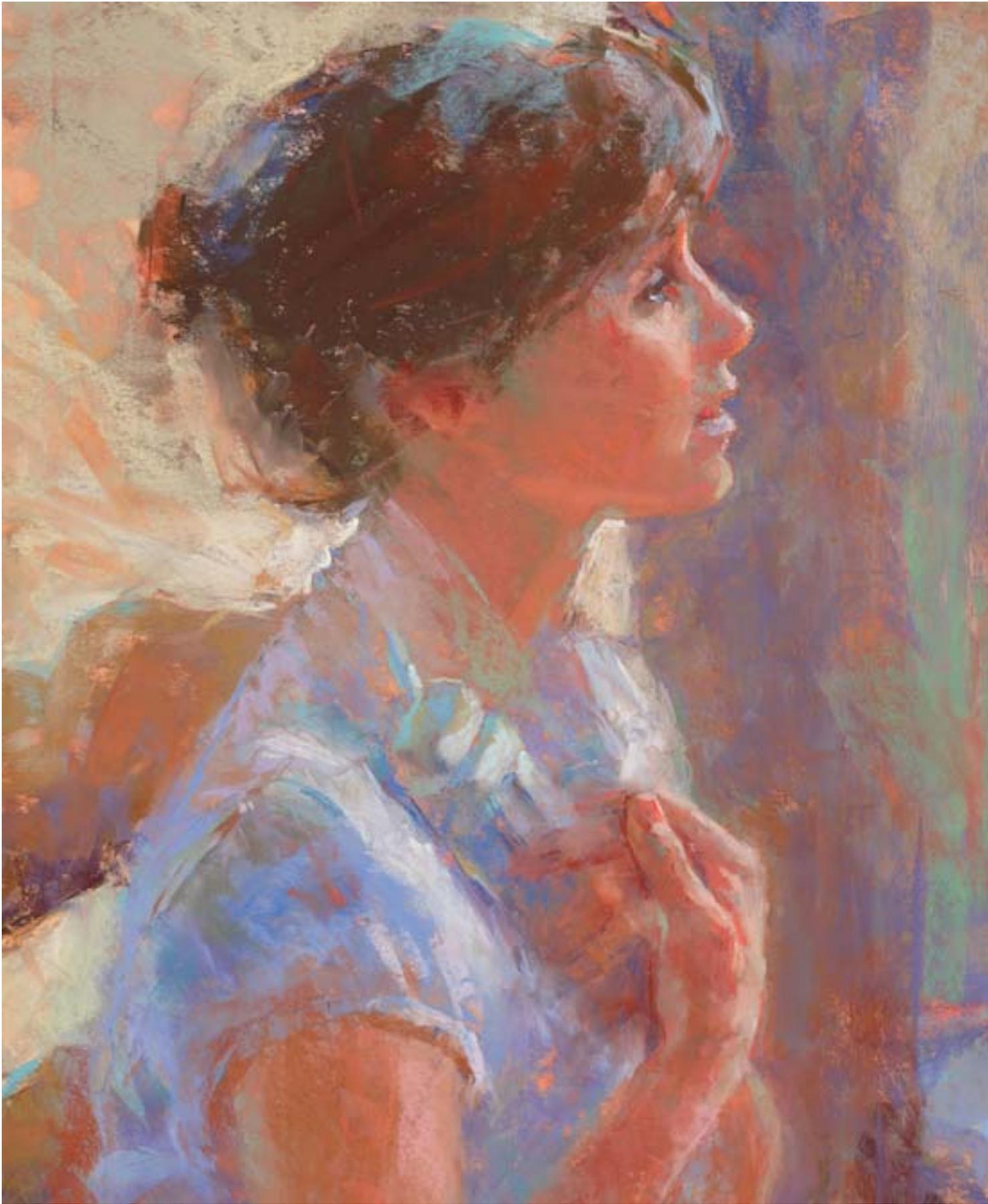
What a wonderful experience. For a moment, and for the last time in this life, we had truly communicated. I knew how Dad felt about the call. I was comforted to know that we left on our mission with his blessing.

If I had relied on my own understanding before meeting with my father, I would have assumed that a conversation about my mission call would be fruitless. But the Lord was aware of my wife and me, and because He knew the longing of our hearts, He directed us through one of His prophets. Perhaps this direction also came because the Lord knew of my father’s desire to express, one last time in mortality, his love, faith, and support before his son left for several years on the Lord’s errand.

Less than four months after we left for Japan, my father

passed away. His passing left a void in my life that has been eased by my knowledge that he has safely returned to Heavenly Father and that he is well, restored, and engaged in the Lord’s work on the other side. How I look forward to visiting with him again and telling him all that happened during our mission and afterward.

How grateful I am that we have living prophets to lead and guide us today. I have reflected again and again on the blessing of knowing the word of the Lord and then having the power to choose to follow His word. Whether He gives direction on a seemingly small matter, such as the counsel to speak with my father, or whether it is a matter upon which our very salvation may hinge, it is my testimony that the Lord seeks our obedience coupled with our faith. I pray that each of us will choose to be obedient to His word. I testify that He knows our hearts and He knows our needs, and if we will choose to be obedient, He will provide blessings in ways we can hardly imagine. ■



A Greater Love

BY EVE BURCH

An unusual telephone call changed the course of my life.

I don't remember when my parents first told me I was adopted. It was just part of who I was—like my blue eyes and my love of music. My father always made it sound like something wonderful. He said he and my mother had especially chosen me, while other parents had to take what they were given. As I grew, I knew that my parents, to whom I had been sealed in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple, were the parents I was supposed to have. My love for my family members grew each day, and I knew that no matter what my bloodline was, they were truly my family.

Yet during my teenage years, I often thought that someday I would like to find the woman who had given birth to me. I was curious about the circumstances surrounding my birth, and, most of all, I wanted to thank my birth mother for what she had done for me. Although I did not fully comprehend the complexities of the decision she had made, I did know that placing a child for adoption was not a popular choice. I was incredibly grateful that my birth mother had chosen to give me something she could not provide herself—an eternal family with both a mother and a father to love and care for me.

The year 1992 turned out to be very eventful for me. I married my sweetheart in the Las Vegas Nevada Temple in May. I will be eternally grateful that my father was able to attend our wedding, because that was the last time I saw

him. We lost him unexpectedly six weeks later due to a heart attack and associated complications. It took me awhile to adjust to the addition of one man to my life and the loss of another. But Heavenly Father always knows when we are ready to grow through trials and challenges.

By the end of the year, when life was starting to feel a little more settled, I got an unusual telephone call from my mother. She had received a letter from a couple in Utah who said they were the maternal grandparents of a baby girl placed for adoption in Sandpoint, Idaho, 28 years previously. They requested that if my parents were willing, the information containing their names, address, and telephone number be forwarded to me.

My mother explained that the letter had taken a miraculous journey to reach her. It was originally mailed to the family with whom my biological mother had stayed during her pregnancy. This family forwarded it to a dear lady who had been in my parents' ward at the time I was adopted. She had long since moved from Sandpoint, but the family remembered where she worked and sent it there. This sister in turn forwarded the letter to my parents—in Sandpoint, Idaho—with no street address. Although Sandpoint is a relatively small town, under normal circumstances it still would have been next to impossible to deliver a letter with no street address. But my mother had worked for years as a mail carrier and was well known at the Sandpoint post office. The letter was hand-delivered directly to her when it arrived. I can't help but believe there was

heavenly assistance in helping this letter along its journey.

My mother told me she would mail the information to me rather than give it to me over the telephone. She said she wanted to allow me time to decide what I would do.

The next few days passed slowly as I pondered my options. Even after receiving the letter, I carried it around in my purse for two weeks. I knew that contacting these people would answer many of the questions I'd always had.

And yet I had heard of so many reunions of this kind that had not ended well. I could be opening myself up to so many things. In the end, however, I knew that if I did not attempt to contact this couple, I would always be curious and wonder what would have happened if I had made a different decision.

One afternoon at work, I finally convinced myself to make the phone call. I spoke with two sweet-sounding people who could not emphasize enough how happy they were that I had called. They briefly told me about their family and the circumstances surrounding my birth. Their daughter, Karen, had become pregnant as a high school senior, with no option of being happily married. They asked about me and my life. They requested my home phone number and told me they would have Karen call me that evening. So I went home after work quite anxious about the telephone call I was to receive.

Karen called me as promised. We spent what seemed like an eternity on the phone together. Like her parents, she wanted to know all about me, my family, and the life I had led. She was thrilled to know that I was active in the Church, had served a full-time mission, and had been married in the temple just that year. She shared with me how difficult it had been to place me for adoption and the struggles and uncertainties she had experienced since that day, wondering if she had made the right choice. She wanted to emphasize that she did not let me go because she didn't want me or love me. She had felt strongly that I was meant to be someone else's baby.

At that point, I did what I had always promised myself

I would do if I were ever given the opportunity. I thanked her from the bottom of my heart for the decision she had made and for giving me a loving, active Latter-day Saint family. I told her that, through her sacrifice, she had allowed me to have everything I valued in my life.

Karen did not respond. At first, I was uncertain if I had said something wrong. Then I realized she was sobbing. It took a few minutes, but she was then able to share with me a special experience. In the years since my birth, she had often felt worried and anxious about me and would sometimes get depressed. During one of these periods she received a blessing of comfort from a family friend. He said many things in the blessing, but one promise stood out. She was told that at some future time, either in this life or in the life to come, we would meet again and I would thank her for the choice and sacrifice she had made. Our conversation that night was a direct fulfillment of that promise.

Even though Karen and I were miles apart, the Spirit bore witness to both of us that her choice and my growing up in the family I did were all in accordance with Heavenly Father's plan.

Karen and I made plans to meet in person, and in the 13 years since that night, Karen has become a cherished friend. She has developed a special relationship with my sweet mother as well. Karen has never attempted to take my mother's place. She simply adds another dimension of love to a life full of blessings. She has also become "Grandma Karen" to my four children, who adore her.

After experiencing the pregnancy and delivery of my own four children, I appreciate even more deeply the gift Karen gave me. When you carry a baby for nine months, that baby truly becomes a part of you. To give up that life so selflessly in order to allow that baby to have a complete family and the opportunity of temple blessings takes a deeper kind of love. It is true charity. ■

For more information about adoption or dealing with unplanned pregnancy, contact LDS Family Services or go to www.itsaboutlove.org.

I thanked Karen for giving me a loving, active Latter-day Saint family. I told her she had allowed me to have everything I valued in my life.

Exercising Charity and Nurturing Those in Need



Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

Blessings of Belonging to Relief

Society: In keeping with the Relief Society's motto, "Charity never faileth," each sister is encouraged to develop and exercise the pure love of Christ in all aspects of her life. She is also encouraged to nurture and care for those in her family, her ward, and her community.

What Is Charity?

Moroni 7:47: "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "We often equate charity with visiting the sick, taking in casseroles to those in need, or sharing our excess with those who are less fortunate. But really, true charity is much, much more.

"Real charity is not something you give away; it is something that you acquire and make a part of yourself. And when the virtue of charity becomes implanted in your heart, you are never the same again. . . .

"Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don't judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone's differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended. . . . Charity is refusing to take advantage of another's weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us.

Charity is expecting the best of each other" ("The Tongue Can Be a Sharp Sword," *Ensign*, May 1992, 18–19).

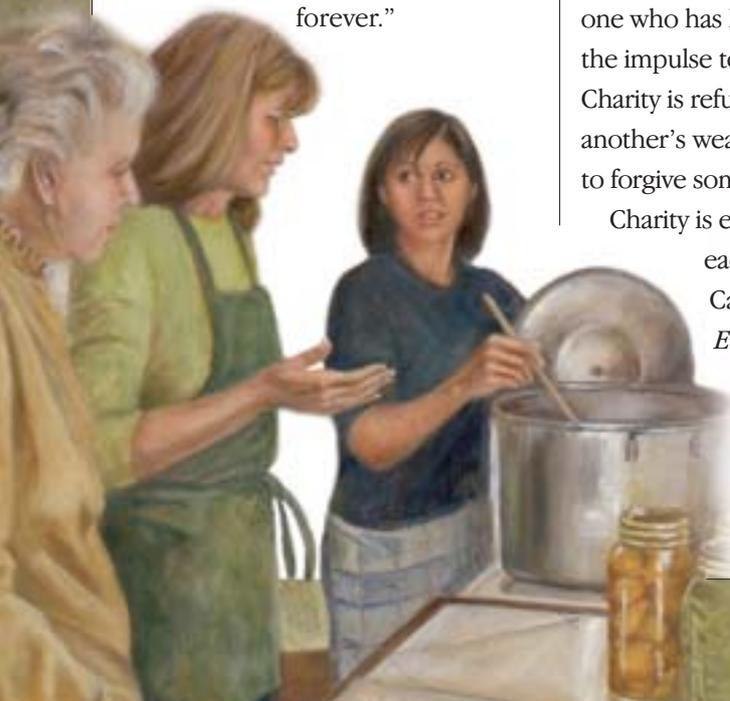
Moroni 7:48: "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love."

How Can We Exercise Charity and Nurture Those in Need?

Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency: "I testify as did Alma that 'by small and simple things are great things brought to pass' [Alma 37:6]. In our homes, those small and simple things—our daily acts of charity—proclaim our conviction, 'Here am I; send me.' I leave my witness that the greatest act of charity in time and all eternity was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He willingly laid down His life to atone for my sins and yours. I express my devotion to His cause and my desire to serve Him always, wherever He calls me" ("Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 110).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95): "We entreat you to minister with your powerful influence for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities. . . .

"Those who follow Christ seek to follow his example. His suffering in behalf of our sins, shortcomings, sorrows, and sicknesses should motivate us to similarly reach out in charity and compassion to those around us. It is most appropriate that the motto of the longest-standing women's organization in the world—the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is 'Charity Never Faileth'" ("Stand Firm in the Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 97). ■



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I have observed that when a loved one dies, many families face conflict over the division of assets and belongings. What are some basic guidelines that could help me avoid similar problems?



Before Death

We have been counseled to prepare for unforeseen events. The transfer of possessions upon death should be such an event. Start now and have a plan in place to minimize strained family relations at the time of your death. Planning for the transfer of possessions after death applies to everyone, not just those with large estates.

Get a recommendation of a qualified and capable attorney to help. You want someone who will be able to advise you on all the aspects of your

property and any special situations.

Your estate plan does not need to provide for equal division of property or complete fairness. Share the reasons for your decisions with your family now so they aren't surprised later at the reading of the will.

Gregory L. Tanner, California

Today, one can acquire a simple will very reasonably from an attorney or legal clinic. Costs vary depending on circumstances, local economic considerations, and the complexity of the will. Self-help documents are available in office supply stores and on the Internet. Caveat emptor ("let the buyer beware") is the rule for all self-help documents.

David L. Evans, Washington

Be sure to tell your spouse or another family member what your computer passwords are so they can access financial records and other necessary documents on the computer. Also, let them know where important paper documents are located.

Earl D. Jardine, California

My family members and I have created a photo album of everything in

my parents' home. Digital cameras work well for this, and the resulting images can easily be put onto a CD and stored in a safety deposit box for insurance purposes.

We numbered each photo and made a database that contained the following columns: category of item (furniture, jewelry, and so on), item name, description, history. We then had two final columns. One was the column in which people put their names if they desired to inherit that item. The last column was the official record of who would actually inherit the article. There are many ways to reach a final decision if more than one person wants the same item.

I appreciate that my parents have insisted that all of their estate, financial, and funeral details are worked out now. It lifts a great burden from their shoulders and will make our lives easier in the future. When the time comes to mourn, our family will be able to focus on supporting one another and will not be torn apart by details and decisions.

Patricia A. Gnadt, Illinois

Some family heirlooms may mean something special to one individual and not to others. Why not give it to that person to enjoy while you are alive and can see the smile it brings?

There also might be things of value that nobody in the family really wants. Why not dispose of those things where they will do the most good?

My wife and I are in the process of disposing of those things that we do not really need. It feels good to be simplifying our lives so that we may have more time for the important things.

Ed Kearney, Utah

When family treasures are given away prior to death, the giver should include a letter or note to the recipient identifying the object, stating clearly that it is being given as a gift, and describing the object's history, previous owners, significance to the giver, and so forth. This letter serves as evidence that the object was freely given to the recipient, as a certificate of authenticity, and as a document explaining the object's place in one's family history.

Richard A. McFarlane, California

My mother prepared well by asking each of us what we would like and then labeling her possessions with small stickers indicating who should have the item. As a result, there were no conflicts between us concerning what each of us should inherit.

Wayne H. Martin, Ohio

After Death

Upon my mother's death, my father, brothers, and I found peace, healing, and comfort by doing the following:

1. We held a family meeting, ensuring that each immediate family member was invited and encouraged to be present.



Family meetings can be a time for healing, sharing fond memories, and strengthening each other.

2. We began with a family prayer. This was a time for healing, for reflection of fond memories, and for strengthening and uplifting each other.

3. We sought to keep the Spirit with us as we made decisions regarding her earthly possessions. We decided it might become necessary to adjourn and meet again at a later date, when possible, to keep the Spirit.

4. We made copies for everyone of journals, letters, pictures, recorded blessings, death certificate, personal will, and so on.

5. We allowed time for reflection and grieving. It helped us set aside our worldly passions and focus on the eternal nature of this life and the next.

Amanda Widmer, Iowa

After my mother died, it was understood among my brothers and me that any gift given to her would be returned to the family of the giver. It

was then up to us as brothers to work out the distribution of her household.

The following process proved to be successful:

An inventory was made of all of the items and sent to each brother. Each brother privately discussed with his wife which items he and she most wanted to have.

Then, without our wives, we brothers gathered to the family home and chose numbers out of a hat. The brother who drew number 1 would have the first choice of a household item; the number 2 brother would have the second choice, and down the line to number 5. However, the number 5 brother would have the fifth *and* the sixth choice of items. The number 4 brother, who had already had the fourth choice, then had the seventh choice. The pattern continued so that the number 1 brother, who had had

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

the first choice, couldn't choose again until the 10th choice. This pattern was repeated until all of the household items had been chosen.

This manner of choosing, based on a random drawing but weighted in terms of one's opportunity for choice, gave each brother a fair opportunity of choosing among the household items without feelings of jealousy or contention. We enjoyed peace and brotherly love throughout the process.

Doug Ladle, Idaho

Family relationships are more important than earthly possessions. Realize that it isn't worth it to argue over a deceased loved one's possessions. This can result in hard feelings, emotional words, and possibly litigation in the courtroom. And whenever there is litigation, only the lawyers truly come out the winners.

Remember the intentions of the deceased loved one. Consider how heartbroken the loved one would be to know of arguing and contention.

David A. Schory, California

Everyone suffers loss differently. The division of property will go more smoothly if we will give others the benefit of the doubt and look on the heart. For example, if a member of the family seems to want to control the process or exhibits greed, it may simply be that this individual has an emotional void opened up by the loss. This individual may subconsciously feel that a tangible object will fill an emotional need. He or she may be in need of extra love and support.



Be sure that family members know where important documents are located.

Often there is one family member who "doesn't want anything." This person often cannot voice how deep his or her loss truly feels. Perhaps this person hasn't lived near the loved one for many years and feels a sense of guilt as well as a deep and profound sense of loss. This family member can feel undeserving. At some later date, he or she may regret not having some special item by which to remember the loved one. Others need to recognize that this family member should *not* be left out of any decisions or divisions. Careful consideration of this hurting individual can afford him or her great comfort once time has passed.

Lisa Morton Mills, Tennessee

Here are some suggestions based on what helped my siblings and me after our parents' death:

1. Do not expect an inheritance. Any material possession you get is just a bonus. The real inheritance left to us is not things but values.
2. Do not expect things to be totally equal. Those who get more also inherit more responsibility such as taxes, upkeep, and so on.
3. Remember, you didn't have the

item to begin with. So if you don't get it, you haven't lost anything and you don't have to figure out what to do with it when you get home.

Margaret Lott Turpin, Idaho

My parents' wills were very brief—deeding all to each other, then naming the executor, and adding only "share and share alike."

My brother, who was executor of the will, reminded us frequently: "All of this is just a mess of pottage! What really matters is the love and good feelings between us as siblings."

On the day we gathered together (siblings only—no spouses or children), we each wrote a numbered list of items desired. Next we each read off our number 1 item. If no one else had listed that item as number 1, the individual could take that item. If more than one listed it first, they negotiated. Often feelings and memories were shared, expressing why the item was desired. It was surprising that others didn't desire the same items to the same degree.

It was a sweet and tender exchange, and love abounds. ■

Rita Hardy, Alberta, Canada

Being Watched

By Kimberly Webb
Church Magazines

When I found the address I had scrawled in my notebook, I thought the place looked creepy. It was a big, old, gray house that had been converted into apartments, but it looked more like a haunted house in a black-and-white movie. Still, I wanted to meet Rachael, so I marched up the rickety steps.

Earlier, when I stared at the housing ads tacked to a board in the institute building, the ads had blurred together like a patchwork quilt made of paper and pushpins. But one ad stood out. It showed a stick figure saying, “This is me, Rachael. I like running, jazz music, and chocolate.” I laughed. It didn’t say much about the apartment, but the roommate seemed fun.

After talking to Rachael for a while, I decided that the feeling inside her apartment seemed welcoming. I dismissed my first impression and moved in a few weeks later.

The next morning Rachael left on a two-week family vacation. An eerie feeling sank in the minute she was gone, but I brushed

it off and busied myself unpacking. “I’m nervous because I’m not used to being here,” I reasoned. “I need time to adjust.”

It was almost midnight when I came down with an itchy sore throat. “I must be allergic to something,” I thought. I hunted around until I found Rachael’s scented candles. I decided to put them outside.

I had discovered earlier that the entryway light didn’t work, so I left the front door open a crack, letting a sliver of light spill out. Barefoot, I hurried through the darkness onto the porch.

Suddenly I froze.

The night air was still. I couldn’t hear a thing. But *I felt* someone approaching.

I hurried through the darkness onto the porch. Suddenly I froze. I couldn’t hear a thing. But I felt someone approaching.



“Get back into your apartment before someone else does.” The Spirit’s instructions were unmistakable and urgent.

Still grasping the candles, I raced through the darkness into my living room and slammed the door. As soon as I locked it, the doorknob turned. My jaw dropped. I watched the doorknob slowly twist back and forth without a sound.

Someone had been hiding in my entryway! He had tried to follow me inside, only a moment too late. Now nothing but a flimsy wooden door stood between us. Instinctively, I hit the door with my fist as hard as I could.

I don’t know how long I stood there silently praying, waiting for something to happen. Finally a peaceful feeling assured me that the threat had passed and I would be safe for the night.

The next morning my mom called. She and Dad were gone on vacation, or I might have called them sooner. Before I could tell Mom what had happened, she said, “I’ve been worried about you! I keep getting the impression that your entryway is a danger zone. Is it well lit? It would be so easy for someone to hide there.”

I shivered to realize how close I had come to being attacked—so close that my mom had sensed the danger from 200 miles (320 km) away.

Then she told me she had been trying to call me the day before to

warn me of her impression. “I couldn’t catch you on the phone, so I prayed. I knew I couldn’t protect you, but Heavenly Father could.”

Mom was right. A stranger had hidden in my entryway, watching me. Higher powers had also been watching and had told me what to do.

I know that the Lord won’t always protect me from tragedy, but as I follow Him, He won’t let His plan for my life be thwarted. It was His will for me to be protected that night, and I am grateful He was watching over me. ■

Just Five More Minutes

By Elaine Brown Preslar

Our family enjoys nature. We spend almost every Saturday outside—hiking, camping, bike riding, or sightseeing in the summer; and sledding, skiing, or taking walks in the snow in the winter. These are wonderful family times that give my husband and me opportunities to converse with our three children.

One summer day we hiked around a lake in a nearby forest. It was perfect weather: sunny and warm with a refreshing, cool breeze from the lake. As we made our way down the

trail, we pointed out the wildflowers and trees. We discussed how much Heavenly Father must love us to create such beauty for our enjoyment. We tried to decide which was the most beautiful place we had seen. One child suggested nearby Yellowstone National Park. Someone



Jacob, age 7, said, “I think the most beautiful place in the world is where all the things about Jesus are.”

else suggested a favorite camping spot. We thought about our trip to the ocean and the beauty of a cross-country ski trail with trees covered in glistening snow.

Our youngest child, Jacob, age 7, who had been quietly listening to our discussion, said, “I think the most



Small Decisions, Eternal Blessings

By Víctor Pino Fuentes

I first heard the gospel as a child when my parents welcomed the missionaries to our home in Antofagasta, Chile. I grew up in the Church, but I did little to gain a personal testimony. Consequently, I eventually fell from activity and found myself facing life’s challenges without the divine power of the gospel to help me. My faithful mother, however, continued to love me and remained a quiet example of righteousness.

Although I married a Church member, neither of us felt the urgency or necessity of living the standards we had been taught in our youth. But as time went by, life in our home changed radically for the worse.

Because of the difficult problems we were facing, my wife decided to start attending church with our daughter. I had no desire to go with them, yet they returned home each week and shared what they had learned.

Some time later I began to receive visits from home teachers, two faithful brethren who somehow envisioned my divine potential even though I couldn’t.

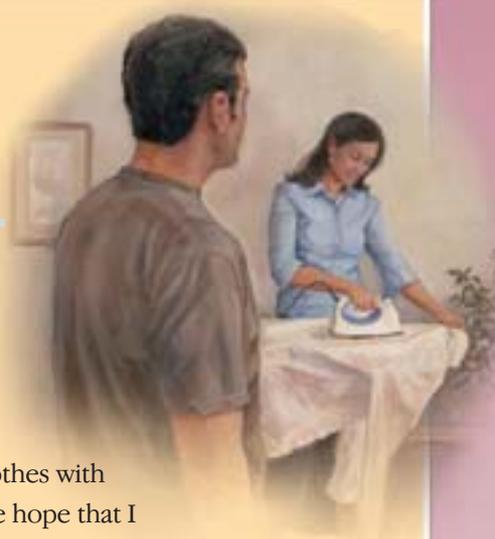
Slowly, a change began to take place in my heart, but I refused to acknowledge it at first. Every Sunday my wife would iron my

clothes with the hope that I would attend church with her. I was too stubborn to put on the clothes, but I started going to sacrament meeting in jeans and a T-shirt. As less-active members often do, I sat on the bench nearest the door so I could be the last one in and the first one out without having anyone speak to me.

After several months I realized I was not being a good example to my children or blessing my family with the priesthood as I should. I made the decision to never again miss a day of church. I had watched the application of gospel principles brighten my life, and I realized that this simple decision should have been made long ago.

How eager the Lord was to bless my family and me! My wife and I and our children were soon sealed to each other in the Santiago Chile Temple.

I am grateful for a mother who diligently taught me the principles of the gospel, for a wife who encouraged me through her love and example to live them, for faithful home teachers, and for a Father in Heaven who patiently waited for me to live the gospel so He could bless me more than I thought possible. ■



beautiful place in the world is where all the things about Jesus are.” Things about Jesus? My mind searched for a connection, and then I realized that Jacob meant Temple Square in Salt Lake City. With the magnificent temple, trees, fountains, and flower gardens, Temple Square is indeed a beautiful place. But to Jacob, Temple Square means more than the outward beauty of nature alone.

Born with a complex congenital heart defect, Jacob is the veteran of three heart surgeries and numerous medical tests, with many more surgeries anticipated. His doctor frequently comes to Idaho, but for Jacob’s surgeries and some tests, we must travel to Primary Children’s Medical Center in Salt Lake City. These trips are often filled with anxiety and worry about Jacob’s health, and we have found that a trip to Temple Square helps calm our nerves and reminds us of Heavenly Father’s plan and of our need to trust in Him.

The night before Jacob’s most recent and most complicated surgery, we took him to the Temple Square visitors’ center, where we sat together looking at that glorious statue of the Savior—the *Christus*. Peaceful, warm, and safe in a parent’s lap and not wanting to leave, Jacob sat uncharacteristically still and kept asking to stay for “just five more minutes,” until our time there stretched past an hour. When at long last we needed to leave, we all felt at peace and ready to cope with

whatever the surgery would bring.

I believe that Temple Square is beautiful to Jacob not because of what he *sees* there but because of what he *feels* there. Heavenly Father’s gifts of peace, hope, and comfort are more beautiful than anything Jacob can remember seeing with his physical eyes.

Understanding Heavenly Father’s plan and accepting and trusting in His will can bring indescribable peace and joy. When we become discouraged, upset, or afraid, there is somewhere to turn—not to a specific beautiful place but to our Savior Jesus Christ. And I think Jacob is right: nothing is more beautiful than that. ■

Reuniting the Dancing Couple

By Kurt Stättner

For 25 years I worked in downtown Wiener Neustadt, Austria. On a mild day in May, I strolled through the pedestrian zone during my lunch break and came upon a bookstore. Near the door were two large crates full of discounted books. I was curious to know what kind of literature was selling at such a low price, and I picked up the top book in one of the crates. With no particular interest in buying it, I

opened it and noticed the depiction of a dancing couple. To my great surprise, I also found the name Gretl Stättner. Instantly I recalled that this was the name of my father’s second wife. I had not thought about her for years.

My father was a customs official, but he was also an enthusiastic dancer and oper-

ated his own dance school. A few years after my parents’ divorce, my father met Gretl at the dance school. Their relationship was short, however,

because my father died from a ruptured appendix when he was

only 35 years old. As he lay dying he must have hoped that Gretl would take me on, knowing that my mother did not look after me. For this reason, my father married Gretl just three hours before he died. Gretl, however, was extremely young and still under her parents’ influence. There was no way she could look after me, so I grew up in foster homes.

As I stood there holding the book, seeing not only the name Stättner but the dancing couple as well, I suddenly realized that this was my father’s legal wife. She had a right to be sealed to him.

My father met his second wife, Gretl, at his dance school. I knew she had a right to be sealed to him.

My investigation disclosed that Gretl had never remarried, that she had lived in Vienna and had operated a foot care salon there. I remembered her maiden name as well as the place her family, the Weißenbergs, had lived. My wife and I looked them up, but we were disappointed to

learn that no members of the family were still living. We visited the cemetery but made no further progress at first, because the stone at the family

plot contained only a list of surnames. After it occurred to us that someone, after all, had to pay for the grave and its maintenance, we asked the authorities for information about the grave's owner. We received a name leading us to Vienna and to a woman who turned out to be Gretl's niece. She provided us not only with all the required dates to perform Gretl's temple work, but also with information about all the family members who had passed away: parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

It also turned out that when my wife and Gretl's niece were young, they had entered the same high school at the same time, and both had graduated on the same day. How small the world can be.

My wife and I submitted all the family names to the temple and were then able to personally carry out the work in the Frankfurt Germany Temple. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity and am firmly convinced that my finding my stepmother's book was no mere coincidence.

Our conversation with Gretl's niece disclosed that Gretl had owned many books, and her niece had given some away, kept some, and sold some. Only a single book made its way to Wiener Neustadt, and I was the one who stumbled across it. ■



Our Neighborhood Craft Day

Is your home the gathering place for neighborhood children? Mine seems to be, and I encourage it. You see, I periodically invite children over for a “make day.” It all started years ago when school-age children in our neighborhood began visiting me and my two toddlers at home. Because their mothers worked full-time, they had little to do during the afternoon, so I began entertaining them one day a week with my “treasure box” of unfinished crafts.

When those projects were completed, we made other inexpensive crafts, such as papier-mâché items, sewn snakes, pipe-cleaner pencil toppers, and play-dough sculptures. I also helped the children learn to cook simple treats. We enjoyed making doughnuts, suckers, and baked goodies. They even helped me to make a spaghetti dinner for their parents. As our “make day” became increasingly popular on the street, the children took turns bringing snacks to share.

We moved after two years, and “make day” ended for a while. As my children grew, life got busier, but the fun memories of our initial neighborhood activities have prompted me to reinstate it for my own children and their friends from time to time,



whenever I can manage it. For me, the main reward is making my home a fun place to be. I also enjoy providing our neighborhood children with a good experience in a Latter-day Saint home, and I hope I’m contributing to happy childhood memories.

I think any neighborhood would enjoy having a “make day” mom. To start your own neighborhood “make day,” you might see if other stay-at-home mothers would like to help. It’s also a good idea to notify parents of your plans, obtain written permission for their child to participate, and exchange contact information. The rewards of friendship and happy memories are worth the time and effort.

Marianne Olson, California

Nutrition— to Go

While sitting down to a meal with the whole family is the ideal, sometimes that isn’t possible. And when you are in a rush, it’s easy to forget about eating right or even eating at all. Eating on the run requires some planning so that as you rush out the door your nutrition and health goals aren’t left behind. You can still eat healthy on the go by following these tips.

Start the day with a portable breakfast. Bring along a minibagel and juice, yogurt and graham crackers, or a plastic bag filled with nutritious dry cereal and a piece of fruit.

Prepare foods ahead of time. Pack sliced vegetables, dried and fresh



Come On Over!

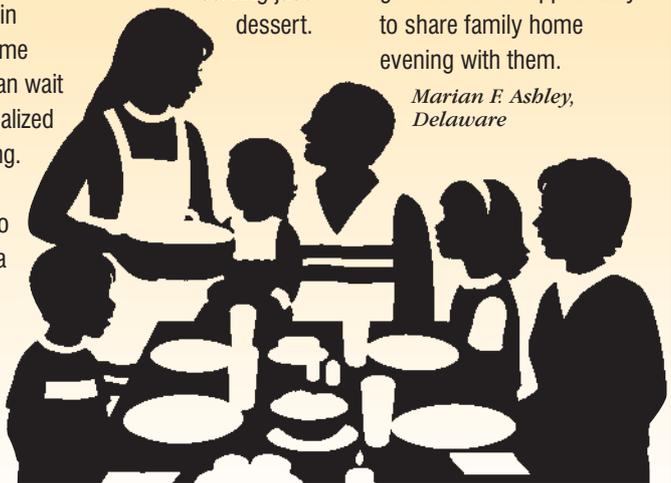
As a child, I loved participating in family home evening with my family. When I moved away for school and career opportunities, I wanted to regain the “family” aspect in my single family home evenings. Rather than wait for an invitation, I realized I could do the inviting. At the beginning of the year, I decided to prayerfully choose a family each month and prepare dinner for them in my home if they would furnish the night’s lesson and activity.

Would they! I had no trouble finding plenty of guests. To ensure a successful dinner, I asked about food preferences ahead of time and learned how to prepare meals for both small and large families. I enjoy cooking, but those who don’t could simplify meal preparations by assigning potluck dishes or serving just dessert.

Spending time with others is more important than the food you serve.

By the end of the year, I felt my dinner invitations had helped me to become a more integral part of our ward family. As various family members have shared their testimonies in my home, my heart has been touched, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share family home evening with them.

Marian F. Ashby, Delaware



fruits, string cheese, whole-grain crackers, jerky, nuts, squeeze yogurt, and bagels into individual plastic bags that can be grabbed at a moment’s notice. Fill plastic bottles partway with water or juice and freeze; top off with cold liquid as you run out the door.

Create a “snack area.” Designate an easy-to-reach location where busy kids can find a healthy snack. With the foods you have prepared in advance, fill a drawer with shelf-stable items or a refrigerator shelf with perishable goods.

Keep a variety of nonperishable foods in the car. Fill a portable, easy-to-carry container with more shelf-stable snacks. Add containers of juice and water, canned fruit, and pudding to fill your “snack caddy.”

Make wise choices when eating out. Choose a child-sized hamburger, a small deli sandwich, or a salad with low-fat dressing. Curb the tendency to order large sizes or additional high-calorie items. Keep in mind that a typical fast-food meal can contain almost two-thirds of your recommended daily calories.

The secret to eating nutritious food on the go is to plan ahead. Taking a few minutes each week to prepare healthy foods, ready to go, will keep you and your family’s nutrition and health goals on track.

Pauline Williams, Utah

Web of Gratitude

We feel it is important for our family to visualize the many things we are grateful for. A simple activity that helps us to remember our blessings is called “the gratitude web.” One person holds a ball of yarn or string and identifies one thing for which he is thankful.

Holding onto part of the yarn, he then tosses the yarn ball to someone else in the circle. That person then repeats the process, also holding onto a portion of the yarn. The activity continues until everyone has had at least one turn. Depending on the size of your family, you may want to play several times until a web is formed, connecting the group.

Sometimes life’s challenges can hinder our ability to focus on our blessings. Activities and lessons that help us realize how much Heavenly Father loves us can bless us individually and as families.

Kristin W. Belcher, Utah





Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Patricia, center, visit with members in Laos.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Dedicates Laos

On February 23, 2006, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles dedicated the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the work of the gospel.

A small group of local Latter-day Saints, humanitarian missionaries, and visiting Church leaders were in attendance as Elder Holland invoked God's blessings upon the people of Laos. He prayed that the government, its leaders, the Laotian people, and the entire land would be blessed with peace.

Elder Holland was accompanied on his visit to Laos and other Asian nations by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy, First Counselor in the Asia Area Presidency; and President Scott F. Hansen of the Thailand Bangkok Mission.

The Vientiane Laos Branch of the Thailand Bangkok Mission was formed in June

2003. President Khampee Keosouphom and his two counselors in the branch presidency represent an emerging group of local leaders in Laos.

Two Church members present at the dedication have received mission calls to the Thailand Bangkok Mission. Elder Tiengsak Inthavong and Sister Lackhana Keosouphom, the Vientiane branch president's daughter, will be the first two missionaries to leave from Laos to serve missions.

"This dedication will be a blessing to our country and to the Church here," said President Keosouphom. "It is the first time an Apostle of the Lord has been on Laotian soil."

Elder Lawrence Martin, a humanitarian missionary, said, "It was touching to hear Elder Holland bless the fields and crops, the very earth here, as well as blessing the

government and the people."

Sister Gaile Clark, a humanitarian missionary, agreed. "It was marvelous and moving, so filled with hope, optimism, and promise for the future," she said.

Laos is located in Southeast Asia, northeast of

Thailand and west of Vietnam. It is slightly larger than Utah, with just more than six million residents. The landlocked country is mostly mountainous and thickly forested. The Mekong River forms a large part of its western border with Thailand. ■

New Mission Presidents Receive Assignments

Accepting assignments from the First Presidency, 108 new mission presidents will begin service on or around July 1, 2006.

The new presidents and their wives are humbled by the calls to serve in this capacity, each in an individual way.

For John Douglas Whisenant, serving in Brazil is going "home." The president of the Brazil Porto Alegre North Mission served in this same mission as a young missionary.

"I was here when the first stake was organized in São Paulo in 1966," he said. "When we talk about the growth of the Church in a short time, I think of those days and look at the Church in Brazil today. There are now 26 missions and about 200 stakes—incredible."

David B. Iwaasa is also returning home—to his heritage. Both he and his wife, Jane Kadonaga, are third-generation Japanese Canadians and are heading the Japan Fukuoka Mission.

"Jane and I have a deep love for the Japanese people and want to share the joy of the gospel with them,"

Brother Iwaasa said. He feels, just as in 1 Nephi 3:7, that the Lord has prepared a way for them to accomplish this calling, as he has been privileged to serve in Canada as a bishop of a Japanese-speaking ward and in a stake presidency of a Japanese stake. Sister Iwaasa has also served in a Japanese-speaking ward and stake.

"As a consequence, I feel that we can understand many of the challenges facing those who become members of the Church in Japan," Brother Iwaasa said.

Peter Leonard Joyce expressed his feelings over different challenges as he prepares to preside over the Utah Ogden Mission: "I don't know of many areas in the Church with 144 stakes and about 1,500 wards and branches," he said. Yet adapting to this mission environment is a challenge he looks forward to. The location is special to his wife, Sheena, since the missionary who taught her the gospel 42 years ago resides within the mission. "It's not a small world," she said. "It's a big Church."

The missions and their respective new presidents are:

Argentina Bahía Blanca

Raúl H. Spitale

Argentina Neuquén

Carl L. Cook

Australia Adelaide

Robert E. Quinn

Australia Sydney South

Brent W. McMaster

Belgium Brussels/Netherlands

Paul R. Woodland

Brazil Belém

Roger D. Hoggan

Brazil Belo Horizonte East

P. Randy Johnson

Brazil Belo Horizonte

Daniel K. Frei

Brazil Porto Alegre North

J. Douglas Whisenant

Brazil Porto Alegre South

Ren S. Johnson

Brazil Salvador South

Getúlio W. J. Silva

Brazil São Paulo East

Craig D. Wilkins

Bulgaria Sofia

Blair S. Bennett

California Oakland

James C. Beck

California San Fernando

Robert L. Goodrich

California San Francisco

W. James Keller

California Santa Rosa

Charles C. Stoddard

Cambodia Phnom Penh

Robert W. Winegar

Canada Calgary

Gene F. Priday

Canada Halifax

S. Gardner Jacobsen

Canada Winnipeg

Judd D. Morgan

Cape Verde Praia

Ronald C. Tolman

Chile Concepción South

Jorge F. Zeballos

Chile Santiago East

Sofocles E. Morán

Chile Viña del Mar

Gerardo J. Wilhelm

China Hong Kong

Lee H. Van Dam

Colombia Bogotá North

Hernando Camargo

Colombia Bogotá South

Rene Arturo Martinez

Costa Rica San José

Luis Ricardo Arbizú

Dominican Republic Santiago

Richard W. Thomas

England Birmingham

Richard W. Moffat

England London South

Jeffrey C. Swinton

England London

Clayton F. Foulger

Florida Tampa

Clark A. Davis

Georgia Atlanta

H. Warren Mathusek

Germany Berlin

K. Günter Borchering

Greece Athens

John Galanos

Haiti Port-Au-Prince

Fouchard Pierre-Nau

Honduras Comayaguela

Sergio A. Gómez

Hungary Budapest

G. Walter Gasser

Idaho Pocatello

K. Brent Somers

Illinois Chicago North

William H. Stoddard

Jamaica Kingston

David W. Gingery

Japan Fukuoka

David B. Iwaasa

Japan Tokyo North

Allen F. Hill

Korea Seoul

Man Goo Cho

Madagascar Antananarivo

Ricardo V. Gaya

Maryland Baltimore

T. Dean Moody

Massachusetts Boston

Edward C. England

Mexico Cuernavaca

Wayne L. Gardner

Mexico Guadalajara South

Ross J. Davidson

Mexico Hermosillo

Omar Villalobos

Mexico Mexico City South

Gary B. Doxey

Mexico Monterrey West

Ernesto R. Toris

Mexico Tampico

Brian H. Moss

Micronesia Guam

Gary L. Marshall

Mississippi Jackson

Parker J. Fuhrman

Montana Billings

Craig G. Fisher

Mozambique Maputo

Blair J. Packard

Nebraska Omaha

Jan E. Newman

Nevada Las Vegas West

Douglas M. Andrus Jr.

New York New York North

Richard M. Searle

New York New York South

Steven D. Bennion

New York Utica

Jay W. Eckersley

Nigeria Enugu

W. Blair Garff

Nigeria Ibadan

Steven G. Dyreng

Nigeria Lagos

Chad L. Evans

Nigeria Uyo

J. Wayne Brockbank

North Carolina Charlotte

Brad R. Hobbs

North Carolina Raleigh

W. Budge Wallis

Norway Oslo

Lynn J. Poulsen

Ohio Cleveland

Kenneth V. Peterson

Oklahoma Tulsa

Kent M. Seal

Papua New Guinea Port Moresby

Tevita Funaki

Paraguay Asunción

Matthew G. Bradley

Pennsylvania Harrisburg

Donald E. Pugh

Peru Lima Central

Jeffrey C. Elmer

Peru Lima South

Francisco W. Fierro

Peru Piura

Carlos A. Solís

Philippines Bacolod

Dany T. Daquioag

Philippines Baguio

Eleazer S. Collado

Philippines Laoag

Mark L. Lewis

Portugal Lisbon

Craig B. Terry

Portugal Porto

James F. Henry

Russia Moscow South

Philip L. Collins

Russia Rostov-na-Donu

Michael A. Harrison

Scotland Edinburgh

Lynn L. Summerhays

Singapore

Bryan Skelton

South Dakota Rapid City

Joseph S. Cannon

Spain Barcelona

W. Christopher Waddell

Spain Bilbao

Kenneth L. DuVall

Spain Madrid

Brad W. Farnsworth

Switzerland Geneva

Paul T. Peterson

Taiwan Kaohsiung

William S. Hsu

Taiwan Taipei

Norman S. Nielson

Texas Houston South

Calvin W. Allred

Thailand Bangkok

Karl L. Dodge

Uruguay Montevideo West

Lewis C. Bankhead

Uruguay Montevideo

Frederick H. Ashby

Utah Ogden

Peter L. Joyce

Utah Provo

Harold C. Brown

Venezuela Barcelona

Alexander Mestre

Venezuela Maracaibo

Fidel Alberto Coello

Venezuela Valencia

Abraham E. Quero

Washington D.C. South

B. Jackson Wixom Jr.

Washington Spokane

David R. Clark

West Indies

Reid A. Robison

Zimbabwe Harare

Andre Bester



The new Mexico Cuernavaca Mission was created by realigning the four missions in Mexico City.

2002, he says opening a mission will be challenging. But he is excited to serve again.

The addition of the Cuernavaca mission also comes at a special time for members in Mexico, as they recently celebrated the 125th anniversary of the dedication of the country for missionary work. On April 6, 1881, Elder Moses Thatcher (1842–1909) of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles knelt in prayer upon the face of Mount Popocatepetl—a nearly 18,000-foot active volcano—to dedicate the land for the preaching of the gospel.

Retracing those steps in two different hikes, about 300 missionaries and more than 200 members commemorated Elder Thatcher's dedication with a plaque placed on Popocatepetl's mountainside. ■

New Mission Opens; Anniversary Celebrated

Created from missions in Mexico City, the new Mexico Cuernavaca Mission opens in July. The mission boundary begins just below the heart of Mexico City and stretches west to the Pacific Ocean, taking in 350 miles (560 km) of coastline. Encompassing the states of Morelos and Guerrero and cities such as Acapulco, Ixtapa, and Iguala, it is larger geographically than any of the four missions from which it was created and reflects the growing missionary activity in a metropolitan area served by nearly 800 missionaries.

Though there will be no increase in the number of missionaries serving in the region when the mission opens, the creation of the mission by realigning the four Mexico City missions will allow for better administration of Church affairs in one of the largest cities in the world—home to more than 18 million residents.

Called to serve as the first president of the mission is Wayne Leroy Gardner, along with his wife Teresa. Though he previously served as president of the Chile Santiago East Mission from 2000 to

Two Temples to Open in 2006

Two new temples will be dedicated by the end of 2006—the Sacramento California Temple on September 3 and the Helsinki Finland Temple on October 22—bringing the number of operating temples to 124. Additionally, ground has been broken for the Twin Falls Idaho Temple, and the Papeete Tahiti and Los Angeles California Temples are currently being renovated.

New Temples

A statue of the angel Moroni is already atop the Sacramento California Temple, a sign of its pending completion.

“We have faith-promoting experiences every day working on the temple,” says Jacob Jensen, the project superintendent for the Sacramento temple. To him, it is evidence of Heavenly Father’s hand in the work.



An artist's rendering shows the Twin Falls Idaho Temple, which is now under construction.

The dedication of the Sacramento temple is set for Sunday, September 3, with the open house scheduled from July 29 through August 26. It will be the Church's seventh temple in California.

The new Helsinki Finland Temple is scheduled for dedication in October. "Finnish members feel the temple is a great blessing for such a small nation," says Ville-Matti Karumo, Church public affairs director in Finland.

But it will bless more than just members in Finland, as it will be the closest temple for members in Eastern European countries, including Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and northwestern Russia. The dedication will include four dedicatory sessions on October 22. The open

house is scheduled from September 23 through October 7, culminating with a cultural celebration on October 21. Until then, stake presidents have asked all the members to visit the Stockholm Sweden Temple as often as they can to show appreciation to the Lord for blessing Finland with a temple.

Renovations

In November 2005 the Los Angeles California Temple closed to undergo renovations, including a seismic overhaul.

"If there's a big quake, the building will be fine," explains John Dietrich, a temple recorder at the Los Angeles Temple. He explains that a crossbeam in the 115-foot (35-m) tower on the

temple was bent by a 1994 earthquake, which reached a magnitude of 6.7.

Meanwhile, members in Tahiti await the time when they can perform ordinances and receive blessings again in the Papeete temple, one of four temples in the Pacific Islands. The temple was closed for renovations in August 2005.

As of May 1, no rededication dates had been announced for either temple.

Ground Broken

While work on these temples nears completion, work on another has just begun. On April 15, 2006, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy broke ground for the Twin Falls Idaho Temple, the second temple in Idaho to undergo construction during the past year. It will be the fourth temple in Idaho, serving 40,000 Church members from 14 stakes. ■

View Art Competition Winners Online at LDS.org

By Brittany Karford, Church Magazines

There is a story behind the tattered-lace *Tree of Life*, now viewable online at www.lds.org/museum, along with the rest of the pieces from the Seventh International Art Competition exhibit, "Our Heritage of Faith."

For the artist, a Merit

Award recipient, the piece represents not only the heritage of the Book of Mormon but her own heritage as well, tracing back to her youth in Syria.

Melva Hindoian-Emrazian, born in Syria 81 years ago, learned lace making at age 14 from her mother, who



Detail of A Child's Prayer, by Dan Burr, which received a Purchase Award.



Allegory of the Olive Tree, by Brad Teare, received a Purchase Award.

learned the craft in an orphanage as a child. Sister Emrazian now teaches her daughter and granddaughter the technique.

Members worldwide have the opportunity to see her award-winning work online, even if they do not have the opportunity to visit the Museum of Church History and Art in downtown Salt Lake City, at least for the next few months.

Like the other 25 Merit Award recipients announced at the opening of the exhibit, Sister Emrazian's work will be showcased and then returned. Curator Robert Davis explains that funds allowed the museum to bestow 15 Purchase Awards to acquire the pieces for the Church's permanent collection of art.

Artists and guests filled the Assembly Hall on Temple Square for the awards ceremony on March 27, 2006.

To have a work included in the 235 pieces displayed—

out of more than 900 submissions in all—is an honor.

That's nearly 200 more submissions than the previous competition.

Competitions are held every three years. The increase in submissions is a milestone in the effort to stimulate the production of Latter-day Saint art around the world. The competition was initially designed to help develop the museum's collection of art but has yielded an ever-increasing response each year. A number of the pieces will be featured in the *Ensign*

and *Liabona* magazines to touch the lives of members throughout the world.

The purchased pieces represent a variety of media and subjects. One in particular, a still-life oil painting done by Rebecca Wetzel Wagstaff, is unique in Brother Davis's eyes. "The Church very seldom buys pieces like this," he says, commenting on its content. The painting, *Emblems*, depicts a vase of flowers and various objects, such as two tickets and a picture of the Nauvoo Temple hanging in the background—nothing



The Five Wise Virgins, by Louise Parker, received a Purchase Award.

overtly religious, Brother Davis adds. And yet he favors it. "It shows the flow of life," he says.

Richard G. Oman, senior curator at the museum and a judge in the competition, explains the selection process.

"What makes LDS art unified?" Brother Oman asks. "The gospel of Jesus Christ. The challenge we have is to put art in the context it comes from," he says of the process of placing the style in its indigenous part of the world. Then comes the second evaluation—how well the artist conveyed the theme.

For Sister Emrazian, the theme "Our Heritage of Faith" aligned with the teachings of her grandfather.

"He had a strong testimony of the Book of Mormon, and he made sure we knew it," she says. Her grandfather joined the Church in Turkey in 1893, shortly after the first missionaries arrived in the country. "He was eager to share [the gospel] with his family," she says. "When Lehi ate the fruit from the tree of life, it was so delicious he wanted to share it with his family. With my *Tree of Life*, I pay tribute to my family. I like to keep the heritage alive."

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, Executive Director of the Family and Church History Department, thanked the artists at the awards ceremony.

"This provides a way for art across the world to show reverence for Heavenly Father and His will," he said. "It deepens our appreciation of each other." ■

International Dancers Celebrate 50 Years

For 50 years and in more than 50 countries, members of the Brigham Young University International Folk Dance Ensemble (IFDE) have performed as ambassadors of their school.

This year, celebrating a half century of dance from cultures around the world, the group will take its performance to three countries it has never visited before—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

At the end of February, the ensemble performed a 10-day tour in preparation for its annual summer traveling schedule. The repertoire this year consists of dances from 10 different countries.

The Baltic States, along with much of Eastern Europe, share a rich heritage of folk

dancing. One traditional dance from the Baltic region, the hopak, has been in the IFDE repertoire for more than 30 years.

“The dance is exciting,” says Edwin G. Austin, the ensemble’s director. “The movement, the spins—it’s very acrobatic.”

After taking the hopak to the Baltic States, the ensemble will travel to Quebec, Canada, in response to a private invitation to an inter-national dance festival. Brother Austin says the IFDE is one of the most sought-after groups in international dance. But the purpose of the ensemble’s travel, he says, is twofold: to help people get acquainted with the Church and to strengthen Church members in their own countries.

The IFDE started in 1956 with just a few couples, under the direction of founder Mary Bee Jensen. In 1964 Sister Jensen accompanied the ensemble on its first international tour—mortgaging her home to have the funds to do so. It was the first group of performing students

from BYU to tour internationally. Today 30 of the ensemble’s 180 members are on the touring team.

Brother Austin succeeded Sister Jensen as the director of the ensemble—making him only the second director in its 50-year history. He says those first worldwide tours not only shared in the folklore of the countries visited but also helped to introduce the name of the Church in many places where it wasn’t well known. “Our group had the opportunity to travel to

areas where the Church had not yet been recognized,” Brother Austin explains.

He says the group has an impact on those it encounters during its travels, leaving a distinct impression of standards and faith behind. Brother Austin is excited to take the ensemble into Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, where the Church is still relatively small. ■

Celebrating Mormon Handcart Company 150 Years

For those who couldn’t get the word *ses-qui-cen-ten-ni-al* to roll off the tongue during the 1997 commemoration of the pioneers’ reaching the Salt Lake Valley, another chance to master the word comes this year as members celebrate the thousands of immigrants who joined the Saints by handcart.

Celebrations will include the Iowa City Mormon Handcart Trek Commemoration, taking place where it all began 150 years ago—Iowa City, Iowa. Here, where the westward railroad ended, 3,000 men, women, and children embarked on a 1,300-mile journey across prairie, desert, river, and mountain, pushing and pulling what few belongings they had in handcarts.

Taking place on June 9 to 11, the commemoration honors the departure of the first Mormon handcart company on June 9, 1856, with a

daylong symposium, festivals, an interfaith devotional, and an evening fireside with a visiting General Authority. Paul Willie, a descendant of Captain James G. Willie, whose company is well remembered for its late start and ill-fated journey, will also speak.

Even those from other denominations will take part in celebrating the historical significance of the expeditions of the handcart pioneers. A song to be performed at the weekend’s interfaith devotional was composed by Jon Spong, a Methodist. The words were written by Loren Horton, a senior historian emeritus of the State Historical Society of Iowa. He and his wife, Carol, who will sing the song in the devotional, are Episcopalian.

In that Sunday devotional, a Methodist, Unitarian, and Episcopalian, along with Iowa City stake president Andrew Hall, will each speak to the



Brigham Young University’s International Folk Dance Ensemble celebrates its 50th anniversary in June 2006.

interfaith gathering, which is representative of the various denominations that were present in Iowa City in 1856.

“It’s always a delightful thing to be able to have different background and beliefs working together,” Mr. Horton says. “This is a natural opportunity for that to happen.”

Mr. Horton will speak in the Friday symposium on the setting in Iowa in 1856, remarking on the social and economic impact of LDS handcart pioneers. Iowa City’s population at that time stood at 6,316. The following year brought 2,340 immigrants. This influx of Mormon settlers, who had faced persecution elsewhere, found a safe harbor in Iowa City, where, Mr. Horton says, members of other denominations often helped the Saints build handcarts and prepare for their journey.

Fred Woods, current chair for religious understanding at Brigham Young University and the executive director of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, helped to forge the union of denominations for the event.

“We want to emphasize the common ground which we all walk upon as we journey through life,” he says.

The Cedar Rapids Iowa Stake, Davenport Iowa Stake, Des Moines Iowa Mission, Des Moines Iowa Stake, Iowa City Iowa Stake, and Nauvoo Illinois Mission will all take an active part in the three-day event, but Brother Woods emphasizes that members worldwide can take part by honoring the pioneers’ sacrifice.

“The best way that Latter-day Saints can revere our rich pioneer ancestry is to live a faithful life,” he says. ■

New Collection of Church History Videos Now on DVD

An exciting new DVD compilation of Church history videos, including footage many members have never seen before, is now available for purchase. This DVD set, titled *Church History*, is part of the Home and Family Collection intended to enrich instruction and learning in the home.

The set includes three DVDs containing 29 videos that take viewers on a visual journey through a century and a half of Church history. Many of the segments are quite rare.

One segment, *LDS Leaders of the Past*, includes black-and-white footage from the first half of the twentieth century.

The set contains 7 hours and 48 minutes of Church history videos and is packaged with a booklet that includes ideas and questions for discussion.

“It’s not just a collection of videos,” says Robb Jones, development designer for the Church Curriculum Department. “We designed it to be a teaching and learning tool for individuals,

families, and teachers.”

Sold individually for U.S. \$6.00 each (item no. 54116), or U.S. \$4.25 each when a case of 38 is ordered, the *Church History* DVD set is

available at distribution centers. It is available only in English since many of the individual videos were not translated into other languages. ■

New ASL Products Available

ASL Book of Mormon Released on DVD

The American Sign Language Book of Mormon is now available in DVD format, making it easier for the deaf community to study the scriptures.

A common misconception is that the deaf community can simply read material the same as English speakers, but because English and ASL are structured differently, many of those who are deaf cannot read the Book of Mormon.

“With the Church providing the Book of Mormon in their language, deaf members can comprehend it just as you and I,” says Doug Hind, a special curriculum specialist in the Church Curriculum Department.

It also means no more lugging around a bag of 17 VHS tapes and no more cuing to select scriptures.

The DVD boxed set contains 17 DVDs, containing a higher quality version of the same footage on 17 VHS tapes. The DVD collection is \$2.50 a set. While the footage may be the same, the most important feature of the DVDs is the ability to search the scriptures by every 10 verses. Previously, finding a specific scripture was difficult for the deaf—they just had to fast-forward and guess. Now they can navigate the scriptures at

the touch of a button, and members with iPod technology or portable DVD players can take the ASL Book of Mormon with them anywhere. This full-translation format for ASL scripture appears to be the first of its kind.

“No scripture has ever been done like this as a true translation—even the Bible,” Brother Hind says, adding that the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price are currently being translated.

Monthly Messages Now Available in ASL

The First Presidency and Visiting Teaching Messages are debuting in American Sign Language (ASL) at LDS.org this year. The messages will be available each month on a new ASL page at lds.org/asl. General conference and First Presidency Christmas Devotional files will also be available on the page.

Previously many members who are deaf or hearing-impaired could read the messages only in print, which involved comprehending text and a verbal language on top of their primary visual form of communication. But the grammatical and conceptual makeup of ASL is significantly different from any spoken language.

The First Presidency and Visiting Teaching Messages in

ASL are not the only recent milestone for the ASL community in the Church. Just months ago, the worldwide leadership training meeting was broadcast over satellite

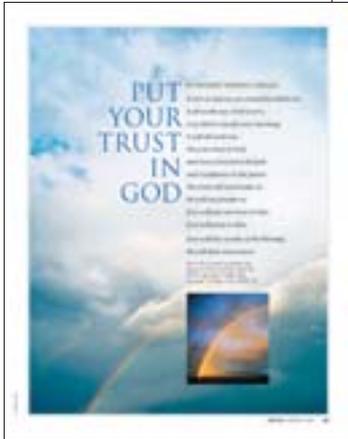
in ASL for the first time.

The First Presidency Messages and Visiting Teaching Messages are published in more than 50 languages worldwide. ■

Comment

Hope and Comfort

I have received and continue to receive so much hope and comfort from the beautiful message “Put Your Trust in God” by President



Gordon B. Hinckley in the February 2006 issue. I have shared it with others who are struggling with adversity.

Last March I was diagnosed with a rare, incurable type of cancer, and I felt we were traveling in a “terrible wilderness.” Every source of encouragement and hope has been necessary in this interesting time. Thank you for that welcome message by President Hinckley.

Dawne I. Gibson, Michigan

An Often-Forgotten Population

I was excited to see in the February 2006 *Ensign* the article “Church Programs Assist Often-Forgotten Population.” I have often

wondered if the Church had such a program, and my prayers were answered with this article.

I have been incarcerated for two years now and am the only member of the Church at this facility. The *Ensign* has been my major contact with the Church for most of that time. I look forward each month to its arrival and the messages of hope and faith it brings with it. I especially treasure each of the conference issues for the messages from the First Presidency and other General Authorities. Thank you so much for the light and faith it brings with it each month into this often

dark and dreary place.

Name Withheld

Comfort from the Proclamation

I appreciated E. Jeffrey Hill’s article “The Proclamation: A Guide, a Comfort, and an Inspiration” in April’s *Ensign*. I related fully to the article. Many memorized scriptures have filled my mind with comfort and understanding at various times in my life, but particularly since the death of my husband. I appreciate the honesty given to an emotional subject and the message of hope, that we truly do have a loving Heavenly Father who is aware of us individually. Thank you for an insightful article,
Tammy Mulford, Utah

Call for Articles

If you have had experience with the following situation, we invite you to share your suggestions:

I would like to get involved in community service, but I don't have much free time, and I'm not sure how to get started. What should I do?

Please send your submission (500 words or less) by July 14, 2006, to ensign@ldschurch.org or to Ensign Editorial, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150-3220, USA. Clearly mark your

submission “Community Service,” and at the top of your submission, write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and allow up to a year. ■

March 12

The April 2006 *Ensign* has changed March 12 for me. In 2003, March 12 was the day I returned home from serving as a missionary in Taiwan. I wanted to celebrate March 12 every year in ways to thank my Heavenly Father and my Savior for allowing me to serve Them in that way.

Then on March 12, 2004, my best friend from high school took her own life. Suddenly March 12 became a day on which I could find no

happiness. I felt guilty to be so blessed with an LDS upbringing, the opportunity to serve a mission, and a temple marriage to a wonderful husband. How could I celebrate my blessings now?

Nancy May’s article “Our Journey to the Temple” (April 2006) helped me feel that I can still find joy in the blessings God has bestowed on me—both before and after every March 12 of my life.

Sarah Smith, Colorado





MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

J U N E 2 0 0 6

FAMILY HOME EVENING FUN

Family Home Evening doesn't have to be formal and stiff. This article shows how having fun together can make a great family home evening. See page 27.

THE BLESSINGS OF ADOPTION

"Although I did not fully comprehend the complexities of the decision she had made," writes Eve Burch, "I was incredibly grateful that my birth mother had chosen to give me something she could not provide herself." Meeting her many years later was a great blessing for two lives. See page 58.

DIVIDING THE ESTATE WITHOUT DIVIDING THE FAMILY

If you had to divide up your parents' estate, could you do it in a way that would satisfy everyone in the family? For some basic guidelines that can help preserve harmony at such a difficult time, see page 62.

For Singles DATING VERSUS HANGING OUT

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "My single young friends,

we counsel you to channel your associations with the opposite sex into dating patterns that have the potential to mature into marriage, not hanging out patterns that only have the prospect to mature into team sports like touch football." To read more of Elder Oaks's counsel, see page 10.

HE SAYS, SHE SAYS

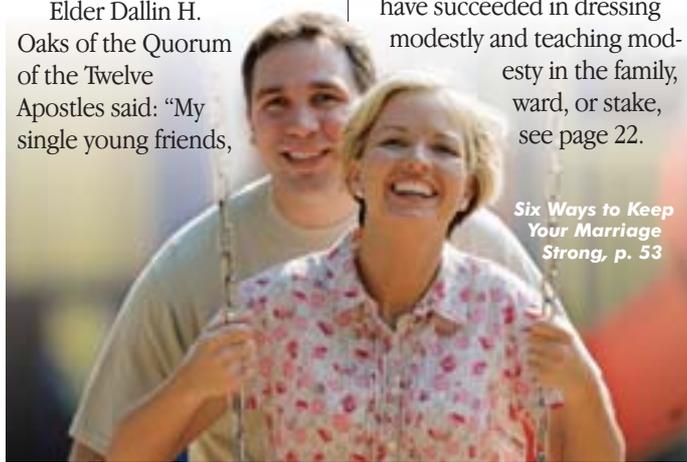
Nervous about dating? Trying to date more and hang out less? Single Church members share ideas that have helped their dating experiences go more smoothly. See page 17.

Charity and Friendship AN EXPERIMENT WITH FRIENDSHIP

A student in Karen Case Ho-Ching's school class was constantly disruptive—until class members had an idea. To read about the startling change their "experiment" created, see page 8.

Does Modesty Matter?

Is modesty in dress a problem in your family or for someone you know? To read how many Church members have succeeded in dressing modestly and teaching modesty in the family, ward, or stake, see page 22.



Six Ways to Keep Your Marriage Strong, p. 53

The Prophet of the Restoration NEW MOVIE ABOUT JOSEPH SMITH

In December 2005, 200 years after Joseph Smith's birth, a new movie about the Prophet's life opened in many Church visitors' centers around the world. To view scenes from the movie and read a description of how it was produced, see page 40.

PROFILE OF A PROPHET

In this Gospel Classic, President Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975) describes a memorable conversation he had with a justice of the Supreme Court of England about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Afterward the distinguished gentleman asked pointedly, "Do you appreciate the import of what you say?" See page 34.

For Families SIX WAYS TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE STRONG

Marriage can be like a yo-yo with its ups and downs. For some good suggestions on avoiding the downs and keeping your marriage strong, see page 53.

Inspiring Experiences

Can the Spirit warn us in times of personal danger? When faced with a serious



Faith, Hope, and Elijah, p. 45

health concern, have you turned to the Savior for comfort? For stories of these and other inspiring experiences, see pages 45, 50, and 65–68.

Home, Visiting Teaching

For this month's messages, see pages 2 and 61.

GOSPEL TOPICS

Activation, 67	Marriage, 53, 82, 88
Adoption, 58	Marriage Preparation, 10, 17
Agency, 48	Media, 40
Charity, 61	Modesty, 22
Children, 8, 88, 93	Music, 7
Comfort, 66	Neighborliness, 70
Compassion, 8	Nutrition, 70
Conversion, 67	Obedience, 2, 22, 56, 65
Covenants, 82	Old Testament, 30, 56
Dating, 10, 17	Overcoming Adversity, 45
Faith, 48	Parenthood, 70, 93
Families, 27, 88, 93	Peace, 66
Family, 71	Prayer, 22, 98
Family History, 50, 68	Premortal Life, 48
Family Home Evening, 27, 71	Priesthood Blessings, 45
Family Relationships, 62	Prophets, 34
Finances, 62	Protection, 65
Friendship, 8, 30, 71	Restoration, 34, 40
Gratitude, 71	Sacrifice, 56
Grieving, 62	Satan, 48
Health, 70	Scripture Study, 2
Holy Ghost, 2, 22, 65, 66	Self-Respect, 22, 30
Home Teaching, 67	Service, 61, 88, 98
Homes, 98	Singles, 10, 17
Hope, 45	Teaching, 8
Inspiration, 50	Temples, 68
Jesus Christ, 48	Testimony, 2
Joseph Smith, 34, 40	Together, 27
Love, 58, 82, 98	



Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting

Supporting the Family

FEBRUARY 11, 2006



The proceedings of the worldwide leadership training meeting are included in the June 2006 Liahona and Ensign and at www.lds.org for members to use in their families and in teaching.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF
LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan

ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



The Doctrinal Ideal of Marriage

We have been counseled strongly by the First Presidency to devote our best efforts to the strengthening of marriage and the home. Such instruction has never been more needed in the world than it is today, as the sanctity of marriage is attacked and the importance of the home is undermined.

Even though the Church and its programs support marriage and

family and generally are successful at doing so, we should always remember this basic truth: no instrumentality or organization can take the place of the home or perform its essential functions.¹ Consequently, today I will speak with you primarily as men and women, as husbands and wives, and as mothers and fathers and secondarily as priesthood and auxiliary leaders in the Church. My assignment is to discuss the essential role of eternal marriage in our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness.

We will focus on the doctrinal ideal of marriage. My hope is that a review of our eternal possibilities and a reminder about who we are and why we are here in mortality will provide direction, comfort, and sustaining hope for us all, regardless of our marital status or personal present circumstances. The disparity between the doctrinal ideal of marriage and the reality of daily life may seem at times to be quite large, but you gradually are doing and

becoming much better than you probably recognize.

I invite you to keep in mind the following questions as we discuss principles related to eternal marriage.

Question 1: *In my own life, am I striving to become a better husband or a wife, or preparing to be a husband or a wife, by understanding and applying these basic principles?*

Question 2: *As a priesthood or auxiliary leader, am I helping those I serve to understand and apply these basic principles, thereby strengthening marriage and the home?*

As we prayerfully ponder these questions and consider our own marriage relationships and our responsibilities in the Church, I testify the Spirit of the Lord will enlighten our minds and teach us the things we need to do and to improve (see John 14:26).

Why Marriage Is Essential

In "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles proclaim "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."² This keynote sentence of the proclamation teaches us much about the doctrinal significance of marriage and emphasizes the primacy of marriage and family in the Father's plan. Righteous marriage is a commandment and an essential step in the process of creating a loving



family relationship that can be perpetuated beyond the grave.

Two compelling doctrinal reasons help us to understand why eternal marriage is essential to the Father's plan.

Reason 1: *The natures of male and female spirits complete and perfect each other, and therefore men and women are intended to progress together toward exaltation.*

The eternal nature and importance of marriage can be fully understood only within the overarching context of the Father's plan for His children. "All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and . . . has a divine nature

and destiny."³ The great plan of happiness enables the spirit sons and daughters of Heavenly Father to obtain physical bodies, to gain earthly experience, and to progress toward perfection.

"Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose"⁴ and in large measure defines who we are, why we are here upon the earth, and what we are to do and become. For divine purposes, male and female spirits are different, distinctive, and complementary.

After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said it was "not good

that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18; Moses 3:18), and Eve became Adam's companion and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females were needed to implement the plan of happiness. Alone, neither the man nor the woman could fulfill the purposes of his or her creation.

By divine design, men and women are intended to progress together toward perfection and a fulness of glory. Because of their distinctive temperaments and capacities, males

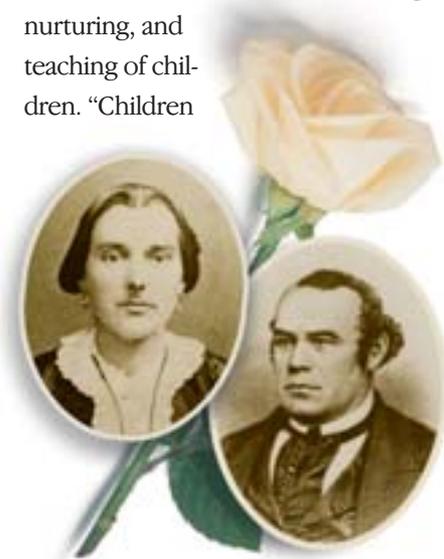
and females each bring to a marriage relationship unique perspectives and experiences. The man and the woman contribute differently but equally to a oneness and a unity that can be achieved in no other way. The man completes and perfects the woman and the woman completes and perfects the man as they learn from and mutually strengthen and bless each other. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, *in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 11:11; italics added).

Reason 2: *By divine design, both a man and a woman are needed to bring children into mortality and to provide the best setting for the rearing and nurturing of children.*

The commandment given anciently to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. “God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. . . . The means by which mortal life is created [are] divinely appointed.”⁵ Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

A home with a loving and loyal husband and wife is the supreme setting in which children can be reared in love and righteousness and in which the

spiritual and physical needs of children can be met. Just as the unique characteristics of both males and females contribute to the completeness of a marriage relationship, so those same characteristics are vital to the rearing, nurturing, and teaching of children. “Children



Elder Parley P. Pratt expressed beautifully the blessings that come as we learn about, understand, and strive to apply the doctrinal ideal of marriage.

are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.”⁶

Guiding Principles

The two doctrinal reasons we have reviewed about the importance of eternal marriage in the Father’s plan of happiness suggest guiding principles for those who are preparing to marry, for those who are married, and for our service in the Church.

Principle 1: *The importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father’s plan of happiness.*

We frequently speak about and highlight marriage as a fundamental unit of society, as the foundation of a strong nation, and as a vital sociological and cultural institution. But the restored gospel helps us to understand that it is so much more!

Do we perhaps talk about marriage without adequately teaching the importance of marriage in the Father’s plan? Emphasizing marriage without linking it to the simple and fundamental doctrine of the plan of happiness cannot provide sufficient direction, protection, or hope in a world that grows increasingly confused and wicked. We would all do well to remember the teaching of Alma—that “God gave unto [the children of men] commandments, *after* having made known unto them the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:32; italics added).

Elder Parley P. Pratt expressed beautifully the blessings that come to us as we learn about, understand, and strive to apply in our lives the doctrinal ideal of marriage:

“It was Joseph Smith who taught me how to prize the endearing relationships of father and mother, husband and wife; of brother and sister, son and daughter.

“It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies



and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. . . .

“I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. . . . In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the understanding also.

“Yet, at that time, my dearly beloved brother, Joseph Smith, had . . . merely lifted a corner of the veil and given me a single glance into eternity.”⁷

As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, can we see how the importance of eternal marriage can be understood only within the context of the Father’s plan of happiness? The doctrine of the plan leads men and women to hope and prepare for eternal marriage, and it defeats the fears and overcomes the

uncertainties that may cause some individuals to delay or avoid marriage. A correct understanding of the plan also strengthens our resolve to steadfastly honor the covenant of eternal marriage. Our individual learning, our teaching, and our testifying in both the home and at church will be magnified as we ponder and more fully understand this truth.

Principle 2: *Satan desires that all men and women might be miserable like unto himself.*

Lucifer relentlessly assails and distorts the doctrines that matter most to us individually, to our families, and to the world. Where is the adversary focusing his most direct and diabolical attacks? Satan works unremittingly to confuse understanding about gender, to promote the premature and unrighteous use of procreative power, and to hinder righteous marriage precisely because marriage is ordained of God and the family is central to the

plan of happiness. The adversary’s attacks upon eternal marriage will continue to increase in intensity, frequency, and sophistication.

Because today we are engaged in a war for the welfare of marriage and the home, in my latest reading of the Book of Mormon I paid particular attention to the ways the Nephites prepared for their battles against the Lamanites. I noted that the people of Nephi “were *aware of the intent* of [their enemy], and therefore they did prepare to meet them” (Alma 2:12; italics added). As I read and studied, I learned that *understanding the intent of an enemy* is a key prerequisite to effective preparation. We likewise should consider the intent of our enemy in this latter-day war.

The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him. Lucifer’s attacks on the plan are intended to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to halt their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27), and he works to warp the elements of the Father’s plan he hates the most. Satan does not have a body, he cannot marry, and he will not have a family. And he persistently strives to confuse the divinely appointed purposes of gender, marriage, and family. Throughout the world, we see growing evidence of the effectiveness of Satan’s efforts.

More recently the devil has attempted to combine and legally validate confusion about gender and marriage. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit alternatives the adversary advocates can never lead to the completeness that is made possible through the sealing together of a man and a woman, to the happiness of righteous marriage, to the joy of posterity, or to the blessing of eternal progression.

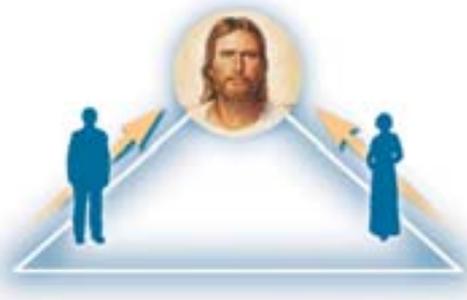
Given what we know about our enemy's intent, each of us should be especially vigilant in seeking personal inspiration as to how we can protect and safeguard our own marriages—and how we can learn and teach correct principles in the home and in our Church assignments about the eternal significance of gender and of the role of marriage in the Father's plan.

Principle 3: *The ultimate blessings of love and happiness are obtained through the covenant relationship of eternal marriage.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the focal point in a covenant marriage relationship. Please notice how the Savior is positioned at the apex of this triangle, with a woman at the base of one corner and a man at the base of the other corner. Now consider what happens in the relationship between the man and the woman as they individually and steadily “come unto Christ” and strive to be “perfected in Him” (Moroni 10:32). Because of and through the Redeemer, the man and

the woman come closer together.

As a husband and wife are each drawn to the Lord (see 3 Nephi 27:14), as they learn to serve and cherish one another, as they share life experiences and grow together and become one, and as they are blessed through the uniting of their distinctive natures, they begin to realize the fulfillment that our Heavenly Father desires for His children. Ultimate happiness, which is the very object of the Father's



Husband and wife draw closer together as they individually and steadily come unto Christ.

plan, is received through the making and honoring of eternal marriage covenants.

As men and women, as husbands and wives, and as Church leaders, one of our paramount responsibilities is to help young men and women learn about and prepare for righteous marriage through our personal example. As young women and men observe worthiness, loyalty, sacrifice, and the honoring of covenants in our marriages, then those youth will seek to emulate the same principles in their courting and marriage relationships. As young people notice that we have

made the comfort and convenience of our eternal companion our highest priority, then they will become less self-centered and more able to give, to serve, and to create an equal and enduring companionship. As young women and men perceive mutual respect, affection, trust, and love between a husband and a wife, then they will strive to cultivate the same characteristics in their lives. Our children and the youth of the Church will learn the most from what we do and what we are—even if they remember relatively little of what we say.

Unfortunately many young members of the Church today are fearful of and stumble in their progress toward eternal marriage because they have seen too much of divorce in the world and of broken covenants in their homes and in the Church.

Eternal marriage is not merely a temporary legal contract that can be terminated at any time for almost any reason. Rather, it is a sacred covenant with God that can be binding in time and throughout all eternity. Faithfulness and fidelity in marriage must not simply be attractive words spoken in sermons; rather, they should be principles evident in our own covenant marriage relationships.

As we consider the importance of our personal example, do you and I discern areas where we need to improve? Is the Holy Ghost inspiring our minds and softening our hearts and encouraging us to do and to become better? As priesthood and

auxiliary leaders, are we focusing our efforts on strengthening marriage and the home?

Husbands and wives need time together to fortify themselves and their homes against the attacks of the adversary. As we strive to magnify our callings in the Church, are we unintentionally hindering husbands and wives and mothers and fathers from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities in the home? For example, do we sometimes schedule unnecessary meetings and activities in a way that interferes with the essential relationship between a husband and a wife and their relationships with children?

As we sincerely ponder these questions, I am confident the Spirit is even now helping and will continue to help each of us learn the things we should do at home and in the Church.

The Spiritual Resources We Need

Our responsibilities to learn and understand the doctrine of the plan, to uphold and be examples of righteous marriage, and to teach correct principles in the home and at church may cause us to wonder if we are equal to the task. We are ordinary people who must accomplish a most extraordinary work.

Many years ago, Sister Bednar and I were busy trying to meet the countless competing demands of a young and energetic family—and of Church, career, and community responsibilities. One evening after the children were asleep, we talked at length about



One of our paramount responsibilities is to help young men and women learn about and prepare for righteous marriage through our personal example.

how effectively we were attending to all of our important priorities. We realized that we would not receive the promised blessings in eternity if we did not honor more fully the covenant we had made in mortality. We resolved together to do and to be better as a husband and a wife. That lesson learned so many years ago has made a tremendous difference in our marriage.

The sweet and simple doctrine of the plan of happiness provides precious eternal perspective and helps us understand the importance of eternal marriage. We have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need. We have the fulness of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We have the Holy Ghost and revelation. We have saving ordinances, covenants, and temples. We have priesthood and prophets. We have the holy scriptures and the

power of the word of God. And we have The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I testify that we have been blessed with all of the spiritual resources we need to learn about, to teach, to strengthen, and to defend righteous marriage—and that indeed we can live together in happiness as husbands and wives and families in eternity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

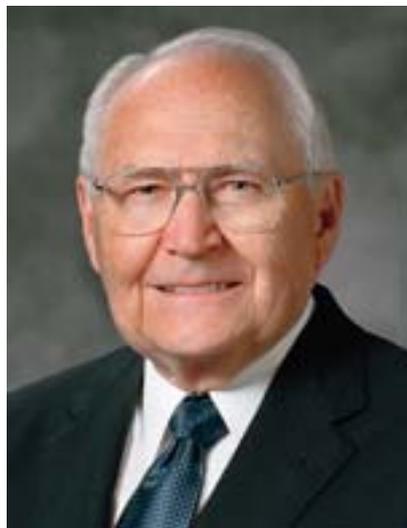
NOTES

1. See First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; or *Liabona*, Dec. 1999, 1; *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
4. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
6. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 297–98.

A Solemn Responsibility to Love and Care for Each Other

ELDER L. TOM PERRY

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Balancing Our Responsibilities

The subject I have been assigned is the following sentence from the proclamation on the family: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”¹ I want to approach this subject in a very different manner than you might be familiar with in

other training meetings. I will not quote much from handbooks; instead, I want to talk to you heart to heart about your service in our Father in Heaven’s kingdom. The purpose will be to see if together we can better understand how to balance our responsibilities to love and care for our families with the other special callings our Father in Heaven has given to us.

As the Church was being organized on April 6, 1830, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that is now recorded in the 21st section of the Doctrine and Covenants. A portion of the revelation reads:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ,

“Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith. . . .

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1–2, 4–5).

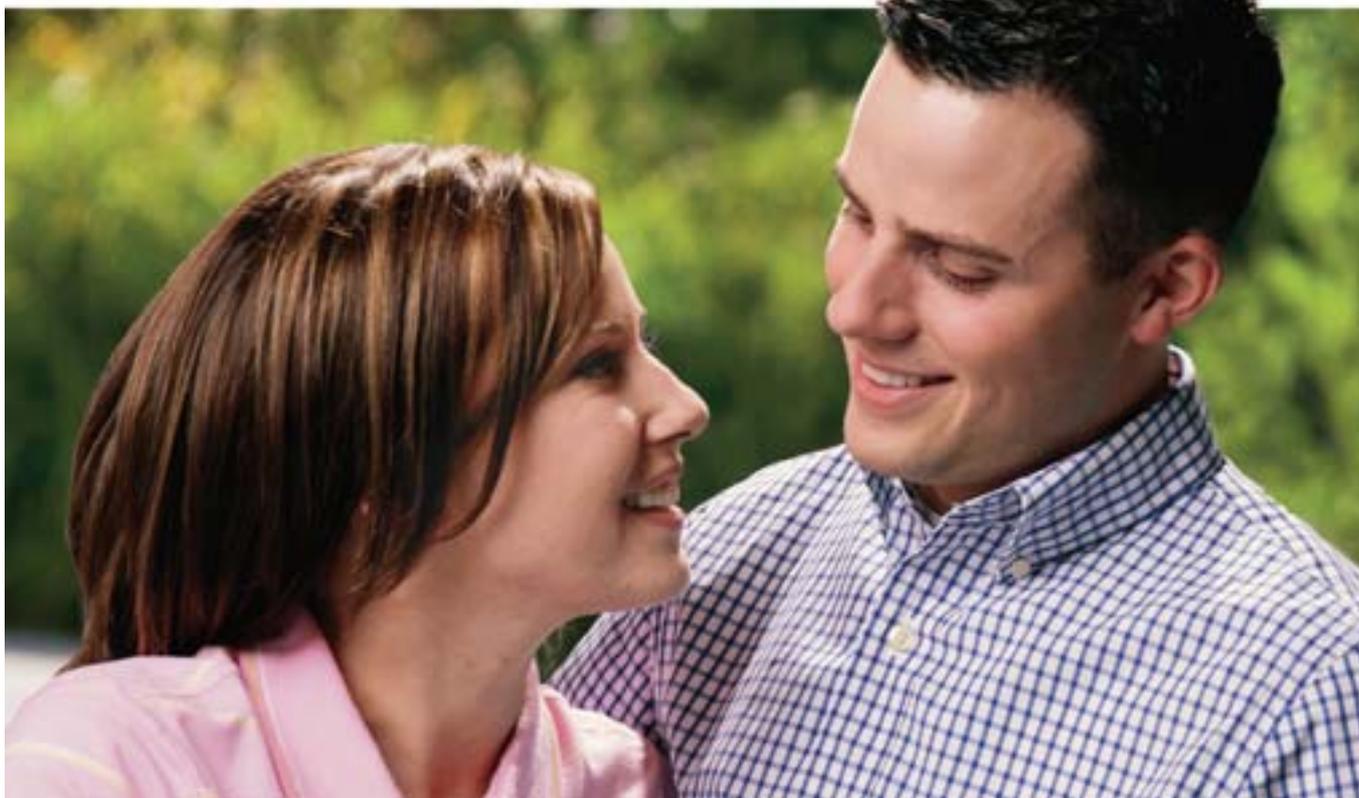
Among the first instructions given to this newly organized Church was to follow the inspiration and revelation that comes from the Lord, through His prophet, in fulfilling our responsibilities to build His kingdom. He has promised to direct us in the course that should be ours to carry on this great work.

The Prophet’s Counsel

I think President Gordon B. Hinckley, our prophet today, gave us the key to balance our responsibilities in an earlier worldwide leadership training meeting, held on June 21, 2003. In that broadcast he stated:

“Yours . . . is the privilege of standing in the shadow of the Redeemer of the world as we carry forward this work. Yours is the opportunity to speak of the beauty of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in behalf of His sons and daughters. Could there be a greater privilege than this?

“Rejoice in the privilege which is yours. Your opportunity will not last forever. Too soon there will be only



In all periods of history, God has given His divine law to safeguard and protect the holy union between husband and wife.

the memory of the great experience you are now having.

“None of us will accomplish all we might wish to. But let us do the best we can. I am satisfied that the Redeemer will then say, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant’ (Matthew 25:21).”²

As you remember, in that broadcast he explained our fourfold responsibility. The first applies to the subject we are addressing in this broadcast. He stated:

“First, it is imperative that you not neglect your families. Nothing you have is more precious. Your wives and your children are deserving of the attention of their husbands and fathers. When all is said and done, it is this family relationship which we will take with us into the life beyond. To paraphrase the words of scripture, ‘What shall it profit a man

though he serve the Church faithfully and lose his own family?’ (see Mark 8:36).”³

This has been a continuing message from our prophets since the early days of the organization of the Church. The most important place for gospel teaching and leadership is in the family and in the home. If we follow these instructions, we will give assignments and plan programs, activities, and classes which will complement and support our families.

Establishing Proper Priorities

How we use our time and keep our lives in balance is fundamental to how we will perform our family duties and our Church service. Discipline yourself to follow the prophet’s counsel on how you prioritize the use of your time.

Your Eternal Companion

Begin by discussing with your eternal companion how much time you need together to strengthen your marriage, to demonstrate the love you have for each other. That is your first priority.

The Church is to help individuals and families come unto Christ and obtain eternal life. Eternal life is God’s greatest gift to His children, and it is obtained only through a family relationship. This relationship must start with the union between husband and wife, which is sacred to the Lord and is something not to be trifled with. The marriage covenant is essential for the Lord’s plan and is the purpose for which He created the heavens and the earth. In all periods of history, He has given His divine law to safeguard and protect the holy union between husband and wife.



The most important instruction children will ever receive should come from their parents.

Your Children

Second, consider the spiritual needs of your children. How much time is necessary to be certain you are being close to them? It is your responsibility as fathers and mothers to provide adequate time to teach them, for the most important instruction children will ever receive should come from their parents. We need to be familiar with what the Church is teaching our children so that we can be in harmony with that teaching in our instructions to each child. For example, the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*, quoting the proclamation on the family, gives young people this counsel about families:

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and

maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”⁴

The pamphlet continues:

“Being part of a family is a great blessing. Your family can provide you with companionship and happiness, help you learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and help you prepare for eternal life. Not all families are the same, but each is important in Heavenly Father’s plan.

“Do your part to build a happy home. Be cheerful, helpful, and considerate of others. Many problems in the home are created because family members speak and act selfishly or unkindly. Concern yourself with the needs of other family members. Seek to be a peacemaker rather than to tease, fight, and quarrel. Remember that the family is the most sacred unit of the Church.”⁵

Providing for Your Family

Our third priority is to provide for our family units. Again from the proclamation on the family:

“By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.”⁶

We need to maintain good skills to be gainfully employed. In a changing world, we must keep up-to-date, or our skills will become obsolete. Even though we are busy in Church assignments, we should not pass up opportunities to increase our development and improve the welfare of our families. This requires that we invest adequate time and thought to preparing for the future.

This counsel applies to the sisters as well as the brethren. Although the responsibility to provide for the family belongs primarily to fathers, the

proclamation indicates that “disability, death, or other circumstances”⁷ may also require you sisters to use and develop your skills to provide for your families.

Church Service

Fourth in our priority is our commitment to the time we spend in Church activities. Active Latter-day Saint families value their Church time and make choices in their family life to make room for it.

Leaders need to be especially sensitive to different family situations when they extend calls and create expectations. Families with young children where both parents have demanding calls that take them out of the home are the most likely to feel that Church activities interfere with their family life. Church leaders can help by acknowledging and validating members’ efforts to balance Church

We can increase our association with our families while we serve in Church callings.



service with their family responsibilities.

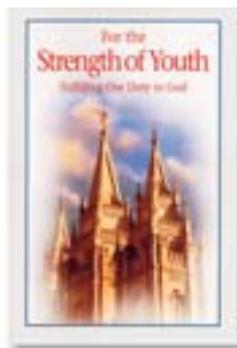
Involving Family Members

There are ways to increase our association with our families while we serve in our Church callings by involving our families, when appropriate, in our Church service. Let me give you one personal example.

My father served as my bishop during the early years of my life. He was a busy man with a demanding legal practice. He was also active in civic affairs and in demand as a public speaker. And, of course, he was the father of six children. I was always grateful that my father had his priorities right. Mother was always his first priority. It was evident by the way he treated her. This was followed by a real dedication to each of his children.

When I was about six years old, I received a red wagon as a Christmas gift. It was exactly like this one in

miniature. The little red wagon provided a real bond between my father and me. In his busy life, he had to find ways of involving his



family in activities without diminishing his own productivity.

Much of his service as a bishop occurred during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Many of our ward members were in desperate need. As the bishop, he had the responsibility of supplying the means to sustain their lives. This seemed to be a good activity for a bishop, his son, and the little red wagon.

I would come home from school and find stacks on the side of the garage—flour, sugar, wheat, and other commodities. I knew that that evening my father and I would have the opportunity of being together.

When he would arrive home, the little red wagon was loaded with supplies to take to a family. The two of us, walking and talking together, would complete our welfare assignment by delivering the commodities to those in need.

I was able to witness firsthand the love and care a good priesthood leader had for his ward members. More important, I had an opportunity of spending precious time with my father.

Focusing on Basic Priorities

Let me encourage you to do what we taught you in the first worldwide leadership training meeting. We remind you that all units of the Church are at different stages of development, and all units have different needs. When we are planning our Church programs, the families





“The home is the best place to teach, learn, and apply gospel principles.”⁸

Again, we encourage you to refer to this booklet’s helpful teachings.

The Savior’s Example

Our Lord and Savior ministered personally to the people, lifting the downtrodden, giving hope to the discouraged, and seeking out the lost. By His words and actions, He showed the people that He loved and understood and appreciated them. He recognized the divine nature and eternal worth of each individual. Even when calling people to repentance, He condemned the sin without condemning the sinner.

Like our Savior, as Church leaders we should love the people we serve, showing care and concern for each one individually. May the Lord bless us in the sacred responsibility He has given us is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 24.
3. *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22.
4. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 10.
6. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
8. *Family Guidebook* (2001), 1.

The Family Guidebook (item no. 31180) may be obtained through Church distribution centers and service centers.

must be taken into consideration.

Again, we caution you not to burden your membership with more than one Church calling, plus home teaching and visiting teaching. Discipline yourself to stick to the basic priorities, and you will be surprised how the inspiration of the Lord will direct you as you carry on your responsibilities to be a servant in His kingdom.

The ultimate focus of the restored Church is to facilitate and bring about opportunities for us to assist the Lord in His work to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. We do this primarily by strengthening families. In an age of moral decline, political uncertainty, international unrest, and economic instability, our focus on strengthening and stabilizing families must be enhanced and magnified. The very purpose of the

Church is to assist families in obtaining salvation and exaltation in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

The Family Guidebook

Several years ago we published a special *Family Guidebook*. It was for the use of members, especially those who are new converts or have limited Church experience. We encourage you to use it. It begins with a statement:

“The family is the basic unit of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the most important social unit in time and eternity. God has established families to bring happiness to His children, allow them to learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and prepare them for eternal life.



CHRIST WITH THE CHILDREN, BY HARRY ANDERSON; PHOTOGRAPH BY BUSATH PHOTOGRAPHY

Parents Have a Sacred Duty

BONNIE D. PARKIN

Relief Society General President



Family Responsibilities

If I could have one thing happen for parents and leaders of this Church, it would be that they feel the love of the Lord in their lives each day as they care for Heavenly Father's children. It may not be something that I say that touches your heart, but what the Spirit whispers to you. Follow those sweet promptings.

I distinctly remember when the proclamation on the family was given: September 23, 1995. I was seated in the Tabernacle at the general Relief Society meeting. President Hinckley was the concluding speaker. He

presented "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Stillness was in the congregation but also a sense of excitement, a reaction of "Yes—we need help with our families!"

I remember feeling it was so right. Tears ran down my cheeks. As I looked at the sisters seated near me, they seemed to be experiencing similar feelings. There was so much in the proclamation that I couldn't wait to get a copy and study it. The proclamation affirms the dignity of women.

And to think that it was first given to the women of the Church at the general Relief Society meeting—I know President Hinckley values women.

We are all here as Church leaders. We're busy. But I have to remember—just like you do—that our first responsibility is to our own family. Remember, they are one of the few blessings we get to take with us to the eternities!¹ Newel K. Whitney was a bishop in the early Church in Kirtland. Like you bishops today, he must have been pretty busy doing lots of good things. But he was chastened by the Lord and commanded to "set in order *his* family" (D&C 93:50; italics added). Sisters

and brothers, this counsel applies to all of us.

Many of you are parents or grandparents, or someday you may be. But married or not, we are all members of families. Take a minute and think about your own family. What do you love about them? One thing I love about mine is I rejoice that my four sons love to be together.

What doctrine on the family does the proclamation teach? I'd like to focus on one paragraph: "By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."²

I love the words "by divine design." Parenting is part of our Heavenly Father's divine design for His children. As parents, we have divine responsibility to provide, protect, and nurture our families.

How can these guidelines—to *provide*, *protect*, and *nurture*—help us to rear righteous children?

Provide

The proclamation says parents provide "the necessities of life." But what are those necessities? Yes, they are a roof overhead, and they are food on the table. But because of the gospel plan, we know there is more than



that. They include skills—the things that build character. Let’s look at just a few.

We provide for our children as we teach them how to work. Let me tell you about my grandson Jacob. He did not want to go to school. His mother had tried so many things. Finally she sat him down and said, “Daddy’s job is to go to work and earn money. My job is to stay home and take care of you and your brothers and sister. And your job, Jacob, is to go to school.” When Jacob understood the principle, he accepted it and went to school.

We also teach our children to work by expecting them to do chores and, when appropriate, to work outside the home. We help our children provide for their lifetimes by teaching them the value of work. Start early! My husband says the greatest gift his father gave him was independence—because he taught him to work.

Managing our finances also helps us to be good providers. As parents, plan together to live on a budget.

Teach your children the difference between wants and needs. Don’t place unreasonable financial demands on your spouse. When President Hinckley counseled us to get out of debt, a father I know sat down with his married children and asked them about their finances. He was surprised to find that two had serious debt. He then asked them if he could help them make a plan.

Education and training enable parents to provide. Encourage your children to get all the education they can. In some countries, young people cannot qualify for Perpetual Education Fund loans because they have not completed secondary schooling. In today’s world, it is so important that parents continue to learn.

Protect

The second guideline I would like to talk about is *protect*. Protection from what? From harm—both physical and spiritual. We protect when we teach our children that they have divine worth, when we go to church as a family, when we have family home evening, when we have family prayer, when we study the scriptures together. That’s all pretty simple stuff, but I testify to you that it provides powerful protection.

The proclamation teaches that parents have a sacred duty to protect their children. Abuse can be emotional, such as talking down to a spouse

or a child, treating them as worthless, or withholding love and affection. Fathers do not protect their families when they beat or strike their wives or children. A West African sister said that before joining the Church, her father beat her mother and the children. “Now,” she said, “he treats us with respect and tenderness because he understands we are children of God.”

Parents protect their children by knowing their choice of friends. One teenage girl was angry when her father questioned her about her evening’s activities. The father explained that the proclamation said he should be a protector of his family and that he loved his daughter, and that was why he wanted to be sure she was safe.

We must also protect our children from the influences of the media. Know what your children are watching on the television, in the theaters, and in their friends’ homes. If you have a computer in your home, make sure it is a tool for those things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

We are protected as we follow the living prophet. How have you been protected as a family by following President Hinckley’s counsel to read

the Book of Mormon? I recently received a note from a sister in England. She wrote:

“My family has struggled in the last year with a father who has chosen not to attend church any longer. He has been active all his life and has been in bishoprics. My heart has cried to the Lord about what I can do to not feel resentment and bitterness. I have family home evening and prayer on my own with the children. While in the temple I felt prompted, because of the challenge to read the Book of Mormon, to not have scripture time alone with the children but take the children and the scriptures to my husband, wherever he may be in the house. So off we march, every night at 9:00, to find him. He reads with us—not at first, but now he does. He is coming to church, meeting with us



in family home evening, and leading gospel discussions. My children were the Lord's feet and carried the words of redeeming love to my husband. This has been a great blessing to my family.”

Nurture

The third and the last guideline is *nurture*. What does nurturing look like? What does it feel like? What does it sound like? Nurturing looks like, feels like, and sounds like this scripture: “By persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness” (D&C 121:41–42). Let me share just a few examples.

I think nurturing looks like disciplining with love. One young mother stops her child



when he doesn't obey. She cups her hands around his face, looking him in the eyes, and says, “Listen to my words.” We must teach our children to make wise choices, but we can't remove the consequences of their actions. Remember, the basis of our Heavenly Father's plan is agency.

What does nurturing feel like? Much of the teaching and relationship building in families takes place in those brief, unplanned moments during our daily routine. The dinner table is a place to connect with each other, share our daily activities, listen to and encourage each other, and even laugh together. I know laughter lightens the load. Dear mothers and fathers, make a regular mealtime for the people you love.

Are you done parenting when your children are all grown and on their own? No, the deal is that you're never



done. But we're in this great business of creating eternal families. While my husband and I were serving a mission in England, one of our sons and his family came to visit. I remember him saying, "We came because we needed to be nurtured." Once a parent, always a parent. Isn't that the best? As I finished reading the Book of Mormon in December, I was struck with the realization that even Mormon counseled his adult son Moroni: "My son, be faithful in Christ; . . . may Christ lift thee up . . . and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and eternal life, rest in your mind forever" (Moroni 9:25).

What does nurturing sound like? Sometimes it's hard to get more than one-word answers from a teenager. Here's a question that I've found to be extremely helpful in changing that: "What is the biggest challenge or struggle you have right now?" This question opens the door for youth to share. And when they do, just listen! Don't judge or counsel or anything else. Just listen. You'll be amazed at the connections and bonds that will be formed. Bishops and counselors, this very same question can be powerful as you interview the youth in your wards.

Nurturing sounds like family prayer. One of my most lasting memories of my father is kneeling with my brothers and sister by my parents' bed in their small room and hearing my father plead with Heavenly Father to bless our mother, who was in the

hospital. Hearing my father pour out his heart helped me know that there was a God in heaven who listens. Pray for your children about their schoolwork and for their protection during the day. Our children know of our love and expectations when they hear us pray for them.

Strengthening Families

As a leader, how do you strengthen and support the families of those you serve? You can use those same guidelines—provide, protect, and nurture—to strengthen your ward families.

Leaders support parents by honoring them, not by stepping in front to take over a child. You can be a mentor, you can share like interests, but defer to how the parents would like to have things done. One mother shared: "It has often seemed to me that the last people my teenage sons wanted to listen to were my husband and me. At times, my sons, yielding to peer pressures, have turned the parent volume down. I'm thankful for wise Church leaders who have counseled our sons. They never took over our role as parents. They listened but gave support to *our* guidance and redirected them back to us."

As families, we all have needs. Just a few heartfelt words about mothers who parent alone: Let me share with you the story of a mother of five whose husband was deployed overseas. She relates:

"When my husband left in early February, we had reliable vehicles.

However, by November, they had broken down, and we were not able to repair them. During this same time, my 17-year-old son let me know that he wasn't planning to serve a mission because he wasn't sure if the gospel was true. If ever there was a time in my life that I needed the blessings of the priesthood, it was then. I don't remember all the details or when and where, but I distinctly remember receiving more than one blessing from caring priesthood holders during that time. I always knew that I could call on my home teachers and they would be there. Neither one could fix my van, but they could give me much-needed priesthood blessings, and they found someone who could fix the car."

Devoted home teachers made a difference for this family, and they can make a difference for all single-parent families as they come to know them, gain their trust, and provide priesthood blessings. Bishops, high priests group leaders, and elders quorum presidents, these mothers need the blessings of the priesthood in their home, as do our remarkable single sisters.

President Hinckley warned about the "slow stain of the world" 10 years ago when the proclamation was issued. This prophetic declaration reaffirms the Lord's "standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family."³ In contrast, the world tries to dictate the roles of women and motherhood. Women today are told they need a



Leaders support parents by honoring them, not by stepping in front to take over a child.

thriving career, organizations to belong to, and, if they have resources, children. The honored role of mother is increasingly out of fashion. Let me make it clear: we must not allow the world to compromise what we know is given to us by divine design.

Sisters, let me speak directly to you for just a few minutes. As members of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is our blessing and our responsibility to nurture and sustain the family unit. Everyone belongs to a family, and every family needs to be strengthened and protected.

My greatest help in becoming a homemaker came first from my own mother and grandmother and next from the Relief Society sisters in the different wards where we have lived. I learned skills; I saw modeled the joys that come from creating a home where others want to be. Effective January 2006, there were new guidelines for home, family, and personal enrichment meetings and activities.

They provide increased flexibility in order for all sisters to participate in Relief Society. Now, Relief Society leaders, make sure that the meetings and the activities you plan will strengthen the homes of all your sisters.

Visiting teaching is another vehicle to support the family. I hope all of you have opportunity to be visiting teachers. Visiting teachers not only strengthen a sister spiritually but are also in a unique position to nurture and to assess needs. Relief Society leaders, be proactive in your welfare committee meetings, and report on spiritual and temporal needs identified by your visiting teachers.

The Pure Love of Christ

For those of you who are married, think back. What made you fall in love with your spouse? Remembering this can give you a forgiving heart. Express your love to each other. A wife can make a difference in her husband's life as she builds his self-confidence. A husband can brighten even the

darkest day with three simple words: "I love you." One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is to show them they love each other.

Our role as parents in rearing righteous children is to provide, protect, and nurture, and we do that as equal partners. We do the same as leaders. Being a leader is hard work. Being a parent is hard work. We get discouraged, but we just keep going. I think we learn so much about the pure love of Christ in our families and through Church service.

As parents and leaders, we need to give to our children the love our Heavenly Father extends to us. In Moroni 8:17 we read, "I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love." Add to this the Lord's words: "Clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace" (D&C 88:125). I invite you, in all of your dealings, to put on the mantle of charity, to envelop your family in the pure love of Christ.

As families and leaders, may the Lord bless you to encircle those you love with the mantle of charity, that all of us may return to the presence of our Father in Heaven and live with Him together forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. "Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100.

Heavenly Homes, Forever Families

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

First Counselor in the First Presidency



Building an Eternal Home

It is in a spirit of humility that I represent the First Presidency as the concluding speaker for this meeting. We have been inspired and edified by the remarks of Elder Bednar, Elder Perry, and Sister Parkin. Our thoughts have centered on home and family as we have been reminded that “the home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions.”¹

A home is much more than a house built of lumber, brick, or stone. A home is made of love, sacrifice,

and respect. We are responsible for the homes we build. We must build wisely, for eternity is not a short voyage. There will be calm and wind, sunlight and shadows, joy and sorrow. But if we really try, our home can be a bit of heaven here on earth. The thoughts we think, the deeds we do, the lives we live not only influence the success of our earthly journey, they also mark the way to our eternal goals.

Some Latter-day Saint families are comprised of mother, father, and children, all at home, while others have witnessed the tender departure of one, then another, then another of their members. Sometimes a single individual comprises a family. Whatever its composition, the family continues—for families can be forever.

We can learn from the master architect—even the Lord. He has taught us how we must build. He declared, “Every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matthew 12:25). Later He cautioned, “Behold, mine house is a house of order . . . and not a house of confusion” (D&C 132:8).

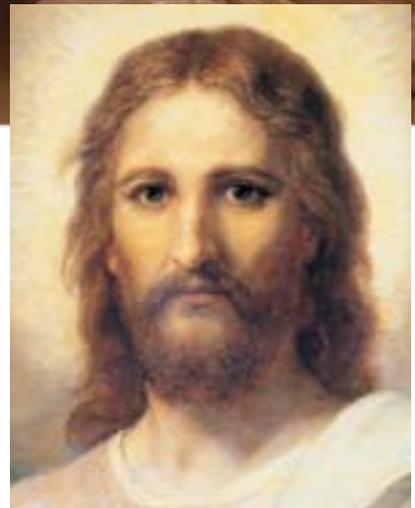
In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, December 27, 1832, the Master counseled, “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” (D&C 88:119; see also 109:8).

Where could any of us locate a more suitable blueprint whereby he could wisely and properly build? Such a house would meet the building code outlined in Matthew, even a house built “upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24, 25; see also Luke 6:48; 3 Nephi 14:24, 25), a house capable of withstanding the rains of adversity, the floods of opposition, and the winds of doubt everywhere present in our changing and challenging world.

Some might question, “But that revelation was to provide guidance for the construction of a temple. Is it relevant today?”

I would respond, “Did not the Apostle Paul declare, ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ ” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Let the Lord be the general contractor for our building project. Then each of us can be subcontractors responsible for a vital segment of the whole project. All of us are thereby builders. In addition to building our own homes, we also have the



The Master counseled, “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith.”

responsibility to help build the kingdom of God here upon the earth by serving faithfully and effectively in our Church callings. May I provide guidelines from God, lessons from life, and points to ponder as we commence to build.

Kneel Down to Pray

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5–6). So spoke the wise Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

On this, the American continent, Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, “Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith” (Jacob 3:1).

This divinely inspired counsel comes to us today as crystal-clear water to a parched earth. We live in troubled times.

Just a few short generations ago, one could not have imagined the world in which we now live and the problems it presents. We are surrounded by immorality, pornography, violence, drugs, and a host of other ills which afflict modern-day society.

Ours is the challenge, even the responsibility, not only to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) but also to guide our children and others for whom we have responsibility safely through the stormy seas of sin surrounding all of us, that we might one day return to live with our Heavenly Father.

The training of our own families requires our presence, our time, our best efforts. To be effective in our training, we must be stalwart in our examples to our family members and available for private time with each member, as well as time for counseling and guidance.

We often feel overwhelmed by the task before us. However, help is ever

at hand. He who knows each of His children will answer our fervent and heartfelt prayer as we seek help in guiding them. Such prayer will solve more problems, alleviate more suffering, prevent more transgression, and bring about greater peace and contentment in the human soul than any other way.

Besides needing such guidance for our own families, we have been called to positions where we have responsibility for others. As a bishop or counselor, as a priesthood quorum leader or an auxiliary leader, you have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. There may be those who come from part-member or less-active families; some may have turned from their parents, disregarding their pleadings and counsel. We could well be the instrument in the Lord’s hands to make a difference in the life of one in such a situation. Without the guidance of our Heavenly Father, however, we cannot do all that we have been called to do. Such help comes through prayer.

A prominent American judge was asked what we, as citizens of the countries of the world, could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and into our nations. He thoughtfully replied, “I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer.”

As a people, aren’t we grateful that family prayer is not an out-of-date practice with us? There is real meaning behind the oft-quoted adage, “The family that prays together stays together.”

The Lord Himself directed that we have family prayer when He said, “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed” (3 Nephi 18:21).

As parents, as teachers, and as leaders in any capacity, we cannot afford to attempt this potentially perilous journey through mortality without heavenly assistance to aid us in guiding those for whom we have responsibility.

As we offer unto God our family prayers and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Kneel down to pray.

Step Up to Serve

For our example, we turn to the life of the Lord. Like a glowing searchlight of goodness is the life of Jesus as He ministered among men. He brought strength to the limbs of the cripple, sight to the eyes of the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf, and life to the body of the dead.

His parables preach power. With the good Samaritan, He taught, “Love thy neighbor” (see Luke 10:30–35). Through His kindness to the woman taken in adultery, He taught compassionate understanding (see John 8:3–11). In His parable of the talents,



He taught us to improve ourselves and to strive for perfection (see Matthew 25:14–30). Well could He have been preparing us for our role in building an eternal family.

Each of us—whether a priesthood leader or an officer in an auxiliary organization—has responsibility to his or her sacred call. We have been set apart for the work to which we have been called. In Doctrine and Covenants 107:99 the Lord said, “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.” As we help to bless and strengthen those for whom we have responsibility in our Church callings, we will in effect be blessing and strengthening their families. Thus, the service we perform in our families and in our Church callings can have eternal consequences.

Many years ago, as a bishop in a large and diverse ward of over a thousand members located in downtown Salt Lake City, I faced numerous challenges.

One Sunday afternoon I received a phone call from the proprietor of a drugstore located within our ward boundaries. He indicated that earlier that morning, a young boy had come into his store and had purchased an ice-cream sundae from the soda fountain. He had paid for the purchase with money he took from an envelope, and then when he left, he had forgotten the envelope. When the proprietor had a chance

to examine it, he found that it was a fast-offering envelope with the name and telephone number of our ward printed on it. As he described to me the boy who had been in his store, I immediately identified the individual—a young deacon from our ward who came from a less-active family.

My first reaction was one of shock and disappointment to think that any of our deacons would take fast-offering funds intended for those in need and would go to a store on a Sunday and buy a treat with the money. I determined to visit the boy that afternoon in order to teach him about the sacred funds of the Church and his duty as a deacon to gather and to protect those funds.

As I drove to the home, I offered a silent prayer for direction in what I should say to compose the situation. I arrived and knocked on the door. It was opened by the boy’s mother, and I was invited into the living room. Although the room was barely lighted, I could see how small and run-down it was. The few pieces of furniture were threadbare. The mother herself looked worn out.

My indignation at her son’s actions that morning disappeared from my thoughts as I realized that here was a family in real need. I felt impressed to ask the mother if there was any food in the house. Tearfully she admitted that there was none.

She told me that her husband had been out of work for some time and that they were in desperate need not only of food but also of money with which to pay the rent so that they wouldn’t be evicted from the tiny house.



The service we perform in our families and in our Church callings can have eternal consequences.

I never did bring up the matter of the fast-offering donations, for I realized that the boy had most likely been desperately hungry when he stopped at the drugstore. Rather, I immediately arranged for assistance for the family, that they might have food to eat and a roof over their heads. In addition, with the help of the priesthood leaders in the ward, we were able to arrange employment for the husband so that he could provide for his family in the future.

As priesthood and auxiliary leaders, we are entitled to the Lord’s assistance in magnifying our callings and fulfilling our responsibilities.

Seek His help, and when the inspiration comes to you, move on that inspiration concerning where to go, whom to see, what to say, and how to say it. We can think a thought to death, but only when we move upon the thought do we bless human lives.

May we be true shepherds of those for whom we have responsibility. John Milton wrote in his poem "Lycidas," "The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed" (line 125). The Lord Himself said to Ezekiel the prophet, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that . . . feed not the flock" (Ezekiel 34:2-3).

Ours is the responsibility to care for the flock, for the precious sheep, these tender lambs, are everywhere to be found—at home in our own families, in the homes of our extended families, and waiting for us in our Church callings. Jesus is our Exemplar. Said He, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep" (John 10:14). We have a shepherding responsibility. May we each step up to serve.

Reach Out to Rescue

On the journey along the pathway of life, there are casualties. Some depart from the road markers which lead to life eternal only to discover that the detour chosen ultimately leads to a dead end. Indifference, carelessness, selfishness, and sin all take their costly toll in human lives. There are those who, for unexplained reasons, march to the sound of a

different drummer, later to learn they have followed the Pied Piper of sorrow and suffering.

In 1995 the First Presidency took note of those who had strayed from the fold of Christ and issued a special statement entitled "An Invitation to Come Back." The message contained this appeal:

"To you who for any reason find yourselves outside the embrace of the Church, we say come back. We invite you to return and partake of the



happiness you once knew. You will find many with outstretched arms to welcome you, assist you, and give you comfort.

"The Church needs your strength, love, loyalty, and devotion. The course is fixed and certain by which a person may return to the full blessings of Church membership, and we stand ready to receive all who wish to do so."

Perhaps an oft-repeated scene will bring closer to home your personal opportunity to reach out to rescue. Let us look in on a family with a son

named Jack. Throughout Jack's early life, he and his father had many serious arguments. One day when he was 17, they had a particularly agitated one. Jack said to his father, "This is the straw that breaks the camel's back. I'm leaving home, and I will never return!" He went to his room and packed a bag. His mother begged him to stay, but he was too angry to listen. He left her crying in the doorway.

Leaving the yard, he was about to pass through the gate when he heard his father call to him, "Jack, I know that a large share of the blame for your leaving rests with me. For this I am truly sorry. I want you to know that if you should ever wish to return home, you'll always be welcome. And I'll try to be a better father to you. I want you to know that I love you, and I'll always love you."

Jack said nothing but went to the bus station and bought a ticket to a distant point. As he sat in the bus watching the miles go by, his thoughts turned to the words of his father. He began to realize how much courage, how much love had been required for his father to say what he had said. Dad had apologized. He had invited him back and had left the words ringing in the summer air, "I love you."

Jack knew that the next move was up to him. He realized the only way he could ever find peace with himself was



May we be true shepherds of those for whom we have responsibility.

to demonstrate to his father the same kind of maturity, goodness, and love that Dad had shown toward him. Jack got off the bus. He bought a return ticket and began the journey home.

He arrived shortly after midnight, entered the house, and turned on the light. There in the rocking chair sat his father, his head bowed. As he looked up and saw Jack, he arose from the chair; they rushed into each other's arms. Jack later said, "Those last years that I was home were among the happiest of my life."

Here was a father who, suppressing passion and bridle pride, reached out to rescue his son before he became one of that vast "lost battalion" resulting from fractured families and shattered homes. Love was the binding band, the healing balm; love so often felt, so seldom expressed.

From Mount Sinai there thunders in our ears, "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12), and later, from that same God, the injunction, "Live together in love" (D&C 42:45).

Following the Lord's Blueprint

Kneel down to pray. Step up to serve. Reach out to rescue. Each is a vital page of God's blueprint to make a house a home and a home a heaven.

Balance is key to us in our sacred and solemn responsibilities in our own homes and in our Church callings. We must use wisdom, inspiration, and sound judgment as we care for our families and fulfill our Church callings, for each is vitally important. We cannot neglect our families; we must not neglect our Church callings.

Let us build with skill, take no shortcuts, and follow His blueprint. Then the Lord, even our building inspector, may say to us, as He said when He appeared to Solomon, a builder of another day, "I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9:3). We will then have heavenly homes and forever families and will be able to help, to strengthen, and to bless other families as well.

I pray most humbly and sincerely that this blessing may come to each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTE

1. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; see *Liabona*, Dec. 1999, 1; or *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a

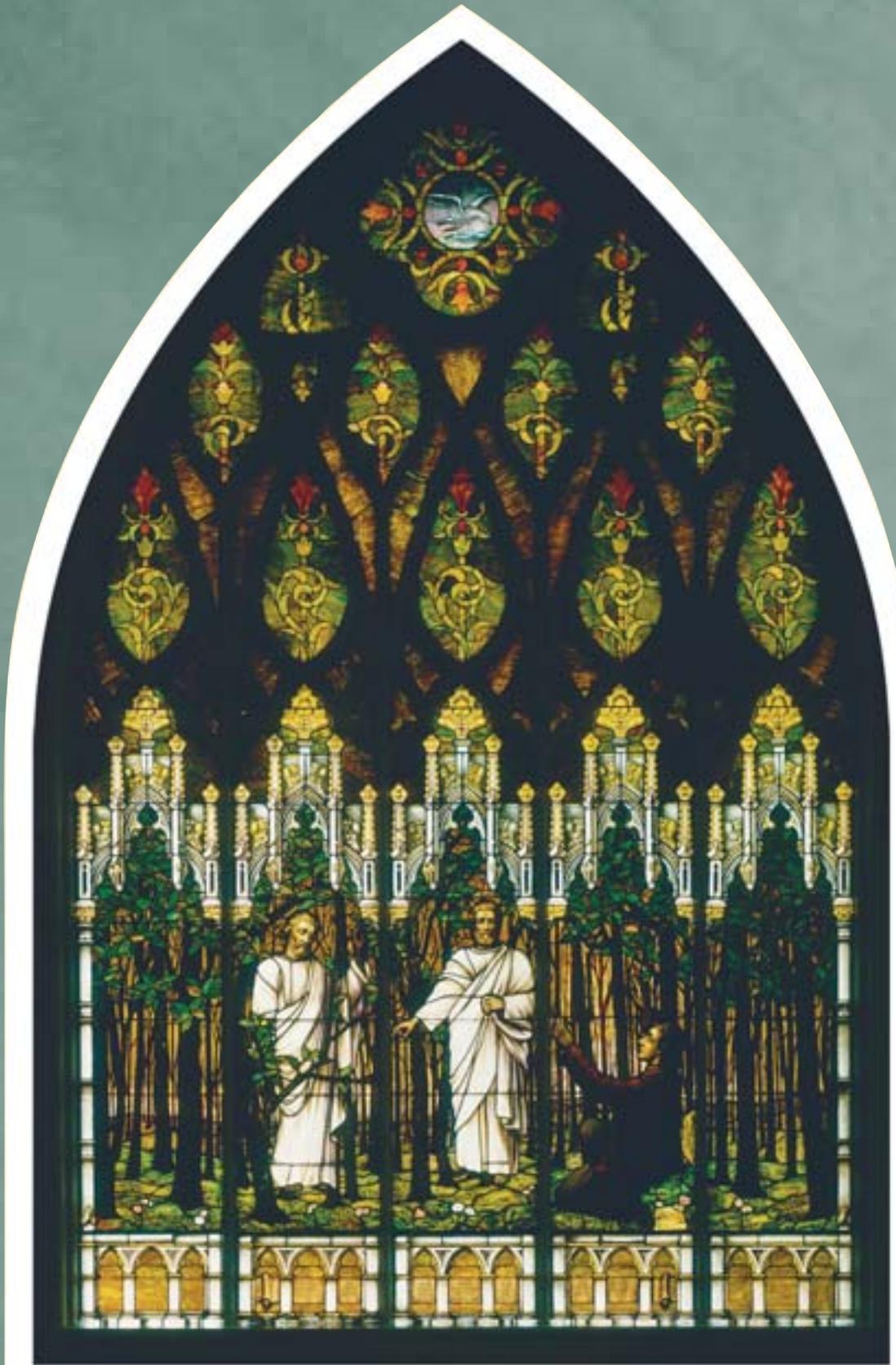
sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

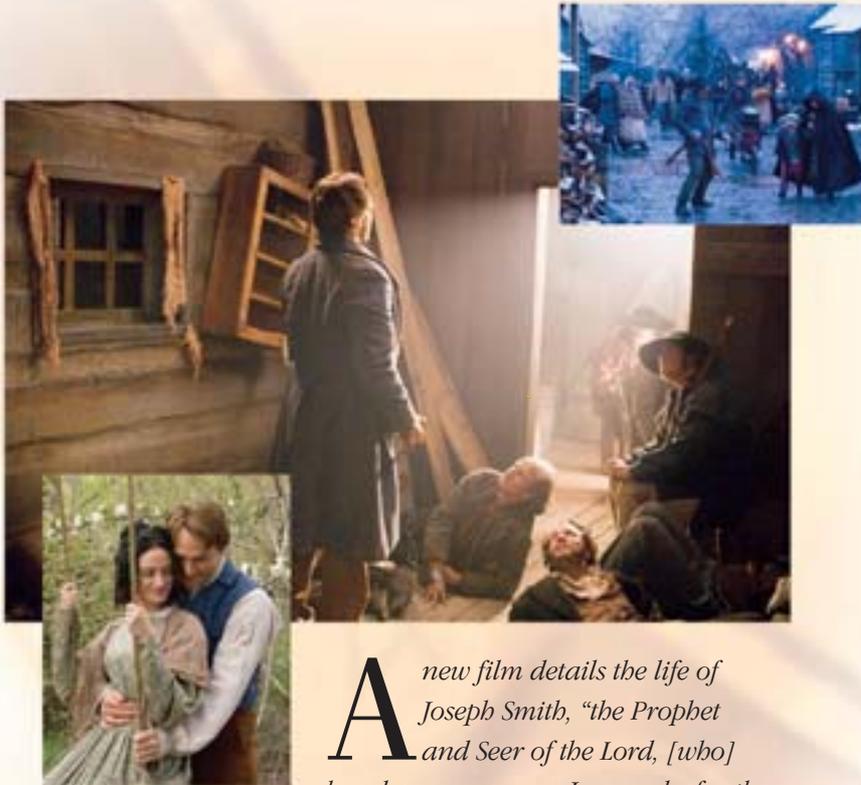
This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.



STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN A MEETINGHOUSE OF THE SALT LAKE LIBERTY STAKE

First Vision, by Lucy Thurston Kinney

"I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).



A new film details the life of Joseph Smith, “the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, [who] has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). See “Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration,” p. 40.