

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MARCH 2006

Ensign



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Vibrant Faith, p. 34

Young Single Adults
and Marriage, p. 20

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from Temptation, p. 62



Wash Day, by Lynde Mott

Emma Smith, left, is shown with Jane Manning James, a faithful African-American Latter-day Saint who lived for a time with Emma and the Prophet Joseph Smith at the Mansion House in Nauvoo. Jane and eight members of her family had journeyed on foot from Connecticut to Nauvoo, a distance of 800 miles.

Ensign



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ON THE COVER: Photography by Don L. Searle.

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Inspirational Thoughts

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Believe in God

“Believe in God. Believe in God the Eternal Father. He is the great Governor of the universe, but He is our Father and our God to whom we may go in prayer. We are His sons and daughters. Have you ever really thought that you were a child of God and that you have something of divinity within you?”

“Believe in God and be not faithless. Worship Him in spirit and in truth. Believe in Him. Read His word and follow His teachings.”

“Believe in Jesus Christ. . . . He is the Son of God, who came to earth, who left the royal courts on high and came and dwelt among men and gave His life for each of us, for you and for me. It is through Him that we approach the Father. Be not faithless, but believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and the Redeemer of the world” (meeting, Moscow, Russia, Sept. 10, 2002).

An Unquenchable Faith

“May you carry in your hearts an unquenchable faith, a certain knowledge of the great and salient things of the gospel of Jesus Christ of which you are a part—this the Church and kingdom of God—that the God

of heaven and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, parted the curtains in this [day] and opened Themselves to the view of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

“Do you have a certain faith in that? That John the Baptist came? That Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah came and restored the priesthood and its keys in ushering in this great dispensation? And that when all is said and done, this is where the truth lies?”

“Do you have in your heart that certain faith? If you do, the load will be light, I promise you. If you do not, . . . there is a way to get it. And the Savior pointed out that way when He said, ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself’ (John 7:17)” (regional conference, American Fork, Utah, Aug. 24, 2002).

Cultivate Family Relationships

“Let us not live a life . . . that would bring regret. . . . It is not going to matter very much how much money you made, what kind of a house you lived in, what kind of a car you drove, the size of your bank account—any of those things. What is going to matter is that dear woman who has walked with you side by



The only things you will take with you, when all is said and done, are your family relationships.

We now have
retired
men and
women serving
in a meaningful
missionary capacity
for this Church
throughout the world
in a spirit of entire
unselfishness to
teach and do good.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STOKER

side as your companion through all of the years of life and those children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and their faithfulness and their looking to you . . . with respect and love and deference and kindness. . . .

“The only things you will take with you, when all is said and done, are your family relationships. . . . God bless us to be good fathers, . . . good parents, and good husbands to our good wives” (meeting, Pleasant Grove, Utah, Jan. 18, 2003).

Be Good Women, Be Good Mothers

“You women, be good women, be good mothers. Be kind and gracious and generous. Strengthen your children with your faith and your testimony. Lift them up. Help them to walk through the troubled ways of the world as they grow in this very difficult age. Support, sustain, uphold, and bless your husbands with your love and your encouragement; and the Lord will bless you. Even if they are not members of the Church, bless them with kindness and reach out to them every good way that you can. The chances are that they will become members of the Church before they reach the time they die. It may be a long time and you may have a lot to put up with, but if that happens,

you will think it is all worth it” (meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Oct. 25, 2002).

Honor Your Wives

“You men who hold the priesthood of God, honor your wives. Respect them. They are the mothers of your children. When all is said and done, when you have lived your lives and go on to eternity, you will not take five cents of wealth that you have accumulated, not five cents. There is only one thing that you can take with you, and that is your eternal soul and the love and companionship of your husband or your wife. Live worthy of it” (meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, May 15, 2002).

Greater Love in Our Homes

“I would like to see greater love in our homes. . . . You parents who are fathers and mothers of children, treasure your children. Look to them with love. Lead them . . . with love. . . . They will follow after you if you do that. And I make you a promise that if you do so, the time will come when you will feel so grateful that you have done so, that you will get on your knees and thank

the Lord for the precious children who have come to you and grown up under your direction" (meeting, Port of Spain, Trinidad, May 20, 2002).

A Royal Priesthood

"This is the day which Peter foresaw when there should be a royal priesthood upon the earth available to all men who would accept the gospel.

"My dear brethren, do you realize what you have when you have the priesthood of God? You can serve in the governance of this Church. You can hold office. You can administer its affairs. More important even perhaps than that, it carries with it the power and authority to lay hands upon the heads of your family and bless them. Do you know of any group in the world where a father has the right and privilege and the opportunity to lay his hands upon the head of his wife and his children and bless them in the name of the Lord? What a priceless privilege that is. And I want to say, . . . live worthy of this great blessing" (meeting, Kiev, Ukraine, Sept. 9, 2002).

Be Loyal to the Church

"Be loyal to the Church. I have a testimony of the truth of this Church. So do you. . . . Nearly everyone here can stand upon his feet and say, 'I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that this is Their work.' . . . Never do anything which would speak of disloyalty in any sense. Uphold [the Church], sustain her, pray for her, work for her, move her forward. . . . The future of the work . . . lies with you. We need loyal and faithful Latter-day Saints. . . .

"Be loyal to the faith. Be loyal to God. Be loyal to Jesus Christ. Be loyal to the Church of Jesus Christ, and in so doing, you will be loyal to yourselves" (meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, May 15, 2002).

"Be loyal to this Church, my brothers and sisters. . . . I want to give you my testimony that the General Authorities

of this Church will never lead you in paths that will take you down. They will lead you in a trail that leads upward if you will follow in faith and faithfulness" (regional conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 5, 2002).

Be Faithful and True

"To every member of the Church, wherever you may be, I wish to say, be good people. Be good citizens of your communities. Be faithful and true. Be true to the wonderful Church of which you are a part. Every one of you is important. Every one of you is a member in a great fellowship of Latter-day Saints. Every one of you is a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father. Put your confidence in the Lord" (Japan stake conference satellite broadcast, Nov. 6, 2004).

Couple Missionaries

"We now have altogether some 5,300 [now 5,800] retired men and women serving in a meaningful missionary capacity for this Church throughout the world. The number is growing. They go where they are called. They serve where they are needed. Friendships are established; skills are shared; opportunities are opened for those who will never forget the men and women who have come among them in a spirit of entire unselfishness to teach and do good. They receive no money.

They go at their own expense. The measure of their devotion is unlimited. The fruits of their efforts are beyond calculation. . . .

"The great genius of this Church is work. Everybody works. You do not grow unless you work. Faith, testimony of the truth, is just like the muscle of my arm. If you use it, it grows strong. If you put it in a sling, it grows weak and flabby. We put people to work. We expect great things of them, and the marvelous and wonderful thing is they come through. They produce" (World Affairs Council, Los Angeles, California, June 12, 2002).



D*o you know of any group in the world where a father has the right to lay his hands upon the head of his wife and his children and bless them in the name of the Lord? What a priceless privilege.*



Every man or woman who goes into the house of the Lord leaves there a better man or woman.

Go to the House of the Lord

“Attend the temple. You will be blessed for so doing. Every man or woman who goes into the house of the Lord leaves there a better man or woman than he or she was when he or she entered the house of the Lord. The house of the Lord will have a refining effect upon you. It will cultivate unselfishness within your lives. It will build righteousness. It will impress upon you the importance of doing what you ought to do. Go to the house of the Lord” (stake conference, Provo, Utah, Sept. 22, 2002).

A Dedicated House of God

“With us, there is no building as sacred as a dedicated house of God. Only in Latter-day Saint temples are preserved in an indissoluble union for all eternity the precious associations of mortality. Among many things of a doctrinal nature that distinguish this Church from all others is the work that occurs in the house of the Lord under divine priesthood authority.

“Every temple throughout the world stands as a visible monument to the faith of this people in the certainty of immortality and the continuation of sacred bonds in that immortal realm” (temple groundbreaking, Sacramento, California, Aug. 22, 2004).

Great Strength of the Church

“What is the great strength of [this] Church? . . . It is the emphasis which we place on families. We live in a world where the family is falling apart. We put great emphasis on the family. Keep your families close together, and love and honor your children. Raise them in truth and faith to love the Lord” (meeting, Reykjavík, Iceland, Sept. 11, 2002).

An Absolute Miracle

“I have seen what I regard as a miracle as I have seen this great work move forward. . . . You may think it a very commonplace thing. I regard it as an absolute miracle, my brothers and sisters, this little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands and which is destined to roll forth and fill the whole earth. We have seen only the beginning. . . . I am satisfied that this work will go on and touch the lives of millions upon millions of people across the world. And the God of heaven, whose Church this is, will open the way to make all of that possible if you and I and the members of this Church, wherever they may be, will do our part in assisting with that process” (regional conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 5, 2002). ■

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. Explain that you are going to read some statements from a respected world leader. Testify to family members that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet to the world. Select and read various sections of the message, and invite the family to heed President Hinckley’s counsel.
2. If possible, bring a world map or globe, and have a family member point to a place on it. (Or have a family member name a country anywhere in the world.) Read from the message what President Hinckley said to the Saints in the closest area. Repeat as time permits. Explain that President Hinckley’s messages are for Church members everywhere.
3. Write the headings found throughout the message on slips of paper. Ask family members to take turns picking a slip and reading aloud the heading. Share President Hinckley’s comments about the chosen topic, and discuss how the family can apply them. Invite family members to share experiences they have had with these principles.

I Felt Understood

BY KAREN VAN ALFEN



When I was a child, we always had the Church magazines in our home. Every month I would grab the fresh new copy of the *Friend* from the mail pile in the kitchen and devour the entire magazine in a day. I would spend many other days rereading it, doing the crafts, trying the recipes. For years I carefully saved every copy, often going back to read past issues.

Years later, as a missionary in South America, I again found myself waiting with anticipation for our magazines to arrive. When the Spanish *Liabona* would finally come, my companion and I would hunker down in our apartment for a blissful hour of reading. The messages always lifted our spirits. We used the articles in our companion study, and we found our work moved along more effectively.

After mission and marriage, I continued to read the *Ensign* but eventually began to take it for granted. Then, for a variety of reasons, my husband and I failed to renew our subscription. At the time, I was struggling spiritually. I was still active in the Church but found myself withdrawing. I felt that I just didn't fit in. Although I realized that many of my negative feelings were self-generated, I felt powerless to stop.

While I was dealing with those feelings and working to regain my footing, I stopped by a friend's house one day,

and on her table lay a copy of the *Ensign*. I began to read and found it difficult to put the maga-

zine down, so I borrowed it and stayed up late that night reading it from cover to cover. I don't recall specific articles, only the feeling that the topics were relevant and that almost every article seemed to apply to me personally. I felt understood.

Later, one of my visiting teachers left me a copy of the *Ensign* and the *Friend*. She continued to shower me with the latest copies until I finally picked up the telephone and ordered my own magazines.

Now, when the mail comes and I see that thick packet, I get excited. I know I will gain valuable insights into scriptures and doctrines and that I will grow from hearing the experiences of others. But most of all I know that I am connected to people from all over the world. We may come from varied circumstances and have vastly different

life experiences, but that is a strength and one of the reasons we all need each other. What we share—the gospel of Jesus Christ—is more than enough to see us through.

I am so happy that the Church magazines are now back in our home to stay. ■

Karen Van Alfen is a member of the Hingham Ward, Hingham Massachusetts Stake.

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Blessed in My Affliction

BY BONNIE D. PARKIN

Relief Society General President

If my siblings had sold me into slavery, I'm absolutely certain I would feel more than a little angry and a lot betrayed! Yet this didn't seem to be the case with Joseph of old, whose brothers *did* sell him into slavery. Much later, when Joseph's opportunity for revenge arrived, those years of affliction had given him perspective on what mattered most. After Joseph identified himself to his brothers, his sensitivity to their concerns revealed his understanding of the purpose of his affliction: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5).

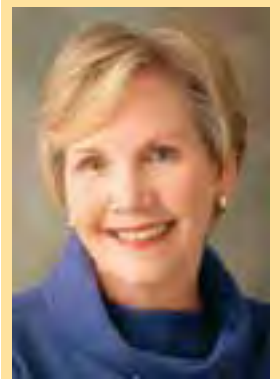
Joseph was a great man partly because he could recognize opportunity in affliction. Few of us have been sold into slavery, but all of us have experienced affliction. Do we recognize opportunities in our affliction?

In 1997 my husband was called to preside over the England London South Mission; we began our missionary service in July. Many things were new to me. Embarking on our first round of zone conferences, I hoped to get to know our missionaries, and I hoped they would get to know me. July 11 found

us on the stand in the Maidstone stake center chapel for a conference with 75 missionaries.

As we sang the opening hymn, I was suddenly overcome with nausea and dizziness. I turned to my husband and told him I was sick. My husband, an ear doctor, noticed an abnormal jerking in my eyes. He quickly summoned two missionaries to help me out of the meeting and into a classroom. What an awful introduction! Becoming sicker by the minute, I received a priesthood blessing from my husband and a faithful missionary and was then taken to the mission home. Every bump in the road and motion of the car worsened the queasiness and vertigo I felt. Soon I had completely lost my sense of balance and could no longer hear in one ear. Medical tests indicated a probable inner ear blood clot and the possibility of never regaining my balance or the hearing in my right ear.

I was scared, worried, and angry. While I believed my husband and I had been called of God, I wondered, "How can I assist the Lord in this great work if I cannot hear or even walk?" With no other family members or close friends to turn to for help, I felt completely alone. I needed a miracle. Believing I had done God's will in accepting callings and trying to do what was right, I pleaded with



While afflictions are never easy, all of them can give us experience and can be for our good. To grasp those blessings, we might need to turn our heads, lean a little closer, or listen a little better.

Two missionaries helped me out of the meeting and into a classroom. What an awful introduction!

Him to make me well. I was sure I had sufficient faith for a miracle.

With treatment, my balance gradually improved. But the hearing in my right ear did not return, leaving me deaf in that ear. This made me feel more discouraged. Why me? I was serving a mission for three years! Did I deserve this? Unlike Joseph, I did not view this affliction as an opportunity for good. I was more like Joseph's brothers who, upon finding their money in their grain sacks and fearing an evil stratagem, wondered, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" (Genesis 42:28).

I had forgotten that the same Lord who can turn water into wine can make our weak things strong (see Ether 12:27), that "all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory" (D&C 98:3).

Nine years later, with my own deeper perspective, I realize that countless blessings

have come from those afflictions in England. For example, like Joseph of old, I was imprisoned—not by bars but by vertigo—in a land far from the help of my extended family. But just as Joseph found support from friends, I found support from my fellow missionaries. Senior couples whom we had barely met came to the mission home and assisted me with my responsibilities to greet arriving missionaries and bid farewell to those departing.

When you hear with only one ear, understanding

others when they speak can be extremely difficult, especially if they are on your bad-ear side. By necessity I have become a better listener as I focus more directly on those speaking to me. Looking directly at them helps me better grasp what they are saying and sense what they are feeling.

Partially losing my hearing has helped me develop patience for others, especially those with disabilities. It has helped me find faith to accept affliction. It has given me clarity to realize that instant, miraculous cures are not always the Lord's will. In fact, sometimes just the opposite is true.

Would I want to go through this experience again? No. Yet has my soul been stretched and expanded from this and other challenges like it? Absolutely. Of course, while the growth has come, my hearing has not; the residue of affliction often remains. What then?

In February 2002 I was sitting across the desk from President Gordon B. Hinckley. He asked, "Bonnie, how is your health?" I answered that my health was fine, although I could not hear in my right ear because I had lost that hearing in the mission field. He then asked, "How is the hearing in your other ear?" "Fine," I said. "Well, then," he replied, "just turn your head." He then proceeded to issue my current call. President Hinckley understands the principle of doing the best with what we have and making adjustments when we need to compensate.

While afflictions are never easy, all of them can give us experience and can be for our good (see D&C 122:7). To grasp those blessings, we might need to turn our heads, lean a little closer, or listen a little better. Yet in those small, humble efforts, we will find that His grace is sufficient (see Ether 12:27). ■



A TALENT

for Touching Lives

BY EMILY METHENY

Even with a painful disease, Jamie touches lives by sharing her optimism, her faith, and her musical talent.

As an infant, Jamie Gibson Hartley wanted to keep up with her older brothers. She crawled all over the house until her hands were raw with blisters. But the painful blisters didn't slow her down. She turned her hands over and crawled on the backs of her hands until they became raw. Then she crawled on her elbows. As soon as her hands were healed, she was back to crawling on her hands.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE, EXCEPT AS NOTED, PHOTOGRAPHS OF JAMIE GIBSON COURTESY OF BYU PUBLICATIONS AND GRAPHICS

Jamie is one of approximately 100,000 Americans who suffer from epidermolysis bullosa (EB), a genetic skin disorder that destroys the skin, mouth, throat, and esophagus. The sores and scar tissue that develop from friction against the skin are a part of daily life for 28-year-old Jamie. Yet, even with a painful disease, Jamie touches lives by sharing her optimism, her faith, and her musical talent.



Humility, faith, and obedience to the gospel have helped Jamie find joy and hope in the future and the strength to help others.

would become as much as they let her become.

A Passion for Music

Passionate about music from a young age, Jamie joined her junior high school band and played percussion. When she could no longer hold the mallets because of her bandage-wrapped hands, Jamie joined the choir, even though she couldn't sing very well. The Gibsons hired a voice teacher, and Jamie went

The youngest of four children, Jamie was the second of Jim and Sheila Gibsons' children born with EB. Her older brother Ben also suffered from the disease and passed away at age 19. Most people with EB are not expected to live past the age of 30, as the sores and scar tissue often lead to infection, malnutrition, and skin cancer.

Living with EB

Jamie's disease affects the daily activities of her life. "It takes me a lot longer to do normal things," she says. Before dressing every day, she wraps her entire body with gauze to protect her skin and prevent sores. She avoids crowds where physical contact with other people could open new sores. She blends foods into liquids because solid foods can damage her esophagus.

When Jamie was six, her esophagus scarred shut, and she underwent a surgery that rebuilt it. At that time the Gibsons were stationed in Japan for Jim's work with the U.S. Army. President Gordon B. Hinckley, then President of the Asia Area, made a special trip to give Jamie a blessing before surgery. He blessed her that she would "live a reasonably normal life" and "be a joy to those around her."

"I have seen that come to pass," Sheila says. The Gibsons have done their best to support Jamie's determined spirit, following a pediatrician's advice that she

on to sing in the Ricks College Women's Chorus and in the Brigham Young University Women's Choir.

"Singing in the BYU Women's Choir was one of the most spiritual experiences of my life," she says. Jamie viewed the choir as a way to share the gospel. When people told her after a concert how good the music made them feel, she explained to them that they were feeling the Holy Ghost.

Since graduating from BYU, Jamie has been a featured soloist with choirs in St. George and Logan, Utah, and has sung the national anthem at professional baseball games. She recorded a Christmas CD that raised \$10,000 for the EB Children's Research Foundation, and she recently returned from a trip to Belgium, where she sang to raise money for a family with a child suffering from EB.

What makes Jamie's success in music so amazing is that her mouth and throat are always full of sores and blisters, and her tongue is so badly scarred that she can't touch it to the roof of her mouth. A close friend of Jamie said: "Jamie has the voice of an angel. The fact she can sing at all, considering all the scar tissue she has to get around, is a total miracle. There are few singers who capture the emotion Jamie does."

An Influence for Good

The emotion Jamie captures through song has influenced many lives. One time a stranger came to the

Gibsons' front door holding a long-stemmed rose for Jamie. He cried as he explained that he had been planning to take his own life, but after hearing Jamie sing at a concert, he was inspired to live. "This is the kind of influence Jamie has on people," Sheila says. "Heavenly Father uses Jamie as an instrument in His hands."

Jamie has also been a role model for hundreds of youth with skin disorders while working as a counselor at Camp Wonder in California and Camp Discovery in Minnesota. When her campers get discouraged, she tells them jokes and helps them see the good in life. Several of Jamie's friends with EB have had limbs amputated because of a form of skin cancer that is common among people with EB. Jamie is now facing a similar trial, but she maintains a positive attitude through her sense of humor, joking that when she dies, she wants "to go in *peace*, not in *pieces*!"

Rejoicing in the Lord's Promises

In college, as her peers began planning their futures, Jamie knew that her life would always be different from theirs. Jim explains how Jamie remains optimistic about her future family by likening her to Lehi in the Book of Mormon: "Lehi was told he would receive a promised land, and he rejoiced. He hadn't even received it yet—he hadn't built the boat—but he rejoiced in it as if he had already received it" (see 1 Nephi 5:5).

She also turns to Heavenly Father in prayer. "I get nearest to Heavenly Father by taking the time to pray out loud," she says. Even though it can be difficult to find the privacy and the quiet time to pray out loud, "it is so humbling." Second, she listens to uplifting music. "Music calms me faster than anything," she says.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DENNIS C. GAUNT

Jamie did not know if she would marry during her lifetime. But on December 9, 2005, she and Taylor Hartley were sealed in the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple.

Recognizing Her Blessings

Although Jamie's suffering is constant, she is quick to express gratitude for her blessings. She says she realizes that many people with her disease do not have the light of the gospel to help them cope with the pain, and she asks herself, "Why am I the lucky one?" She knows she will be resurrected with a perfect body. And as a Latter-day Saint, she has a support system wherever she goes. "The notes, the compliments, and the time people take to encourage me—I appreciate those things," she says.

Because Jamie and her older brother Ben have suffered from EB, the Gibsons say they have truly valued their time together as a family. "Some people see Jamie's condition as a tragedy. But those who understand Heavenly Father's plan seem to realize that things happen for a purpose, and we are just so blessed to know Ben and Jamie," Jim Gibson says. Just a couple weeks before Ben's death, Jamie and Ben both received their endowments in the Salt Lake Temple. For the last time in this life, Jim and Sheila had all of their children together with them. In the celestial room they embraced in a family hug. "It was a special highlight of my life," Jim says.

"Heavenly Father Loves Me"

Not knowing what her future holds, Jamie commits her time to touching lives and helping people feel the Spirit. She says: "So much comfort has come from knowing that Heavenly Father loves me. I have never doubted that. I have never thought that He loves me any less because I have this disease." It is this testimony of God's love that gives Jamie the power to achieve her goals. ■

Emily Metbeny is a member of the BYU 137th Ward, Brigham Young University 14th Stake.

LIKE A PERFECT PUZZLE

BY JACK BROWN

I was secretly impressed at how these young men could have answers to questions others couldn't answer.

After World War II my dad and three of his brothers formed a gospel quartet. They were known as the Brown Brothers Quartet and became famous in our region of the country with their weekly radio and, later, television programs. As a young boy I traveled with the quartet and attended a variety of church meetings, hearing the basic beliefs of nearly all Protestant denominations.

My wife and I married in 1957. In 1963, prior to the birth of our second child, I began experiencing an unusually strong and unexplainable desire to learn about God and my relationship to Him. I needed to know who I was, where I came from, and what my purpose here on earth was. I searched everywhere for answers. And I wanted answers that made sense, not just flamboyant excitement being passed off as a spiritual experience, as I had witnessed so many times in my earlier years. I felt a huge responsibility to teach my children the truth about religion and their purpose on earth. I did not want some man's interpretation of the Bible.

Most of the sermons I heard while growing up taught that one small sin would keep me out of heaven. I was taught there is only heaven or hell after this life. So I reasoned, according to that belief, if I should die with an unrepentant lie on my lips, I would end up in hell. But I couldn't understand how a just God would condemn someone who told a lie to the same punishment as a mass murderer like Hitler. Everybody knows no one is perfect. We all sin. But how does God differentiate between stumbles and deliberate sins? Or does He?

I proceeded on the assumption that the teachings in the Bible would lead me to the right answers and ultimately to the truth. With these questions I secretly and frequently spent hours

My dad and three of his brothers formed a gospel quartet and became famous in the region with their weekly radio program.





secluded in the privacy of my garage, reading and praying for answers. I was looking for knowledge, for the truth. I wanted that indescribable confirmation from the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost. At one point I called on two of my dad's brothers who were ministers, thinking they might be able to help me. The first one listened sympathetically as I shared my feelings with him. He was understanding but had no satisfactory answers. He thought maybe God was calling me to be a preacher. The other uncle spent an entire evening talking and praying with me. Finally, worn down from my commitment to not accept anything less than an undeniable confirmation from the Holy Ghost, he ended our meeting. I went home discouraged and confused.

After a year of searching I felt I had exhausted myself and everyone around me in trying to find the truth about religion. I had done all I knew how to do. As I knelt down in privacy for what I had determined would be the last time, I opened the Bible in front of me and poured out my feelings of despair. In essence I said: "Dear God, for a long time now I have had this overwhelming desire to know the truth about You and my purpose here on earth. I believe my reasons are honest and just. How can I lead my family and teach my children the truth if I can't find the answers myself? I am tired and frustrated. I've decided there can be only one of two possible reasons for my failure. Either there is no God, and I've

been searching for someone who isn't there, or You do exist, but You don't want me. Either way, I plan to discontinue my search and get on with my life. I will pursue happiness for myself and my family. I will raise my children to the best of my ability and hope that the preachers were right about all roads leading to the same place."

Early the following Monday I traveled to a distant city to perform my duties as a bank examiner. When I returned home on Friday my wife mentioned that two Mormon missionaries had come to the door during the week to see me. When she said "Mormon missionaries," I imagined two old men with long beards, wearing black suits. "Did you get rid of them?" I asked.

"I tried to," she said, "but they insisted on seeing you, and they are coming back this Sunday." I couldn't imagine why they would want to see me or why they would be so insistent.

Sunday afternoon came, and I was just starting to enjoy my usual Sunday afternoon nap when the doorbell rang. My wife told them I was asleep, so they made an appointment to come back later. On Tuesday evening the doorbell rang. As I got up to open the door, my wife said, "That must be those Mormon missionaries." Immediately the images of two old bearded Mormon preachers flashed through my mind. I opened the door, took one look, and thought: "Nope, she's wrong. No Mormon preachers here, just a couple of normal-looking young guys in suits

I secretly and frequently spent hours secluded in my garage, reading the Bible and praying for answers.

I felt I had exhausted myself and everyone around me in trying to find the truth. So I poured out my feelings of despair to God in prayer and told Him I planned to discontinue my search and get on with my life.

and ties.” I opened the door and invited them in.

We engaged in small talk for a few minutes. I learned they were on a two-year mission for their church and they received no pay. In fact, their families provided their financial support while they were on their mission. Then one of the elders said: “Mr. Brown, we’re here this evening to discuss our religion and beliefs with you and your wife. Since we’re going to be talking about sacred matters, could we offer a prayer for guidance from Heavenly Father before we start?” He offered a simple and humble prayer. That evening we enjoyed a warm, friendly, and pleasant spirit in our home that had never been there before.

We started by looking up a few scriptures from the Bible. They explained that Christ’s Church is founded on the principle of continuing revelation from God as given to living prophets and apostles. We turned to Ephesians 2:19–20 where Paul likened the Church to a house or building with a foundation of apostles and prophets. I thought about that. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so if He had called prophets anciently, why would He not call them today? This was something new to me.

The missionaries explained that God does speak to His children through living prophets and apostles today.

“That’s what you believe,” I said. “But how do you know that for sure?”

The elder replied by quoting a scripture: “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). There is really only one way you can know for yourself, beyond any doubt, and that is to pray and ask Heavenly Father. If you ask

Him with a sincere heart, He will manifest the truth to you through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

I remember thinking: “That’s exactly what I’ve been praying for—a confirmation from that still, small voice telling me what this life is all about and which church is true.”

I was secretly very impressed at how these young men could have answers to questions which others much older couldn’t answer. The missionaries challenged us to begin reading the Book of Mormon, to study the scriptures, and to ponder the things we read. They strongly urged us to pray to God for a confirmation of the truth. After offering a closing prayer, they made another appointment with us to continue our discussion.

Each missionary discussion brought light and knowledge into our home that we had never enjoyed before.

In those days there were seven missionary discussions. Each discussion brought light and knowledge into our home that we had never



enjoyed before, but the fifth discussion was one I'll never forget. It was all about our premortal existence, our purpose here on earth, and what happens to us after death. When the missionaries started telling us about where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going, I knew my prayers were being answered. Everything rang true, and a warm feeling in my heart told me, "This is exactly what you've been searching for."

That evening we learned that as spirits in the premortal life we were actively involved in the war in heaven and that we exercised our agency and chose to follow Jesus as our Savior. The very fact that we are here on earth now and have physical bodies attests to our valiance in our first estate. Everything was fitting together like a perfect puzzle. The pieces were falling into place, and the picture was getting clearer and clearer. I felt as if I would explode any minute as I struggled to hold back the tears of joy.

Our baptism date was set for March 7, 1964. We were excited because we knew we had finally found the truth. I wanted to share this good news with every member of my family. But down inside I had a feeling that a storm was coming over the horizon. We told our parents and a few other relatives about our baptism date. They thought it would be very nice and promised to be in attendance. Then they learned we were joining the "Mormon Church." In attendance for our baptism were the missionaries, the bishop, his family, and a few ward members. Our



When we learned that we had chosen to follow Jesus in the premortal life, I struggled to hold back the tears of joy. Everything was fitting together like a perfect puzzle.

relatives did not come.

Almost instantly, hardships and persecution became familiar companions. Within a month our home was gutted by fire, and we nearly lost our firstborn child in it. Vicious gossip circulated through our families about the Church. Unexpected upheavals in our once close family relationships were deep and ugly. We quickly learned about opposition, but we also learned about joy. Today, after more than 40 years of stumbling, making mistakes,

and enduring many trials and tribulations, my testimony of Jesus Christ and His true gospel has only grown stronger and stronger.

Later, the missionaries told me that they had received an impression to stop at our home. They knew they were supposed to insist on talking with me, and they didn't give up until they did. I know the Holy Ghost inspired those two missionaries to persistently knock on our door and bring the answers to our prayers.

When I was a young boy growing up, I knew nothing about Joseph Smith or the plan of salvation. But now I know. God is our Heavenly Father. He lives and loves each of us. We are His spirit sons and daughters. He established a plan for our salvation and eternal happiness. Storms will surely come in our lives, but if we keep hold of the iron rod, obey God's commandments, and endure to the end, the storms will pass and we will emerge victorious. ■

Jack Brown is a member of the Edgemont Ward, Sandy Utah Central Stake.

Agency



A continuing series examining basic beliefs of the restored gospel, doctrines unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A basic tenet of Christianity is that God has given His children free will, the ability and privilege to choose. But the concept of agency, taught in the Book of Mormon and by latter-day prophets and apostles in concert with other gospel truths, is a doctrine rich in power and eternal in its implications.

An Eternal Principle

Agency is essential to Heavenly Father's plan for His children, for without it we cannot become as He is. Agency is an eternal attribute of all intelligent beings. It did not begin with mortal birth. We possessed agency in our premortal existence. As the Lord revealed:

"Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

"All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

"Behold, here is the agency of man" (D&C 93:29–31).

We do not believe in a deterministic God—that is, one who determines in advance the eventual fate of His children. Rather, we believe in a God who has perfect foreknowledge of the choices His children will make. He may use this foreknowledge to guide us or even to warn us, but He does not use it to preempt our agency. He *allows* us to become what we truly desire to become. As Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: "[God] knows what each will do under given conditions, and sees the end from the beginning. His foreknowledge is based on intelligence and reason. He foresees the

future as a state which naturally and surely will be; not as one which must be because He has arbitrarily willed that it shall be.”¹

Most Christian churches believe God created His children *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. If this were true, then God might be held accountable for any evil we would do because He created us with flaws and weaknesses. But we know our Heavenly Father did not create us out of nothing, and He is not responsible for our weaknesses or sins. He merely places us, His spirit children, in spheres where we can learn and grow by exercising our agency, if we employ it correctly.

Conditions Required for Agency

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that agency requires four conditions:

1. Laws ordained by an omnipotent power must exist, laws we can either obey or disobey.
2. There must be opposites—good and evil, right and wrong.
3. We must have knowledge of good and evil; we must know the difference between the opposites.
4. We must possess an unfettered power of choice.²

We must also be accountable for our choices if we are to enjoy agency fully. The laws that exist must bring consequences—and not just the natural consequences resulting from our actions, such as losing people’s respect if we lie and cheat. The laws must also bring blessings from God if we obey them and punishments if we do not.

Satan’s Attack on Agency

Of the premortal existence, the Lord says, “Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3). For his rebellion Lucifer was cast out of heaven, but here on earth he continues to undermine our agency. He does this in many ways, two of which are:



If we use our agency wisely, the possibilities for doing good and blessing others become infinite.

Disobedience. “Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. . . . And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men” (D&C 93:31, 39). Disobedience damages our agency in two ways. First, when we lose light and truth, we become blind to many opportunities to do good; and second, some forms of disobedience are addictive—we become entrapped

in behaviors that are extremely difficult to forsake. We may even hurt others and damage their agency.

No accountability. Satan whispers in our ears, telling us, “Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; . . . and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28:8). Some mistakenly believe that once we have “confessed Christ” and have been “saved by grace,” it doesn’t matter what we do—we are saved. This doctrine is a subtle manifestation of Satan’s ongoing deception that we are not accountable for our sins and that there are no consequences for them.

Blessings of Agency

When we use our agency to choose righteousness, God not only blesses us, but our agency is strengthened and enhanced. When our Heavenly Father sees that He can trust us to make correct decisions, He does as any loving parent would do: He blesses us with new opportunities and more responsibility. Thus, if we use our agency wisely, the possibilities for doing good and blessing others become infinite. Obedience always leads to greater agency and increasing possibilities. It is sin that shrinks our options. ■

NOTES

1. *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 29.
2. See *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 26; see also 2 Nephi 2:10–29.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I am a young single adult and would like to get married, but I have never been very successful at dating. I'm doing all I can to improve myself, but sometimes I get discouraged. How can I continue to hope for marriage when I rarely date?



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

My wife and I were single for many years before we got married. Both of us thought at times that we might not have the opportunity to marry in this life.

Our advice is to keep an eternal perspective and enjoy the fruits of each season of life. Many activities can be pursued more fully while single

than while married. Use opportunities to pursue educational and professional goals, develop talents, pursue hobbies, and serve in the Church and community. All these activities will enrich your life and make you a more attractive companion for the kind of spouse you desire. The habit of developing yourself can continue

when you marry, and it will enrich your relationship with your spouse.

Focus on drawing closer to the Savior. Let Christ be your hope and your peace in troubled times. Pray for an eternal companion, but be willing to accept the Lord's plan for your life as it unfolds. Fervent prayer can bring the peace the Savior promised in John 14:26–27. Fasting and temple attendance will also sanctify your soul and bring peace and comfort.

*Kevin and Angela Lambert,
Goldenrod Ward, Orlando Florida Stake*

In some ways, finding a mate is like buying a pair of shoes. The important thing is that you have a proper fit. If one of the first pairs you try on meets your needs, do you still have to try on every other pair in the store? It doesn't matter how few dates one has as long as one is open to new friendships until the one that fits comes along.

*Yvonne Stephenson, Annandale Ward,
Annandale Virginia Stake*

When I was 30 years old, I felt my chances of meeting the eternal companion promised in my patriarchal blessing had come and gone. It wasn't until I was 31 and seeking to find what the Lord's mission for my life was that I met and married my eternal companion. One of the most

important things I learned from that experience is that I wasn't being denied blessings; I was being prepared—as was my eternal companion—for our eventual marriage. When I aligned my will with the Lord's, He was able to do what He does best: bless us beyond our current understanding.

My bliss was put on hold temporarily, however, when my sweetheart passed away unexpectedly after two years of marriage. As we were not able to have children, I have been left to ponder once more what the Lord has in store for me. Again, I have tried to align my will with the Lord's, and I can testify that the results have been miraculous.

I have found there are specific things the Lord needs me to accomplish right now that I couldn't do if my situation were different. From that work have come blessings beyond description, an increase in spiritual gifts, and a rewarding purpose for my life.

*Cassandra Dawn Bushman,
Evergreen Ward, Tempe Arizona Stake*

It is a mistake to think that life begins only upon marriage. You must feel that you have something to offer whether you are single or married. Look at the areas of your life you have control over, such as your appearance, attitude, and treatment of others. Not exercising control over these things can be a problem when dating.

Pray to be more like the Savior and to recognize others as children

TRUST IN THE LORD



"Like other important mortal events that depend on the agency of others or the will and timing of the Lord, marriage cannot be anticipated or planned with certainty. We can and should work for and pray for our righteous desires, but despite this, many will remain single well beyond their desired time for marriage.

"So what should be done in the meantime? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for whatever life brings. This kind of faith prepares us to deal with life's opportunities—to take advantage of those that are received and to persist through the disappointments of those that are lost. . . .

"Commit yourself to put the Lord first in your life, keep His commandments, and do what the Lord's servants ask you to do. Then your feet are on the pathway to eternal life. Then it does not matter whether you are . . . married or single. . . . Do your best on what is fundamental and personal and then trust in the Lord and His timing."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Timing," *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 15–16.

of God. Continue to do worthwhile activities on your own and with friends, and always meet the standard required to enter the holy temple. Do not give up hope for marriage, but do not become so obsessed with it that you lose sight of your ultimate goal: to return to Heavenly Father.

*Alina Riquelme, Chisholm Trail (YSA) Ward,
Round Rock Texas Stake*

In many ways, my husband is very different from the type of man I always thought I would marry. Had I not been open to all possible candidates, I would not have discovered my true love.

Looking at people to date not just in terms of how they would be as a spouse but how they could be as a friend might help alleviate the pressure and make each dating experience more successful. Some single people seem to place too much importance on each and every date. Enjoyment and friendship may come through relaxing and trying to discover the great qualities about each individual irrespective of that person's possibilities as a spouse.

*Kathryn Latour, Arnhem Ward,
Apeldoorn Netherlands Stake*

An optimist is always more attractive than a pessimist. Sometimes we are led to believe that if we are single, we can't be happy. There is no truth to that. We are happiest when we make the most of the opportunities afforded us. And someone who is happy and is making the most of his or her opportunities is an attractive person.

*Spencer Larson, Wadsworth Ward,
Akron Ohio Stake*

One thing that helps me is to keep a journal. I make a special effort to write down spiritual experiences I have, including insights gained from scripture study, priesthood blessings, and heartfelt prayers. When I get discouraged, I like to look back in my

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

journal and remember the ways the Lord has blessed me. This gives me comfort and strengthens my faith that the Lord will bless me with the righteous desires of my heart in His own time.

*Michelle Ann Lloyd, Raleigh University
(Student Single) Ward, Apex North Carolina Stake*

Pray! When I took the time to pray for other things besides getting a date and getting married, it was easier to live my life and helped me to relax. Take time to pray for your family, loved ones, and neighbors who are having trouble. Pray

for inspiration; ask if there is someone the Lord needs you to visit, call, write a letter to, or introduce the gospel to. Pray for those you home teach or visit teach. When I was praying for service opportunities, I had less time to feel sorry for myself because I didn't have a date.

Also, step out of your comfort zone! Invite new members of the ward, single friends, and acquaintances over for potluck dinners, service projects, and games. Ask a friend to help you if you are uncomfortable doing this on your own. It may be easier to get to know others when

your group is small—perhaps around six to eight people.

*Samantha Licurse, Escalante Ward,
Tucson Arizona Rincon Stake*

Here are two things I did to combat those faith-challenging moments in my single days:

- **Set goals.** Imagine what you would like to be doing, what you would like to have accomplished, and the person you would like to become in one year, five years, and ten years from now. Be willing to change your path if the Spirit prompts you to do something different.

- **Travel.** If your finances allow, set goals regarding places you would like to visit. I didn't know it at the time, but my travel experiences helped me prepare for my future. Experiences like these will make you

**Stepping outside our
comfort zone can lead
to great rewards.**



more informed about the world and more interesting to talk to.

*Natalie Sparks Johnson, Melville Ward,
Perth Australia Rockingham Stake*

When I was single, I learned some lessons that may be helpful:

1. Don't be your own worst enemy.

One year our singles group had a weekend conference, and a sister invited her roommate who was not a member of the Church. On the way home, someone asked this woman what she thought of the conference. Her answer was not what any of us expected: "I really do not understand you people. On Sunday you talked of the importance of finding the right mate and having close, loving families. But on Friday night and Saturday, you set up enough barriers between yourselves to be certain no one could ever get close to you." Those words hit close to home. If we have had painful experiences, perhaps we do not want to repeat that pain, and so we may inadvertently sabotage ourselves to remain safe. At times we are our own worst enemy. We cannot experience life's greatest joys if we are unwilling to take some risks.

2. Get feedback from others. I talked with my bishop, who told me: "You have to learn to let rejection just bounce off. Most men have been rejected a few times before they find their wives." He suggested that I broaden my dating efforts rather than focusing only on those few women I thought I was interested in. I tried this and then sought feedback from

**Take advantage
of opportunities
to pursue educational
and professional
goals and to develop
talents.**

mutual friends. It was painful at times, but I learned important insights about myself and about dating.

3. Have realistic expectations. Expect someone roughly equal to what you have to offer. A man may think he needs a great beauty. A woman may want a future successful leader. These expectations may serve only to keep you single. The other side is even worse. Some think, "Since I am getting older, I had better take any chance I can get." The goal is not a life of misery; it is a happy, eternal family.

*Joseph E. Robinson, Aliso Creek Ward,
Santa Margarita California Stake*

Being single while hoping for marriage was an uncertain and difficult time for me. I wondered about priesthood blessings I had received, including my patriarchal blessing, that promised marriage and children. Had I misunderstood certain statements? Did I not have enough faith? I found myself questioning whether I had missed my chance for marriage because I had missed promptings or hadn't understood them.



Finally, I realized that focusing on all my questions seemed only to accentuate my loneliness and doubt. I found comfort when I stopped focusing on what I didn't know and started clinging to what I *did* know. I knew I had a Heavenly Father who was aware of me and loved me. Even though my prayers regarding marriage didn't seem to be answered, I could see other blessings that were brought into my life, and I knew the Savior's Atonement could ease my loneliness. Although I felt very small and unimportant at times, I knew Heavenly Father still had a plan—even for me. I learned that if I would trust in "the due time of the Lord," all would be well. I felt peace, and I was given the strength to get busy with other things in my life while I relied on Heavenly Father's timing. ■

*Sara Porter, Cannon Seventh Ward,
Salt Lake Cannon Stake*

Sunrises, Sunsets, and Seasons

BY ISABELLE L. H. CLUFF

*As a young widowed mother,
I made a decision that has
blessed our family with light.*

As a newly widowed, 22-year-old mother of two daughters, both under the age of three, I had many choices awaiting my attention. Looking back 40 years later, I am particularly grateful for one decision I made early on.

Almost immediately after the death of my eternal companion, it became evident that mornings, when most husbands leave for work, and evenings, when they usually return home to family, were vulnerable times. Frequently as presunset shadows lengthened, my little daughters instinctively stopped their play and innocently asked, “When is Daddy coming home?” escalating the longing in my own heart.

Instead of struggling to fight off sadness and loneliness in the house each morning, I decided to step outside to greet Heavenly Father in the sunrise, partaking of the beauty only He, the Source of all light, could offer. The mellow hues of refracted sunlight witnessed of His love, and deep swelling gratitude began to fill my aching soul, sweeping away the darkness and securing



a wholesome perspective for the day. When the little ones awakened later, happiness born of gratitude for Heavenly Father's blessings genuinely filled my heart, enabling the three of us to cheerfully set about the duties of the day. The early moments alone with Heavenly Father provided deep solace and fostered renewal of my self-confidence, vital when half of myself had so recently been removed.

Sunset became the children's favorite time of day. As late afternoon shadows lengthened, they soon knew the routine. We returned toys to their proper place and tidied the house, not for Daddy's return, but instead to go outdoors and enjoy the sunset while playing in the backyard, talking together on the porch, or simply sharing the resplendent beauty of rapidly changing colors. Hugging and cuddling close on the porch at sunset, our little family circled together, knowing eternal promises are sure.

Years passed and school started; then high school and college followed. Success in each phase was augmented by

sunrise solace and sunset circling of the family together on the porch. Discussions deepened into more mature topics, and decisions for course direction were reached in council with Heavenly Father at sunset. Through the years we witnessed together that He begins and ends each day in beauty, silently setting forth breathtaking loveliness uniquely crafted for that day and beckoning us to be happy in Him.

During these two-score years of watching the sunrise, I've become more aware of the sun's journey across the horizon as fall gives way to winter and spring to summer. In these early, quiet moments with Heavenly Father, I've learned that there are also seasons in our lives and that assuredly winter eventually withdraws for spring. While I have attended each premier-performance sunset, He has sent a harvest of happiness into my soul. What could have been a long and lonely widowhood has instead been richly blessed by harvesting the sunrises and sunsets He has given every day. ■

Isabelle L. H. Cluff is a member of the Century Gardens Ward, Mesa Arizona Kimball East Stake.

The Sacred RESPONSIBILITIES PARENTHOOD



What we do and teach in our homes matters. With the family proclamation as the primary text, let me share with you five concepts that will help ensure happy and secure families.

BY ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

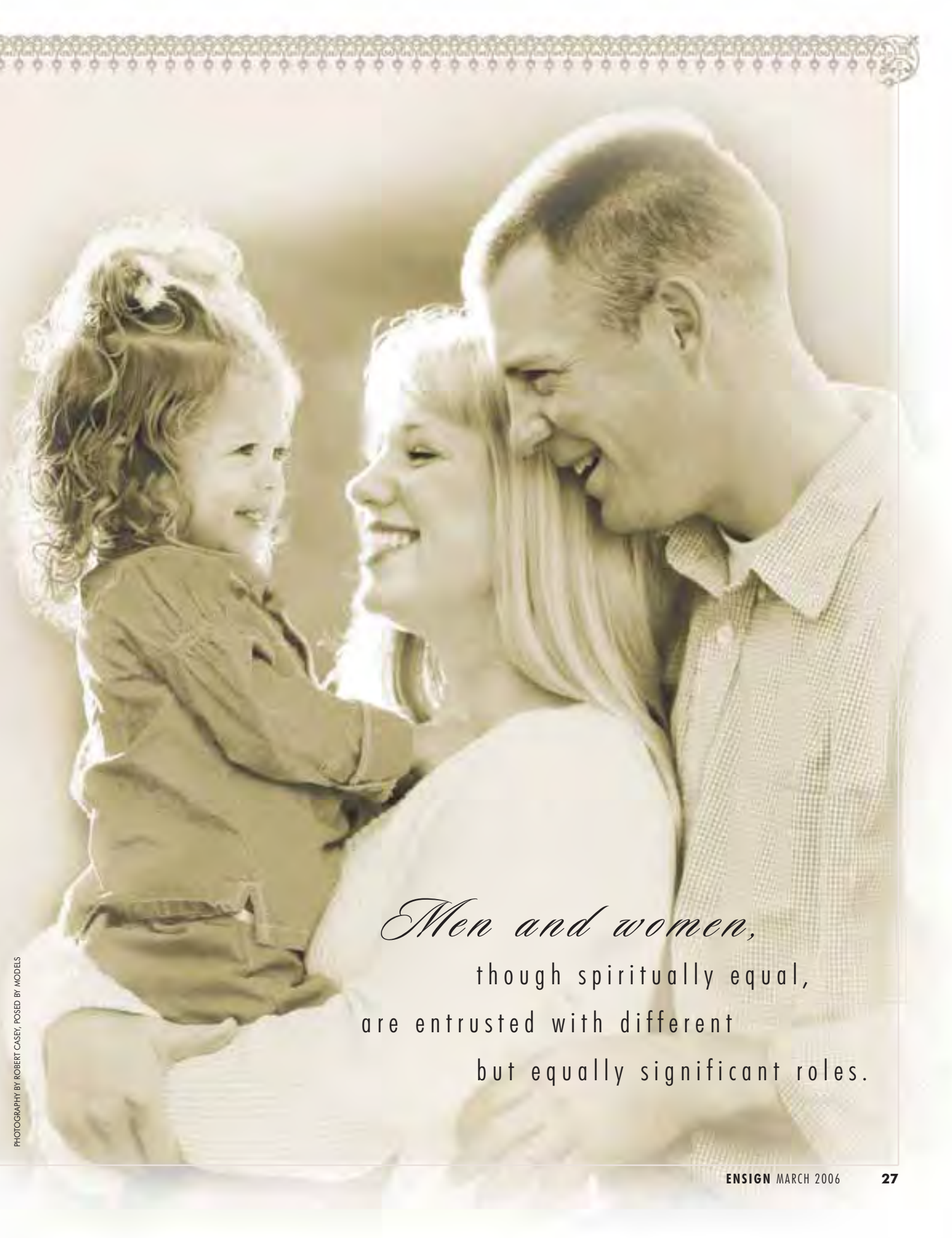
As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I participated in the process of drafting “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” It was a remarkable experience for all of us. As Church leaders travel the world, we see things—both within the Church and outside the Church. We were troubled by much of what we were seeing. We could see the people of the world wanting to define the family in ways contrary to God’s eternal plan for the happiness of His children.

In the midst of all that was stirring on this subject in the world, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles could see the importance of declaring to the world the

revealed, true role of the family in the eternal plan of God. We worked together, through the divinely inspired council system that operates even at the highest levels of the Church, to craft a proclamation that would make the Lord’s position on the family so clear that it could not be misunderstood.

Since the proclamation came out almost 10 years ago, time has overwhelmingly proven its prophetic insight. As a church we are more focused than ever in supporting and strengthening the family. Sadly, the family continues to be assaulted relentlessly throughout the world. You need only to read a newspaper or turn on the television to see how openly and viciously the war against the family is being waged. Gender is being confused, and gender roles are being repudiated. Same-gender marriage is being promoted in direct opposition to one of God’s primary purposes—for His children to experience mortality.

The family is not just the basic unit of society; it is the basic unit of eternity. We lived as Heavenly Father’s spirit sons and daughters before this mortal existence. In that grand



Men and women,
though spiritually equal,
are entrusted with different
but equally significant roles.

premortal family council, our Heavenly Father's plan for the eternal happiness and peace of His children was presented. We understood that we would come to this earth to live as families, and through the sealing authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, we could live throughout the rest of eternity as families.

It is alarming to see how intensely and openly the family is under attack in contemporary society. The proclamation is very clear:

"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

that between 1950 and 1997, some 46 industrialized countries and 9 developing nations legalized or removed most restrictions on abortion. Each year an estimated 46 million abortions take place worldwide. Indeed, some estimate induced abortions end one-fourth of all pregnancies.

Far too many people view marriage as a "couple's relationship," designed to fulfill the emotional needs of adults rather than an institution for rearing children. Children are considered a choice rather than a blessing. About one million children per year experience parental divorce and its aftermath, and about one-third of all children in America are born out of wedlock. Almost every trend indicates that

Fathers should seek constantly for guidance
from the Holy Ghost so they will know
what to do, what to say, and also know
what not to do and what not to say.

powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. . . .

"... 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."¹

We must stand firm, brothers and sisters, at this time when the adversary is using differing lifestyles in an attempt to replace the marriage of one man to one woman. It would be well for all people of the world to read the full text of the proclamation.

The Adversary's Attacks on the Family

The attacks on the family also undermine the value of life—particularly the life of the unborn. Life is being trivialized and subjected to the vacillating whims of convenience and political correctness. You will find it troubling, as I do,

we are on a slippery slope downward from God's plan for His children. The family, once universally hailed as the cornerstone of society, is losing its essential role.

When you stop and think about it from a diabolically tactical point of view, fighting the family makes sense. When Satan wants to disrupt the work of the Lord, he doesn't poison the world's peanut butter supply, thus bringing the Church's missionary system to its collective knees. He doesn't send a plague of laryngitis to afflict the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He doesn't legislate against green Jell-O or casseroles. When Satan truly wants to disrupt the work of the Lord, he attempts to confuse gender and he attacks God's plan for His children. He works to drive a wedge of disharmony between a father and a mother. He entices children to be disobedient to their parents. He makes family home evening and family prayer inconvenient. He suggests family scripture study is impractical. That's all it takes, because Satan knows that the

surest and most effective way to disrupt the Lord's work is to diminish the effectiveness of the family and the sanctity of the home.

Look at what he accomplishes when he does that. Couples unhappy in their marriages tend *not* to give appropriate gospel instruction in the home. They are less likely to be committed to gospel principles in their own lives.

proclamation as the primary text, let me share with you five concepts that will help ensure happy and secure families.

1. Full and equal partnerships. Men and women joined together in marriage need to work together as a full partnership. However, a full and equal partnership between men and women does not imply the roles played

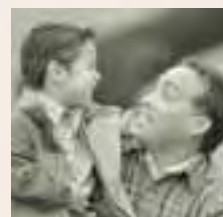
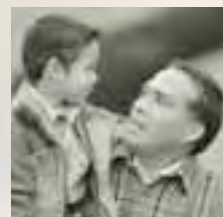
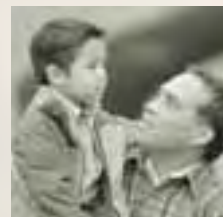


Some drift from the Church. Apathy can overcome even active members, keeping them away from the temple and weakening their capacity to be effective leaders and teachers—thus leaving countless lives untouched and slowing the Lord's work. And the Internet when not properly used is a vicious influence in the home. So we know, without question, Lucifer is the enemy of the family!

Ensuring Happy and Secure Families

What we do and what we teach in our homes and in our families matters. With the

by the two sexes are the same in God's grand design for His children. As the proclamation clearly states, men and women, though spiritually equal, are entrusted with different but equally significant roles. These roles complement each other. Men are given stewardship over the sacred ordinances of the priesthood. To women, God gives stewardship over bestowing and nurturing mortal life, including providing physical bodies for God's spirit children and guiding those children toward a knowledge of gospel truths. These stewardships, equally sacred and important, do not



involve any false ideas about domination or subordination. Each stewardship is essential for the spiritual progression of all family members, parents and children alike.

Family stewardships thus must be understood in terms of obligations and responsibilities—and in terms of love, service, and interdependence. Men who attempt to dominate their wives, who seek



to exercise unrighteous dominion without regard to spousal counsel and sensitivities, simply don't understand that such actions are contrary to God's will.

2. Fathers. The proclamation states, "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." They teach their families the gospel and lead in kindness, following the counsel found in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants (see vv. 34–36).

Fathers perform priesthood ordinances and give priesthood blessings, including father's blessings to their children. They pray for and with family members, collectively and individually. They set an example of respect and love for their eternal companion and mother of their children. In all things they follow the example of the Savior and strive to be worthy of His name and His blessing. Fathers should seek constantly for guidance from the Holy Ghost so they will know what to do, what to say, and also know what *not* to do and what *not* to say. They serve the family and the Church in the spirit of love and enthusiasm, by example preparing family members to serve—especially preparing sons to serve as worthy missionaries.

Fathers are expected by God and His prophets not only to provide for their families but also to protect them. Dangers of all sorts abound in the world in which we live. Physical protection against natural or man-made hazards is important. Moral dangers are also all around us, confronting our children from their early years. Fathers play a vital role in protecting children against such snares.

We know that a father's role does not end with presiding, providing, and protecting family members. On a day-to-day basis, fathers can and should help with the essential nurturing and bonding associated with feeding, playing, storytelling, loving, and all the rest of the activities that make up family life.

3. Mothers. The proclamation teaches that "mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." Nurturing refers to parenting behaviors such as warmth, support,

bonding, attachment, recognizing each child's unique abilities, and attending to children's needs. Nurturing in and of itself is more important in the development of a child than is any particular method or technique of child rearing. It hardly needs saying that nurturing is best carried out in a stable, safe, family context.

A mother's nurturing love arouses in children, from their earliest days on earth, an awakening of the memories of love and goodness they experienced in their premortal existence. Because our mothers love us, we learn, or more accurately remember, that God also loves us.

Today there is significant pressure in our materialistic world to have and spend more money. Unfortunately, this

and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. None other can adequately take her place.

"It is well-nigh impossible to be a full-time homemaker and a full-time employee. I know how some of you struggle with decisions concerning this matter. I repeat, do the very best you can."²

Taking care of small, dependent, and demanding children is never ending and often nerve-racking. Mothers must not fall into the trap of believing that "quality" time can replace "quantity" time. Quality is a direct function of quantity—and mothers, to nurture their children properly, must provide both. To do so requires constant vigilance and a constant juggling of competing demands. It is hard

work, no doubt about it.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has given very wise counsel:

"Women today are being encouraged by some to have it all—generally, all simultaneously: money, travel, marriage, mother-

hood, separate careers in the world. . . .

"Doing things sequentially—filling roles one at a time at different times—is not always possible, as we know, but it gives a woman the opportunity to do each thing well in its time and to fill a variety of roles in her life. A woman . . . may fit more than one career into the various seasons of life. She need not try to sing all of the verses of her song at the same time."³

4. Principles for marriage and families. From the proclamation we learn that "successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities." Parents should work to create loving, eternal connections with their children. Reproof or correction will sometimes be required. But it must be done sensitively, persuasively, with an increase of love thereafter lest the child esteem the parent to be an enemy (see D&C 121:43).⁴

A mother's nurturing love arouses in children
an awakening of the memories of love
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draws married mothers to work outside the home in order to provide a second income. As husbands, wives, and children recognize the difference between basic necessities and material wants, they lessen family financial burdens and contribute to helping mothers be at home. Decisions about working outside the home are difficult ones and need to be made prayerfully, keeping ever in mind the counsel of the living prophets on this complex issue.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, with his usual sensitive, loving spirit, gives us this wise perspective:

"I recognize . . . that there are some women (it has become very many in fact) who have to work to provide for the needs of their families. To you I say, do the very best you can. I hope that if you are employed full-time you are doing it to ensure that basic needs are met and not simply to indulge a taste for an elaborate home, fancy cars, and other luxuries. The greatest job that any mother will ever do will be in nurturing, teaching, lifting, encouraging,

It can be equally destructive when parents are too permissive and overindulge their children, allowing children to do as they please. Parents need to set limits in accordance with the importance of the matter involved and the child's disposition and maturity. Help children understand the reasons for rules, and always follow through with appropriate discipline when rules are broken. It is important as well to praise appropriate behavior. It will challenge all of your creativity and patience to maintain this balance, but the rewards will be great. Children who understand their boundaries through the consistent application of important rules are more likely to do well at school, to be

to discuss the situation. The father and then the mother explained to their children what they had observed and asked how each felt about it. The mother and father learned that since their two oldest children had left home, one to be married and one to go to college, an unfair burden of responsibility had been unwittingly shifted to the two oldest children remaining at home, and they were becoming resentful. By counseling together and listening to what their children were feeling, the family made a more equitable distribution of responsibility among the children, resolving much of the frustration and tension in the home.⁷

Parents should work to create loving,
eternal connections with their children.

more self-controlled, and to be more willing to abide by the laws of the land.⁵

Parents need to give children choices and should be prepared to appropriately adjust some rules, thus preparing children for real-world situations.⁶ To do this, parents must listen—really listen—to what their children are saying. They must know what is important to each child. I learned this lesson years ago from one of our daughters. She was only four or five at the time. She came into the room, all excited. I was reading the newspaper, and she had something very much on her mind that was important to her. And I was responding, “Yes, uh-huh, uh-huh.” All of a sudden the newspaper came crashing down with her two little hands. She grabbed my face between her hands so that she could look me right in the eye. This was a little four- or five-year-old teaching her father a great lesson. “Daddy, you’re not listening to me.” And she was right.

5. Family councils. As you would expect to hear from me, one of the best tools we have as parents is the family council. I cannot emphasize enough its importance in helping to understand and address challenges in the family. When members of one family began to feel unusual contention invading their home, they called a family council

I recognize that there are as many kinds of family councils as there are different kinds of families. Family councils can consist of one parent and one child, of two parents and several children, of just two parents, or of just siblings, and so on. Regardless of the size or makeup of the family council, what really matters are loving motivation, an atmosphere that encourages free and open discussion, and a willingness to listen to the honest input of all council members—as well as to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.⁸

Overcoming Contention

If any of you are struggling with contention in your homes, you can change this. Talk with your family. Ask for their help. Tell them you don’t want a contentious spirit in the home anymore and discuss what each family member can do to prevent it. President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will

grow. The spirit of contention will depart.”⁹

Remember, also, there is great power in prayer. I strongly encourage personal and family prayer, which are important in building strong families. But I want to emphasize something else as well. I’m wondering if

mortal responsibility He gives to His children.

Listen to the voice of the Spirit and the counsel of the living prophets. Be of good cheer. God did not place you on earth to fail, and your efforts as parents will not be counted as failure unless you give up.



many of you parents, you couples, have lost that essential moment of kneeling together at the end of the day, just the two of you, holding hands and saying your prayers. If that has slipped away from your daily routine, may I suggest you put it back—beginning tonight!

To parents everywhere, my counsel is simple: Get a copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Read it and strive to align your marriage and your family to its inspired, revealed direction from the Lord. Then be the very best and act the very best you can. God will give you strength beyond your own as you strive daily to fulfill the most sacred

May our Heavenly Father bless each and every one of you. God lives. We are His children. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. They love us and want us to be faithful and happy. ■

From an Education Week devotional address given on August 19, 2003, at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1. *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. “Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 69.
3. “A Message to My Granddaughters: Becoming ‘Great Women,’” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 18–19.
4. See Craig H. Hart, “Three Essential Parenting Principles,” *BYU Magazine*, spring 2003, 58.
5. See “Three Essential Parenting Principles,” 59.
6. See “Three Essential Parenting Principles,” 59.
7. See M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with Our Councils* (1997), 154.
8. See *Counseling with Our Councils*, 157.
9. “The Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 67.



In Denmark, a Vibrant Faith

The Church has a long history here, but the new temple in Copenhagen offers a focal point for the faith of individuals and families seeking to come unto Christ.

BY DON L. SEARLE
Church Magazines

When Ole Ravn-Petersen was 16, he obtained his father's permission to be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The baptism took place in a neoclassical-style building in a quiet residential area of Copenhagen, a meetinghouse that had been dedicated in 1931 by Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Later, after serving a mission, young Ole would come back to this same building to baptize his father. For him and for many other Danish members, fond memories of the building became only sweeter when it was renovated and dedicated as the Copenhagen Denmark Temple in May 2004.

Many passersby seem to sense something of the majesty of the building, but Church members understand why it is a holy place. A member passing by might step into the small courtyard next to the temple and simply sit gazing at its tall windows and spire, thinking about the things of eternity.

Ole Ravn-Petersen now serves as bishop of the Århus Ward, Århus Denmark Stake, on the Jutland Peninsula, three hours away from Copenhagen by train. He visited his nation's capital city recently and found himself thinking that the pace of life there was a bit hectic. And then he thought of the temple: "We have a place here in Copenhagen where we can get closer to our Heavenly Father."

Moving Closer

Danish members have found many reasons to rejoice in the nearness of a temple, but invariably their reasons come back to moving closer to Heavenly Father.

Tine Andersen of the Roskilde Ward, Copenhagen Denmark Stake, says, "You don't have that closeness anywhere else. The Spirit is very strong." A returned missionary, Tine is the daughter of two temple workers. Her father, Niels, speaks with reverence of opportunities he had while serving as a guide during the open house before the temple's dedication. "It was a fantastic experience to see people's reactions," he says, and emotion overtakes him as he

recalls the stream of visitors. "I have done missionary work for many years, and for the first time, I saw them come on their own. We did not have to knock on doors to find them."

Some 25,000 people toured the temple during the open house. Brother Andersen remembers one of those people, an architect who had been involved in building many fine churches throughout Europe. But what the



Quiet,

man felt in the temple touched him in ways he could not explain; he could only try to describe it in terms of the beauty and quality of the building.

This struggle to describe spiritual things is not unusual. Danish members

will tell you that because their country is prosperous and its people content, most seem not to realize how much they need God.

Tine Andersen speaks of a friend, a young woman who lives with her boyfriend—a practice common in Denmark. The friend talks to Tine about problems in the relationship, but she clings to it because it is all she has.

The gospel “gives you another perspective,” Tine explains. “Others might be happy in a certain respect because they have what they need for daily life. But they don’t know what they did before they came to this life or where they are going.”



Opposite page:
Bishop Ole Ravn-
Petersen, Århus
Ward, Århus
Denmark Stake.

Above: Copenhagen
Denmark Temple.

Left: Marianne, Niels,
and Tine Andersen,
Copenhagen
Denmark Stake.





Above: Thomas Ringheim (left), wife, Heidi (center), and children, Copenhagen Denmark Stake. Right: Orla Rode Nielsen (top) and Kirsten Bokhonko, Århus Denmark Stake.



sacred.” Bishop Jensen adds that youth need not only to know the law of chastity, but to

understand the reasons for it. Where gospel doctrines differ from common practice, he says, children need to understand “that they don’t have to do the things the world around them does.”

Thomas Ringheim is a former bishop of the Allerød Ward, Copenhagen stake, and his wife, Heidi, serves in the ward

Relief Society presidency. They have eight children, ranging in age from 4 to 24, so they know something of the challenges faced by young people. Parents must take advantage of every teaching moment, Sister Ringheim says, because all of those little moments help build testimonies. To help fortify her own testimony, she has set herself the goal of attending the temple weekly. “I can feel a difference in myself in everyday life, just in coping with people.”

“I think it’s a challenge for Church members to be so few” in Danish society, Brother Ringheim says. “But on the other hand, I think it’s a great blessing. We have to learn to stand up for something.” Latter-day Saints need not be fearful about expressing their faith. “Actually, most people respect us when we are outspoken about what we believe.”

Deep Roots

The Church has a long history in Denmark. Missionaries first arrived in 1850. Danish was the second language, after English, in which the Book of Mormon was published (1851). But in the early days and again in the years after World War II, many converts emigrated to Utah. Denmark is a small country whose history, geography, and commerce all give it strong ties to other nations, and Danes may easily be drawn to other countries for employment or schooling. These factors, along with a tendency to keep religion a private matter, may account for the slow growth of Church membership over the past several decades. There are now about 4,500 Latter-day Saints in a nation of 5.5 million.

But the spiritual and leadership experience of longtime

“It’s OK to Be Different”

It is important as a parent to use every opportunity that comes to teach your children, says Tim Jensen, bishop of the Frederiksberg Ward, Copenhagen stake. He and his wife, Karen, are the parents of two preteen girls, Pernilla and Mie. Bishop Jensen explains that if you pay attention to promptings of the Holy Ghost when you are with your children, “you will find a lot of great moments when you can bear your testimony in an informal way.” Sister Jensen explains that she often turns to the Lord for guidance. She recalls one day when she found herself praying to help her older daughter overcome a reluctance to go to church. Pernilla felt the effect; she later bore testimony of the loving promptings that came into her own heart.

Because of the challenges young people face, Bishop Jensen says, parents have to teach them “it’s OK to be different.” His wife underscores the point: “You have to teach children to stick by what they believe.”

Some social conditions can pose challenges. One example: a legal drinking age—16—was established only recently in Denmark. Still, some parents introduce their children to alcoholic beverages early, on the theory that they can teach youngsters to drink responsibly. It is a theory that does not work well in practice. Another example: pornography has been legal and widely available since 1970. A generation has grown up with it, many believing it is harmless.

Karen Jensen says, “It is really important that you teach your daughters to respect their bodies, that the body is

members is a valuable resource to the Church in Denmark.

Orla Rode Nielsen, baptized in 1956, served as branch president twice in Århus before that unit became a ward. Kirsten Bokhonko, another longtime member, says that Brother Nielsen and his wife, Esther (now deceased), are the kind of people who made it a habit to do good for others quietly, in the background. When the Nielsens discovered a love of family history, they devoted much of their own free time to helping more than 30 other members compile their family history. Brother Nielsen still goes to the city archives almost every day to gather information. "I love it. When you get started, you can't stop." From the time he joined the Church, he has felt that way about the gospel. On the day he was baptized, he sang all the way home for happiness. "Since my baptism I have never doubted."

Sister Bokhonko, baptized in 1952, is another who has helped anchor the Church in her area. She has served in leadership positions in all the auxiliaries and also as a translator for Church materials. She knows from her own childhood experience that it may be difficult for the 25 children in the Århus Ward Primary to find friends who share their moral and ethical standards. But she also knows

they need not give up their beliefs. When she was growing up, people always knew what her standards were, and those standards were respected.

The way members live their beliefs can bring blessings into their own lives as well as into the lives of others. Karin Messell of Århus, who grew up in the Church, met her husband, Jesper, at work. When they were married in 2001, he was not a member. Jesper now counts his wife's example as a great blessing in his life. Partly because of it, he was baptized in 2003, and they were sealed in the Copenhagen temple a little more than two months after its dedication in 2004.

Jesper has embraced the standards and values of the gospel, including the importance of the family. As a couple, the Messells have chosen to sacrifice material things so Karin can be at home when they have children. Jesper says, "We can choose: do we want a big house, or do we want Karin at home?"

Johan and Lisa Koch of Copenhagen could tell them about the long-term rewards of



Above: Side view of the Copenhagen temple. Below: Bishop Tim Jensen, wife, Karen, daughters, Pernilla (left) and Mie, Frederiksberg Ward, Copenhagen stake.





Above: Jesper and Karin Messell and Anne Christina Larsen (right), Århus Denmark Stake. Top right: Britta (left) and Kjeld Rasmussen, Copenhagen stake, with a chest whose carvings tell a story from Danish history.



Saint singles can be difficult because they are so scattered and so busy.

A young adult dance or party in Copenhagen usually draws 20 to 30 people, Tine Andersen says, unless the invitation is extended to include members from the Århus stake and from Sweden. Malmö, Sweden, is close; from the top of a tall building in Copenhagen you can easily see the bridge that crosses the narrow

stretch of Baltic Sea between the two countries. While the languages of the two nations are similar, conversation at one of these dances is likely to be conducted in English, a language that many Europeans have in common.

Anne Christina Larsen of Århus could easily fit in whatever the language. In addition to her native Danish, she is fluent in German, English, and Spanish. Baptized while studying in Austria, she worked for a time in Guatemala and served a mission in the Washington, D.C., area. Currently studying psychology at a university, Anne attends institute classes. Regular attendance at the classes is no more than two or three.

But Anne has not put life on hold while waiting for marriage. She is continuing to fulfill personal spiritual goals—especially now that the temple is close. Going there “gives you new strength and peace—and perspective. You’re reminded of who you are.” She bases decisions about her life on gospel principles. “In everything we do, the gospel is the foundation.”

Building the Foundation

Britta Rasmussen, baptized with her husband in 1975, says she gained her testimony of the gospel by living it. When she first began attending Relief Society, she thought, “These ladies are *doing* what they believe.” She has always tried to follow that example.

For 45 years, she has been socializing with a group of friends she first met as a schoolgirl. She invited them to attend the open house at the temple while she and her

setting the right priorities. The Kochs joined the Church as a young married couple in 1968 and reared their seven children in the Church. In 2004 when they served as guides during the open house for the Copenhagen temple, a man who had gone to school with one of their sons came on a tour. “I had to come,” the man explained, “because I know Kristian, and I know what it would mean to him.”

The Kochs first went to the temple in Switzerland many years ago, and they set an example for their family by serving as temple workers when that meant an eight-hour trip to Stockholm. They kept a picture of the temple on a wall in their home. They used every resource to help their children grow strong in the gospel, including family prayer, home evening, and home-study seminary.

After years of having to travel outside their country, “to have a temple so close is a special blessing,” Sister Koch says. Her husband, who was released as president of the Copenhagen stake in 2001, sees the coming of the temple as a sign of growing maturity among members. But the Kochs are also impressed by its effect on those who are not members. When they talked of sealing during the open house tours, Brother Koch says, “you could tell which couples had a good marriage by the way they looked at each other. They would ask, ‘Could we do that?’”

Life in the Single Lane

Temple marriage is a goal, of course, for single members in Denmark, but socialization with other Latter-day

husband were serving as guides, and she had the opportunity to bear her testimony to them. "All those people felt something," Sister Rasmussen recalls, expressing the hope that what she said may someday touch their lives.

Her husband, Kjeld, first became acquainted with the gospel through a friend. Though Kjeld was more accustomed to the philosophical examination of religion, he developed a strong testimony through the witness of the Holy Ghost. He says, "Our challenge is to tell people, 'This is *not* a man-made religion. We have authority from God.'"

Elisabeth Andersen, in her late teens and the only Church member in her school, is not sure yet whether she has a testimony. "Sometimes I feel like I do, and sometimes I don't." But she is in the right place and doing the right things to find one. Her father, Jens Andersen, is president of the Copenhagen Denmark Stake. In her home, there are family prayers and family home evenings. Her father and mother set examples of faithfulness, and Elisabeth is doing the spiritual things she has been taught to strengthen her testimony. She is quite willing to share gospel truths with friends who ask about her beliefs or the way she lives.

The living of basic gospel principles, such as faith, prayer, repentance, and obedience, brings a new perspective on life, President Andersen says. "The joys of life become more abundant. The joy I feel for my wife and children is clothed in an eternal perspective," he explains. "Those families in the Church who are really

enjoying the blessings of the gospel are those who are practicing these basic principles."

The temple in Copenhagen has helped strengthen that eternal perspective, he adds. Members of every age can feel its influence. When his daughter Elisabeth has visited the temple, she too has felt it: "A peace. You can find it almost nowhere else."

President Andersen says stake and ward leaders teach that temple service is the goal for every member. He explains that the growth in spirituality resulting from the making and keeping of temple covenants could be the key to helping the Church grow in numbers in Denmark. "I think that missionary work is a natural result of conversion in your own life." When members are converted, he says, then they are able and eager to reach out to others. ■



Above: Spire of the Copenhagen temple.

Below: Johan and Lisa Koch, temple workers, Copenhagen stake. He is a former stake president.



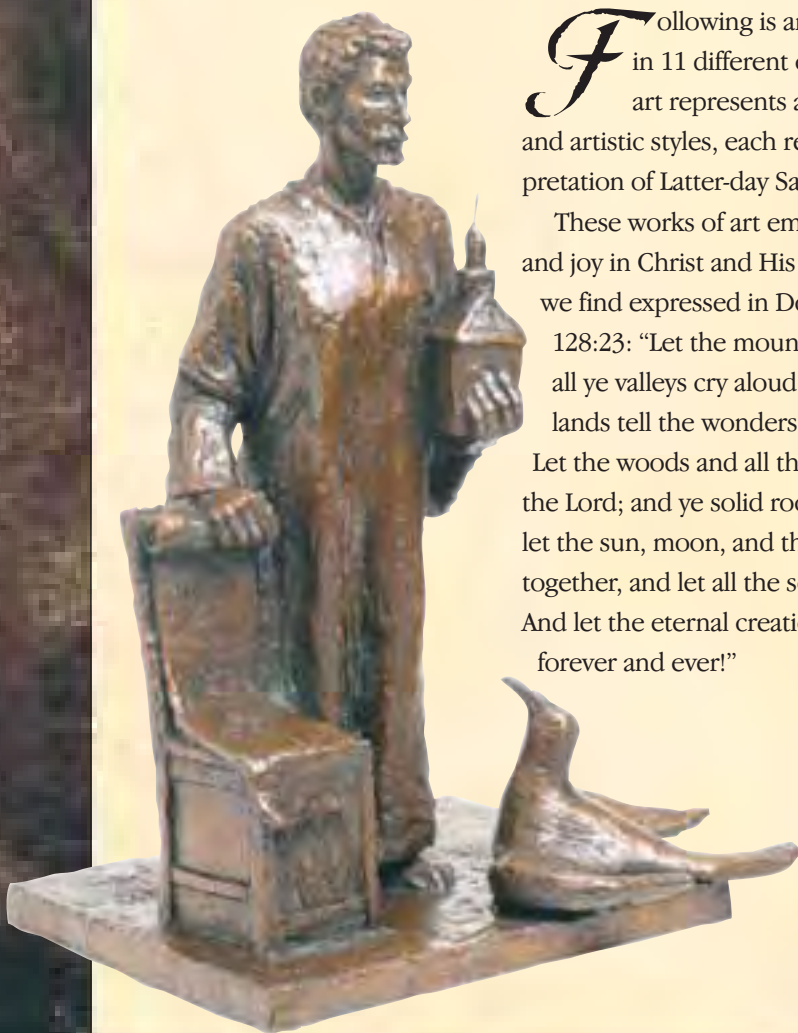
LET THE MOUNTAINS

Shout for Joy!

*Selections from the Sixth
International Art Competition*

Following is art from Latter-day Saints in 11 different countries. Though the art represents a wide range of media and artistic styles, each reflects the artist's interpretation of Latter-day Saint beliefs, history, or life.

These works of art embody the same energy and joy in Christ and His eternal creations that we find expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 128:23: "Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! . . . Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever!"





Opposite page, left:
Elijah, Come, by Lyuba
Prusak (Czech Republic);
opposite page, right:
Ordination, by
Lawrence O. Ehigiator
(Nigeria); far left:
*Selecting Stone: The
Brother of Jared*, by
Nathan Florence
(Utah); left: *Tree of Life*,
by Mabel "Belle" Lara
(Chile); below left:
A Promise Fulfilled, by
Teodorico P. Cumagun Jr.
(Philippines); below:
*Steadfast in Keeping
the Commandments*,
by Chin-Tai Cheng
(Taiwan).



Right: *Other Sheep I Have Not of This Fold*, by José Riveros (Chile);
below: *Lehi's Dream*, by Damaris Puga de Garcia (Guatemala);
far right: *Our Divine Heritage*, by Maria Makarova (Russia).





Far left: *The Ascension of Isaiah*, by Wulf Barsch (Czech Republic); top: Armenian needle lace, by Melva Hundoian Emrazian (Armenia); left: *Sing with Me*, by Rei-Ying Chen (Taiwan); bottom left: *Let the Mountains Shout for Joy!* by Brent Laycock (Canada); below: *Vision*, by Ugolini Valeriano (Italy).



MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR WOMEN

Belle S. Spafford

BY JANET PETERSON AND CONNIE LEWIS

During her 30 years as Relief Society general president, Belle S. Spafford oversaw many changes, including programs and policies that are now an intrinsic part of Relief Society.

At the Relief Society general conference in Salt Lake City on October 4, 1945, President George Albert Smith said: "By the time we have two or three more general conferences here, we may have visitors from Australia, New Zealand, Africa, China, Japan, etc. They may leave their homes in airplanes and in about twenty-four hours be right here."¹

General president Belle S. Spafford felt uplifted when she heard these words. After the meeting, she asked President Smith if he thought this could happen during her administration. When he said it could, she asked how that could happen. He said, "The Lord will take care of that."²



Three years later, the Relief Society presidency hosted a special session for international sisters during general conference. Belle noted that every part of the world President Smith had mentioned in October 1945 was represented.

Today, Relief Society is the largest women's organization in the world, with members throughout the world from Moscow, Russia, to Alice Springs, Australia, to Dunkirk, Indiana. During the nearly three decades that Belle S. Spafford served as Relief Society general president, she saw sweeping changes in the world and in the status of women. In the Church she saw the Relief Society grow from a largely western United States organization of a hundred thousand members to a worldwide organization of nearly a million sisters in 65 countries.

Belle's Childhood

Born on October 8, 1895, in Salt Lake City, Utah, Belle was the seventh child of Hester Sims and John Gibson Smith. Her father, however, had died suddenly seven months before she was born, leaving Hester to raise seven children. Hester named her new baby Marion Isabelle Sims



Smith, but she was known simply as Belle.

"Mother never allowed us to feel that we were without a father," Belle said. "She would often say to us, 'You have a father. He's not with us, but he is taking care of us, I'm sure. And you have a Heavenly Father, and you have the father of the ward who is the bishop.'"³

Hester shared with her children her love of music, art, and good books and firmly implanted in their minds the importance of education. The Smiths took music lessons, served missions, and earned college degrees. Belle completed a two-year normal school (teacher education) course at the University of Utah.

The Spafford family also had support from Hester's mother, Isabella M. Sims. Belle remembered that her grandmother wore a black silk dress with a beautiful gold watch pinned to it

to Church meetings. One day young Belle asked her, "When you die will you will me your gold watch?" Isabella gently reminded Belle that the watch was of "small worth," then said, "I'll will you something else that I brought all the way from Scotland that will serve you into the eternities, I'll leave you my testimony of the gospel."⁴



Belle S. Spafford during her presidency (left) and as a young woman (oval); as a child (above) with two of her siblings—Douglas (left) and Joseph (right).



Sister Spafford supervised a massive relief effort beginning in May 1945 to ease the suffering of the 30,000 Latter-day Saints in Europe when World War II ended there. A few months later, when the war ended in the Pacific, Hawaiian Relief Societies sent supplies to Saints in Japan. Relief Societies like the one shown above made and donated quilts to the bishops' storehouse as part of the relief effort. Blankets and shoes were also donated. Inset: Belle with her husband, Earl Spafford.

Marriage and Family

Belle met Willis Earl Spafford at Brigham Young University shortly after he returned from service in World War I. Handsome and athletic, Earl played basketball at BYU. They were married on March 23, 1921, in the Salt Lake Temple.

Belle and Earl had two children, Mary and Earl. The children grew up in a home where their mother believed that “the most valuable contribution that a woman can make to society is to rear children who have internalized a sense of worthwhile values.”⁵

Her son, Earl, remembered: “Those of us who are close to her . . . have always viewed her not in the light of prominence, but as a warm and affectionate woman who always seemed to have time for the little things. . . . She has been our tutor, our comforter, our counselor and our confidante.”⁶

Belle also enjoyed telling funny stories. Earl says, “Mother is the only person I know



that could tell the same old joke over and over again and get a laugh every time.”⁷

A Relief Society Convert

In 1926, as a young mother, Belle was surprised when her bishop called her to be a counselor in the Relief Society presidency. She responded by saying, “That organization is for my mother, not for me.”

Although she accepted the call, she did not feel enthusiastic about it. After three weeks, she discussed her feelings with her bishop, who asked her to “try a little longer.” Even after she was injured in a car accident, the bishop, with prayerful consideration, did not release her. She agreed to stay on and do her best.⁸

She began by following her favorite philosophy—“if a thing is worth doing, I want to put all I’ve got into it.”⁹ She said of this time: “To me the society needed lifting up and pushing forward. We needed to enroll more



young women, and have programs a little more meaningful. We needed to do something on the homemaking day besides quilting. . . . So I worked toward these goals along with my president and the other counselor.

"Then the Depression came. . . . My Relief Society sisters and I would pick up the windfall peaches and the windfall apples. Then we would go back to the meetinghouse where the sisters would bring their pressure cookers, and we'd gather up the bottles and put them in great big tubs with boiling water and sterilize the bottles. We'd work all day long. And when the canning was done, before the bottles were cool, people would be standing in line, our fine families in the ward, waiting to receive the commodities that we'd prepared. . . . To me, that was Relief Society. Then I liked it. . . .

"It was a very converting experience. Someone had to do it. Why not the women? Why not the organization that the Lord established . . . ? To stand side by side with the brethren . . . , why



Above, inset: The general Relief Society presidency—Belle S. Spafford (center), Marianne Sharp, first counselor (left), and Velma N. Simonsen, second counselor (right)—as the Relief Society Building was being constructed. Above, Sister Spafford and Sister Simonsen on their first trip to Hawaii.

shouldn't we do our part? Then came the vision of it as an essential part of the gospel plan."¹⁰

Now Belle was fully converted to Relief Society. Her vision of it as "an essential part of the gospel plan" grew within her as she served on the Relief Society general board (1935–42), as second counselor to Relief Society general president Amy Brown Lyman (1942–45), and as the ninth Relief Society general president (1945–74).

Ninth Relief Society President

When Belle was sustained in April 1945 general conference, she had no idea that she would work under the leadership of six Presidents of the Church. She could not have dreamed of the changes she would oversee in Relief Society as the Church adjusted programs and policies to meet the needs of a growing worldwide membership. Nor could she know she would become the most traveled Relief Society general president the Church had ever had.



Welfare and social services programs flourished in the hands of the large Relief Society general board, shown here under the leadership of Belle S. Spafford (center); Marianne Sharp, first counselor (right); and Louise Wallace Madsen, second counselor (left).

In April 1945 most Latter-day Saints lived in the Intermountain West. At that time, women paid annual dues to join Relief Society. Visiting teachers visited sisters with the goal of gathering money for charity. Church auxiliaries, including Relief Society, had their own budget and raised money for it. Each auxiliary had its own magazine. The *Relief Society Magazine* contained poems, stories, and pictures of Relief Society activities, as well as lessons for the sisters.

In keeping with its motto “Charity Never Faileth,” the Relief Society was involved in many compassionate service programs. Since Belle had skills and interest in social work, she expanded and professionalized the delivery of social services by the Relief Society in cooperation with the Church welfare program.

Belle reached out to the world through her involvement with the National Council of Women (NCW). Encouraged by President George Albert Smith to “take one or two of your ablest board members . . . and make your influence felt,”¹¹ she did just that. Over the years, she served with distinction in many capacities. In 1969 she was elected

president of the NCW and served a two-year term. Her involvement lasted throughout her lifetime.

Another of Belle’s accomplishments as president was the construction of the Relief Society Building, located east of the Salt Lake Temple. Asking the hundred thousand sisters worldwide to each donate five dollars, the Relief Society reached its half-million-dollar goal. Construction began in 1953, and the building was dedicated on October 3, 1956. It now houses the offices of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary.

Church Correlation

As the Church continued to grow rapidly, leaders recognized the need to bring all parts of the Church under the umbrella of the priesthood. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many responsibilities held by the auxiliaries were moved to other Church departments.

For the Relief Society, that meant sisters no longer paid dues or raised money. All auxiliaries would now receive operating funds from the ward budgets. Visiting teachers

were directed to go to the sisters' homes as friendly visitors and help build the spirit of the home; they were to give service instead of gather money. Beginning in 1971, all LDS women who were 18 and older were considered members of Relief Society; there was no longer any need to "join." Also in 1971, three new Church magazines—the *Ensign*, *New Era*, and *Friend*—replaced the other English-language magazines. Auxiliary lessons were now provided by the Church Curriculum Department. Gradually the social services programs of Relief Society were moved to other Church departments, most to what is now LDS Family Services.

Some of these changes were difficult for Belle, especially losing the social service programs and the *Relief Society Magazine*, but she wisely commented, "Adjustment is painful in changing an old pattern into a new one, but we must make the new patterns fit."¹²

Sisters followed Belle's strong leadership and example of obedience. She said, "There is nothing more fundamental to the well-being of Relief Society than that it is organized by the priesthood."¹³

Advocate for the Family

Belle knew firsthand of the value of the gospel and Relief Society in the home. She saw her widowed mother's example in raising seven children. In her own life, Belle also



Above: Sister Spafford and three Native American Relief Society sisters look at a copy of the History of Relief Society, which had been prepared as part of the Relief Society centennial celebration. As Belle Spafford led the Relief Society into its second 100 years, she brought with her unique skills and personal interest in caring for those in need. Having lived through World War I and the Great Depression, Sister Spafford began her service as president just as World War II was ending. Her experiences and talents were invaluable as Latter-day Saint sisters aided in the recovery from the devastations of World War II. In addition, during her long administration, Belle was instrumental in establishing, in part, programs in adoption services for unwed mothers, foster home placement, youth services, professional counseling, and tutoring for disadvantaged children. These programs thrived under her leadership, and eventually most became part of what is now LDS Family Services.

suffered personal loss. In 1963 her beloved husband, Earl, died of a heart attack, and within a year her daughter, Mary, also died.

Of the relationship between Relief Society and families Belle said: "Women who become active in Relief Society grow to love it. Their knowledge and skills increase, their testimonies of the gospel become firmly rooted. There develops within them a desire to help in the building of the kingdom of God on earth. This influence they carry into their home and disseminate among the family members. The home then becomes enriched, a place where the Spirit of God may dwell, a home prepared to fulfill its divine destiny."¹⁴

Current Relief Society general president Bonnie D. Parkin says of Belle: "I think her teachings of the importance of family continue today. Belle believed in families. We love families. . . . If I could meet Belle Spafford, I would thank her for her vision, for her love of all women throughout the world, and for her great insights to want to make life better for women and families."¹⁵

Concluding a Lifetime of Service

A few months before Belle's release, she noted: "Tremendous changes . . . have taken place in the social, economic, industrial, and educational life of most countries in the world since Relief Society was founded. And I don't think any change in the world has been more

A WOMAN'S INFLUENCE



"Years ago I saw a photograph [below] of a Sunday School class in the Sixth Ward of the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake

City. The photograph was taken in 1905. A sweet girl, her hair in pig-tails, was shown on the front row [center]. Her name was Belle Smith. Later, as Belle Smith Spafford, general president of the Relief Society, she wrote: 'Never have women had greater influence than in today's world. . . . It is a time rich in rewards if we keep our balance, learn the true values of life, and wisely determine priorities.' . . .

"You, my beloved sisters, know who you are and what God expects you to become. Your challenge is to bring all for whom you are responsible to a knowledge of this truth. The Relief Society of this, the Lord's Church, can be the means to achieve such a goal."

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 113, 115.



significant than the change in the status of women. . . . Yet, in the midst of all this change, . . . Relief Society has been just as constant in its purpose as truth is constant. The purposes that were important for the handful of women in Nauvoo are still important to women world-wide."¹⁶

After her release on October 3, 1974, Belle commented that when she was first serving in her ward Relief Society presidency, she would encourage sisters to come to Relief Society by telling them, "We need you." Years later, she would say, "Come to Relief Society. You need it." At the end of her service, however, she said, "We need you, [and] you need it."¹⁷

A Loved Leader of Women

"Belle was one with everyone," says Florence S. Jacobsen, who served as Young Women general president when Belle was Relief Society general president. "This made her a great leader because she could talk to anyone, she could approach anyone and be accepted. She had that quality about her."¹⁸

After Belle's death on February 2, 1982, many women told her family that Belle was their best friend. They echoed the sentiments of a nonmember friend who once wrote to her:

"Many claim you in your church and in your family, but my dear Belle, you belong to the world."¹⁹

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: "You won't know Belle Spafford unless you know her deep and abiding testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and her testimony of the Prophet

Joseph Smith and the Brethren who have succeeded him in the leadership of the Church. If you begin to know that, then you'll know something about this great woman."²⁰

Once converted to Relief Society, Belle Smith Spafford led women, in the Church and in national and international society, through an era of tremendous change. A dynamic leader, she was understanding and tactful but steadfast on principles and forthright on social issues. A mother, a sister, a friend, and a Church leader, Belle Spafford made a difference in the lives of women throughout the world. ■

Janet Peterson is a member of the Brighton 11th Ward, Salt Lake Brighton Stake. Connie Lewis is a member of the Peterson Ward, Morgan Utah North Stake.

NOTES

1. "Address to the Members of the Relief Society," *Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1945, 719.
2. Belle S. Spafford, Oral History (interviews by Jill Mulvey Derr, 1975–76), Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 86. Hereafter cited as Oral History.
3. Oral History, 2.
4. Oral History, 23.
5. "LDS Women Have Defined Roles," *Church News*, Feb. 24, 1973, 5.
6. "Tribute to Belle S. Spafford by Her Family" (scrapbook in possession of Janet Spafford Nimer).
7. Telephone conversation with Janet Spafford Nimer, July 14, 2005.
8. Oral History, 11–13.
9. Oral History, 10.
10. Oral History, 14.
11. Gayle M. Chandler, "Belle S. Spafford" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1983), 23.
12. Chandler, master's thesis, 23.
13. Belle S. Spafford, *A Woman's Reach* (1974), 107.
14. Spafford, *A Woman's Reach*, 247.
15. *A Woman's Reach: A Tribute to President Belle S. Spafford* (video in possession of Relief Society general presidency, 2002).
16. "Reaching Every Facet of a Woman's Life: Relief Society—A Conversation with Belle S. Spafford," *Ensign*, June 1974, 15.
17. Oral History, 100.
18. *A Woman's Reach* (video, 2002).
19. Janet S. Nimer, Relief Society Legacy Lecture, Mar. 1982, 3–4.
20. *A Woman's Reach* (video, 2002).



THE NAUVOO TEMPLE

ONE STITCH AT A TIME

BY KAROL JEAN KASTELER MILLER

Late in April 2005, I received a phone call from a friend at Church headquarters, asking if I would like to do a big project: design and sew a 25-by-40-foot fabric representation of the front of the original Nauvoo Temple. It would be used in a new Nauvoo pageant. It was an exciting challenge for which I would use an architectural drawing of the temple as my guide. The deadline to finish the project was in six weeks.

Using the blessing of e-mail, I gathered help from women in my family, lifelong friends, and various stake and ward members. They included local Chinese, Laotian, and Thai



sisters. My family garage served as our workshop.

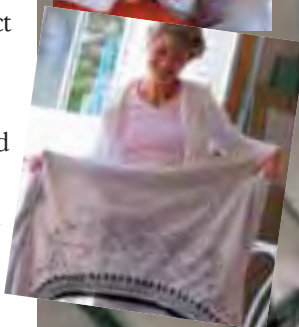
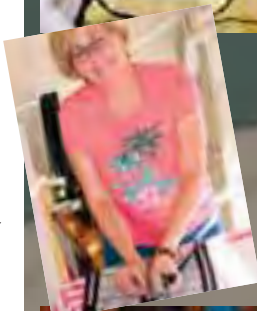
Eighty women helped sew, embroider, crochet, and cross-stitch the panels over 30 days and nights. Ten women sewed the temple tower over the next 10 days and nights. Many supportive family members also helped at home.

Sometimes sisters would clutch their sewing bags and say, “I just don’t want to go. Can I come back tomorrow?” The sisters felt an urgency to complete the sewing so our temple would be built by the deadline. We had one goal in mind—completing the temple in time.

We felt a connection with the building of the original Nauvoo Temple and the early sisters in Nauvoo. As we sewed, we reflected on their tremendous sacrifices. We sensed that we understood in some small way the feelings of those pioneer sisters as they labored hard to assist in completing their temple. We pushed harder.

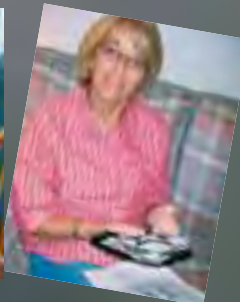
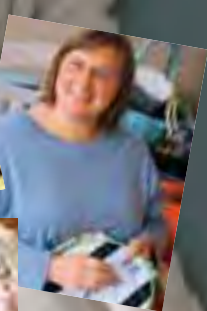
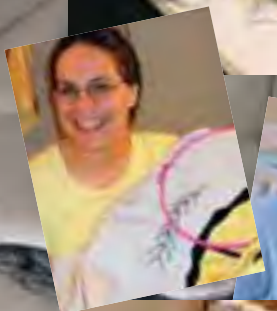
We felt creative blessings multiply as the project progressed. I was blessed with good health and amazing strength, despite getting very limited sleep during those six weeks. Countless sweet and powerful prayers were offered. We met our goals with grateful hearts. I believe all of us who participated understand more now about consecrating time and talents to the building of the kingdom here on earth, and so much more of the magnitude of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s vision. ■

Karol Jean Kasteler Miller is a member of the Stratford East Ward, Salt Lake Highland Stake.



BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN





Eighty women helped sew, embroider, crochet, and cross-stitch the panels over 30 days and nights. Ten women sewed the temple tower over the next 10 days and nights. The author is below.



The Sound of Relief Society

BY KIM WOODBURY

The smell of freshly cooked bacon filled the cabin where the sisters of our young single adult ward had gathered for a Relief Society overnighter. As I lay in bed trying to wake up from a short night's sleep, I heard the sisters begin to gather in the kitchen for breakfast. I heard their familiar voices laughing, talking, and then laughing some more. As I listened to the happy noise, I felt a surge of love for these amazing women. I smiled as I thought to myself, "This is the sound of Relief Society."

I then reflected on all the other wonderful sounds that remind me of Relief Society: a sister sharing her heartfelt testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, the voices of many sisters blending as we sing hymns together, a tender visiting teaching lesson, the hum of a sewing machine as we participate together in a service

project, and the tears we shed as we share one another's sorrows. These are just some of the many wonderful sounds that remind me of the Lord's organization for women.

But that morning in the cabin, as I lay there listening to my sisters laughing and talking, I realized what was my favorite sound of all: the sound of righteous women rejoicing together, loving each other, and celebrating our common sisterhood as daughters of a loving Heavenly Father. To me, that is truly the sound of Relief Society. ■

Kim Woodbury is a member of the Bountiful 55th Ward, Bountiful Utah East Stake.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

Teaching the Doctrines of the Kingdom of God



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: Relief Society helps sisters learn the doctrines of the gospel through studying the scriptures and teachings of latter-day prophets.

How Do We Learn the Doctrines of the Kingdom?

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “It is incumbent upon each of us to do everything we can to increase our spiritual knowledge and understanding by

studying the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. When we read and study the revelations, the Spirit can confirm in our hearts the truth of what we are learning; in this way, the voice of the Lord speaks to each one of us. As we ponder the teachings of the gospel and apply them in daily living, we become better prepared to receive additional light and truth” (“Marvelous Are the Revelations of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 32).

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “I hope that [scripture study] will become something far more enjoyable than a duty; that, rather, it will become a love affair with the word of God. I promise you that as you read, your minds will be enlightened and your spirits will be lifted. At first it may seem tedious, but that will change into a wondrous experience with thoughts and words of things divine” (“The Light within You,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 99).

What Are Our Teaching Responsibilities as Members of Relief Society?

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “Intelligence, light and knowledge . . . are part of the promise given to the sisters by the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . Relief Society sisters

see the fulfillment of that promise daily as they teach children at home, in Sunday School, and in Primary, in Relief Societies, in sacrament meetings, and in daily conversation. . . . We encourage all our sisters to take advantage of their opportunities to receive light and knowledge in school, in personal study, and in Relief Society” (“Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, 4).

D&C 88:77–78, 118: “Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you. . . . Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”

Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president: “The home is the central place where we teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom, but the home is supported by the teaching and the learning that takes place at church. As Relief Society leaders and teachers, we can help accomplish this mission through effective gospel teaching. In Relief Society we teach the teachers—we teach mothers, future mothers and nurturers of God’s children. . . . When effective teaching occurs in Relief Society, sisters will be spiritually uplifted and better able to apply gospel principles in their lives. I believe effective teaching includes knowing your sisters, relying on the Spirit, and allowing the sisters to feel the love of the Lord in their lives” (“Teaching: An Entrance to the Heart” [address delivered at Relief Society open house, fall 2004]). ■

Filling the Void

BY VICTORIA ANDERSON

It was a cold, clear night, and the moon lit the snow-capped mountains as it peeked above their rugged edges. I shivered as I climbed into my car, waiting for the heater to warm my frozen toes and hands.

My last client at the clinic where I worked as a psychologist had left an hour before, but even after finishing phone calls and paperwork, I continued to be drawn to thoughts of concern for her welfare. Sherry (names have been changed) was a 19-year-old college student with an eating disorder. She had been sexually abused as a child by her stepbrother and had never received treatment because her parents were afraid it would ruin the family.

My thoughts of Sherry were interrupted when a car sped past me and swerved in front of me on the freeway. My heart started pumping harder, and I mumbled a few words under my breath. I tried to regain my composure as I drove toward home by turning on the radio. I flipped through the stations to find a comfortable song. "All the same empty noise," I thought. "I wonder why I keep this crazy thing on so much of the time. It's almost like I'm trying to fill a void somehow."

I looked toward the mountains again. The moon was so bright and full that it illuminated the clouds sitting above the mountaintops. I turned the radio off and began to be thankful for the majesty

of nature. A feeling of enormous debt filled my heart and soul, and I began to pray. After thanking Heavenly Father for the beauty surrounding me, I began to muse: "I wonder, Father, why I have a yearning—almost a need—to fill every minute with music or television or something to satisfy the void. Why does Sherry seek to fill her void with food? Why does Susan feel a need to fill her void with drugs, and why does Bert seek to fill his void with sex? Why does there sometimes seem to be a giant hole in our lives, even when we want to do what is right?"

After these questions, thoughts, and feelings filled my heart and soul, the answer came in a peaceful awareness. I had lived with my Heavenly Father in the premortal existence. In that realm I was filled with His divine love for me as His daughter. When I came to earth, I left His presence, and a void was created. I felt the void was placed in my heart for my earthly journey so I would seek Him again. As I seek to know and love my Heavenly Father, the void can be filled.

I had a yearning to fill every minute with music, television, or some other stimulus. What need was I trying to satisfy?

It was a soft and quiet answer—as quiet as the moonlit night. But it touched my soul, and tears began to well up in the corners of my eyes.

How many wasted hours and years do we spend searching after things to fill our voids in our lives: riches, possessions, sexual gratification, food, power, popularity? All of these can elate our senses or bring excitement, but they also return us to a place where we feel even more wanting. Thus begin the addictions, for we can never fill the void through earthly means.

Through the hundreds of people I see each year in counseling who are suffering from pain, loneliness, and addictions, I have reached a new awareness that they are all trying to fill their void in ways that only tear them apart. The void cannot be filled by external sources but must be filled from within.

The only way for us to fill the void in our lives is to come to know our Heavenly Father and His love for each one of us. That means to love Him enough that we want to do His will. Jesus said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,

and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). Christ is the bridge for us to return to our Heavenly Father.

Jesus explained this to the woman at the well: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13–14).



Jesus explained to the woman at the well: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”

As I rounded the final corner, my house came into view. I knew my family was inside and would welcome me home in love. I thought of another future reunion filled with love—perfect love: that of returning to Heavenly Father. As I pulled into the driveway, I was filled with gratitude for what I had been taught about the power of knowing God’s love. I thought of the promise made in different words nearly 2,000 years earlier by His Son:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). ■

Victoria Anderson is a member of the Lodi Second Ward, Lodi California Stake.

Stop Using Words That *Hurt*

BY J. THOMAS CEARLEY

Director, LDS Family Services, Louisiana Agency

What is verbal abuse? How can we avoid being verbally abusive with children?

I probably yell at my children too much” was the contemplative response of a faithful Latter-day Saint mother to my ecclesiastical interview question “Is there anything in your home that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church?”

Her response surprised me. This pleasant, soft-spoken sister was an exemplary member of our ward, as was her husband, and her children were well mannered and well liked. They were a stalwart Latter-day Saint family.

We proceeded to discuss her answer further. She spoke of feeling overwhelmed at times by family and parenting responsibilities and of shouting at her children. She was concerned that her yelling might border on “verbal abuse.”

This faithful Latter-day Saint is not alone in her struggle. Many parents yell at their children, belittle them, or criticize them. Even parents who genuinely love their children

and are sincerely trying to do their best may engage in this behavior. Parents do not always realize the emotional damage they may be inflicting upon their young ones.

What Is Verbal Abuse?

According to the Church publication *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders*, “abuse may include such acts as threats of abandonment, cursing, demeaning comments, . . . and other such deprivations.” This publication further explains that abuse “can deeply affect the mind and spirit, destroying faith and causing confusion, doubt, mistrust, guilt, and fear.”¹

Verbal abuse can include blaming (“If you would behave, I wouldn’t have to yell”), threatening (“You’d better stop that or else”), name-calling (“You’re stupid”; “You’re an embarrassment”), belittling (“Anyone could do better than that”; “You’re so clumsy”), rejecting (“Leave me alone!”), shaming (“You’re no good”), or comparing (“Why can’t you be as smart as your brother?”). Or a parent may communicate to the child in ways that indicate the child is hopeless (“You never . . .”; “You always . . .”). The home should be a safe, sacred place of refuge for children. But this is not the case when parents are verbally abusive.



Control the Tongue

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) spoke about the necessity of controlling one’s communication:

“He is a weak man who will curse or condemn some loved one because of a little accident. What good does it do him? He [must] develop his spirit and control that anger, control his tongue. A little thing? Trace it, and you will find that not yielding and not controlling it bring many an unhappy hour in your home.”²

Stories regarding the “many unhappy hours” in homes are truly tragic.

“If I could do it all over again,” wrote a mother from

Glendale, Utah, “I would commit to never raising my voice. Ironically, as a young mother, I remember hearing an older woman say that she never raised her voice to her children. I thought to myself, *How impractical!*

“Yelling goes way back in my family tree. *Everyone yells*, I thought. *It’s just part of life*. I had often given myself over to my emotions and expressed my anger at the top of my voice at my children. Then I became frustrated by their lack of cooperation and yelled my orders even louder at them. I have even screamed to them that I could not tolerate their yelling and quarreling any longer, not realizing that they had learned to yell from me.



Good job
I'm sorry
Let's try again
Can I help

“Raising my voice invited the spirit of contention into our home. Once it was there, the children learned to call each other names and say cruel things to each other. I would respond with more anger and accusations, and the negative feelings would continue to escalate.

“After yelling at my kids for the better part of 20 years, I have learned what 3 Nephi 11:29 means: ‘He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil.’ Allowing the spirit of contention to enter our home allowed darkness and depression to enter. It fostered meanness and self-centeredness, and nearly destroyed unity, love, and family relationships.”³

Using demeaning, threatening words and shouting can leave indelible impressions on a child’s mind. Hurtful words can be used like a weapon to inflict injuries that are difficult to overcome.

A child who is continually criticized can begin to believe the negative messages. Children who suffer repeated emotional or verbal abuse may experience depression, develop feelings of low self-worth, and have difficulty in their interpersonal relationships. All of these effects may extend into adulthood.

INSTEAD OF YELLING

1. Pause and reconsider what you’re going to say. Then think of a better response—or no response at all for the time being.
2. Remember the last time you felt like yelling, and concentrate on what you did that helped you then.
3. When tempted to yell or use demeaning or threatening words, count to 20 or more before you yell.
4. Put your child, and even yourself, in a time-out chair. Just sit there and cool off for a few minutes.
5. Sing or hum a favorite hymn.
6. Call a friend to talk or to even temporarily relieve you of childcare, if necessary.
7. Go outside for a breath of fresh air. Look at the sky to get the bigger picture.
8. Write a brief list of your immediate feelings of frustration. Then write feelings you think you may still have in 10 minutes or so.

Preventing Verbal Abuse

Some years ago, in an effort to encourage positive communication, my family decided to discuss during family home evening ways we could improve our verbal communication with each other. We agreed to pay attention to our language and to avoid name calling and using negative labels, which we began to call “garbage-can words.” Some of those labels and words were *stupid*, *ugly*, *dummy*, *lazy*, *spoiled*, *crybaby*, and others.

ABUSE IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH THE SPIRIT



"We should not lose our tempers and abuse one another. I want to say that nobody ever abused anybody else when he had the spirit of the Lord. It is always when we have some other spirit."

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951), in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 8.

We all knew which labels and words were negative and hurtful. And, interestingly enough, new ones seemed to creep into our communication and had to also be thrown into the "garbage can."

As I have counseled families throughout the years, I have used a one-page handout for parents on how to stop using words that hurt and start using words that help. Some of the words and phrases that help are: "Good job!" "You did that by yourself." "I've never seen that done any better." "Let's try again." "I'm sorry." "Can I help?" "You always seem to figure out a way." "You're pretty smart!" "I didn't know you could do that." "Nice try." "Great effort!" "Good work." "Keep trying; you'll get it."

Whether or not you consider yourself to be a verbally abusive parent, listen carefully to the language you use with your children. Be receptive to feedback from others about your parent-child interactions. Be aware of any negative, hurtful verbal responses and reactions, including negative words, tone of voice, and overall approach to communicating with your children. When you feel tempted to engage in abusive verbal behavior, stop what you are doing and remove yourself temporarily from the situation. See the sidebar "Instead of Yelling" for more suggestions on avoiding abusive verbal behavior.

If you are finding it difficult to change your actions, seek counsel from your

bishop. If further help is needed, he can refer you to a qualified therapist.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has prescribed love and respect as the most effective tool in curing abuse and other family problems:

"The prescription is simple and wonderfully effective. It is love. It is plain, simple, everyday love and respect. It is a tender plant that needs nurturing. But it is worth all of the effort we can put into it."⁴

On another occasion he said: "My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—

is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection."⁵

Let us treat our children with "kindness and refreshment and affection," knowing as we do so that the Lord will bless our efforts.

Our relationships with our children will then be closer, and they will be farther along the road to becoming happy, well-adjusted adults. ■

J. Thomas Cearley is a member of the Slidell Ward, Slidell Louisiana Stake.

NOTES

1. *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders* (1995), 2, 1.
2. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 490.
3. "What I Would Do Differently as a Parent," *Ensign*, July 1996, 7.
4. "Look to the Future," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 69.
5. "Save the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54.

For additional resources contact www.ldsfamilyservices.org.



The home should be a safe, sacred place of refuge. Family members who avoid contention and who treat each other with kindness and love will be blessed for their efforts.



Fleeing Temptation

BY ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

Of the Presidency of the Seventy



In this day of moral permissiveness, the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife is a powerful reminder to all disciples of Christ.

What a wonderful privilege we have to study the Old Testament this year. The gospel stories I remember best from my childhood are those taught from the Old Testament by my Primary and youth teachers. In times of reflection and challenge, these stories have guided me and helped me make righteous decisions.

The story of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by his brothers is an Old Testament favorite. In this day of moral permissiveness, the portion of the story that speaks to Joseph's personal morality in the face of temptation is a powerful reminder to all disciples of Christ.

In Genesis we read of how the Lord caused Joseph to prosper, and he became the ruler of Potiphar's household. Potiphar was captain of Pharaoh's guard and a very powerful man. After a time, Potiphar's wife began to make seductive advances towards Joseph.

"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

"But he refused, and said unto his master's

wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

"There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: *how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

"And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39:7–12; emphasis added).

Joseph's response is as powerful now as it was then: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

After this experience, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison. However, the Lord continued to bless him because of his righteousness. He was released from prison and eventually became servant to



Alma's teaching to his son Shiblon is instructive to each of us: "I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things.

"See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.

"Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness."

Pharaoh himself. This put Joseph in a position to save his own family and to have a righteous posterity.

This story has had a great influence on me throughout my life. As a teenager I faced a situation somewhat similar to Joseph's. I had treasured up Joseph's story in my mind, and,



PAINTING BY DARRELL THOMAS

like him, I fled in the face of an imminent and dangerous moral temptation. In my heart I have often thanked those teachers of my youth who taught me this wonderful lesson from the Old Testament.

"You Must Not Give In"

In our time, it may be necessary for us to run daily from the moral vices that so often confront us.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has written: "You face tremendous temptation. It

comes at you in the halls of popular entertainment, on the Internet, in the movies, on television, in cheap literature, and in other ways—subtle, titillating, and difficult to resist. Peer pressure may be almost overpowering. But . . . you must not give in. You must be strong. You must take the long look ahead rather than succumbing to the present seductive temptation."¹

I would add two other scriptural admonitions to the lesson we learn from Joseph's experience in guarding against temptation and sin.

The first admonition is taken from the Book of Mormon: "Bridle all your passions." The second is taught in the Doctrine and Covenants: "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly."

"Bridle All Your Passions"

Alma's teaching to his son Shiblon, who was beginning his mission, is instructive to each of us: "I would that ye would be diligent and temperate in all things.

"See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.

"Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye *bridle all your passions*, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness" (Alma 38:10–12; emphasis added).

A wild horse needs to be taught and trained to submit to the will of its master. A bridle or harness is used for this purpose. It is also used thereafter to guide and restrain the animal. Similarly, our natural passions need to be harnessed so that we can follow the will of our Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Passions, like wild horses, need to be



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 one family member to relate the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and another to share Elder Rasband's explanation of letting "virtue garnish thy thoughts."

2. Make a set of cards listing temptations members of your family might face. As each card is shown, have younger family members "flee" or have older family members explain how a virtuous thought could help you escape. Share some of the blessings you have received as you have fled temptation.

bridled and restrained as we strive to be obedient and follow the Lord's teachings.

In an environment such as ours, which suggests we should immediately have everything we want, bridling our physical passions is mandatory if we are to draw near to the Savior and become more like Him.

"Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts"

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and *let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly*; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion" (D&C 121:45–46; emphasis added).

The Lord uses an interesting phrase in this passage: "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." In other words, we are to enhance our thoughts with virtue. I think of a common garnishment as an addition to a nice plate of food. The garnish adds beauty and delight to the meal, just as virtue does to our thoughts.

Virtue is a basic theme of the 13th article of faith:

"We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

It has been my experience that very little occurs in the way of transgression that is not first rehearsed and debated in one's own mind. A key to avoiding these pitfalls is to let virtue guide our thoughts and deeds always, not allowing our minds to wander into places where they should not go.

As members of the Church, we know how strongly

President Hinckley feels about virtue and morality. He has written:

"Challenging though it may be, there is a way to apply traditional moral principles in our day. For some unknown reason, there is constantly appearing the false rationalization that at one time in the long-ago, virtue was easy and that now it is difficult. I would like to remind any who feel that way that there has never been a time since the Creation when the same forces were not at work that are

at work today. The proposal made by Potiphar's wife to Joseph in Egypt is no different from that faced by many men and women and youth in our day.

"The influences today may be more apparent and more seductive, but they are no more compelling. One cannot be shielded entirely from these influences. They are all about us. Our culture is saturated with them. But the same kind of self-discipline exercised by Joseph will yield the same beneficial result. Notwithstanding the so-called 'new morality,' notwithstanding the much-discussed changes in moral standards, there is no adequate substitute for virtue. God's standards may be challenged everywhere throughout the world, but God has not abrogated his commandments.

"The violation of his commandments in this, as in any other age, brings only regret, sorrow, loss of self-respect, and in many cases tragedy."²

I love President Hinckley. I sustain him as our living prophet and revelator. I witness that by following the words of the ancient and modern prophets, by fleeing temptation, by bridling our passions, and by garnishing our thoughts with virtue, we, like Joseph of Egypt, will be prospered spiritually and physically by the Lord and will enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost in our lives. ■

NOTES

1. "An Ensign to the Nations, a Light to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 83.
2. "With All Thy Getting Get Understanding," *Ensign*, Aug. 1988, 4.

Kirsten's Challenge

By Angela Diener

Kirsten, our second child, was born about 30 years ago after a difficult pregnancy.

Immediately after her birth the doctors discovered a serious cardiac defect. Kirsten was quickly transferred to the intensive care unit of the

children's hospital. Laying his hands on her tiny body in the incubator, my husband gave her the first priesthood blessing of her life—a welcome gift for her arrival on this earth.

During the following days I often stood in front of the glass window looking into intensive

care and watched as this little girl struggled for her life. We were not even allowed to touch her, and we did not know what to wish for her.

When I was discharged from the hospital without my baby, my husband and I had the desire to go to the temple. We could do nothing

physically for our little Kirsten. We had to trust the Lord and the physicians. At that time the nearest temple was in Switzerland, far from our home in Hamburg, but

Because of her cardiac defect, Kirsten was in intensive care after her birth. We could only watch her as she struggled for life.



we felt we had to gather strength there for the unknown future. We applied all of our faith in behalf of our daughter.

In the meantime the doctors diagnosed a rare cardiac defect they were not able to operate on at that time. The life expectancy of patients with this condition was very limited. But five weeks later we were able to take our little Kirsten home. While her body may have been suffering, her spirit was cheerful and willing to learn, and we could tell that she enjoyed living in our family and loved her older brother very much.

When Kirsten was four her condition deteriorated, and she became weaker and weaker. After praying, fasting, and visiting the temple, we decided upon surgery in a cardiac center in Munich, where doctors had recently repaired a complicated condition like Kirsten's. Doctors actually had to change everything in the heart—make the ventricles smaller, close holes, and repair both valves. It was a genuine work of art. We were very worried about Kirsten, and our whole ward joined us in praying for her.

The doctors operated on Kirsten on May 21, 1980, and when she had gotten over the worst and was transferred from intensive care to another unit, we were full of confidence. Then a terrible thing happened. A tiny blood clot loosened from a repaired heart valve, settled in the brain, and within a few minutes caused a complete paralysis of

her right side and a loss of speech. Kirsten's eyes were full of fear and sadness. This was very difficult for us. I still see my husband and me standing in a phone booth in Munich, desperately calling our bishop. Within the next few days we received comforting letters from many ward members. Fasting also gave us renewed strength to encourage Kirsten and accept this affliction.

The following years were filled with therapies, and we rejoiced in every little bit of progress. When it was time for Kirsten to start school, her health was sufficient for her to attend a regular elementary school. She developed fabulous coping strategies with her left, usable hand. Her right leg became stronger, and she learned how to swim, bike, and ride horses. She rejoiced in her life. If a child laughed at her somewhat peculiar walk, I simply showed him or her pictures of Kirsten's life, and the laughter turned into admiration.

Kirsten received much love from her grandparents and other relatives, and the ward fellowshiped her. In turn, she showed her joy in the gospel to everyone she met and has been the one in our family who has brought the most friends into the Church.

After graduating from high school Kirsten diligently completed training to be an industry saleswoman and also obtained her driver's license. With her slightly converted car she

could be more self-reliant, and she was able to participate in young single adult conferences and fulfill stake callings. In 1999 she took a year off to serve a Church-service mission in the Frankfurt temple.

Kirsten loves children and finds a special closeness to them. Her niece, nephew, and Primary children love her very much. She is an example for us, showing that one does not have to become bitter because of severe adversity, but that one can radiate cheerfulness.

In 2003 a very loving young man came into Kirsten's life and became more and more important to her. He is a returned missionary who grew up in a faithful Latter-day Saint family. In August 2004 he and Kirsten were sealed in the Frankfurt temple. They are now mastering life's challenges together.

Two of our children have physical impairments. You do not wish it, but if it happens, you have to accept it wholeheartedly, learn, and fight through the difficulties. You develop a keen ear for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our Father in Heaven knows which afflictions we need here on earth if we are to grow. I have often comforted my children with the words, "You will have these physical impairments only while you live on this earth, and mortality is very short compared to eternity." ■

Angela Diener is a member of the Langenborn Ward, Neumünster Germany Stake.



Move!

By Deborah Shatto

My brother and I were driving home from work on a long, dark stretch of highway. We hadn't passed a car for miles. I was exhausted, and in an attempt to stay awake, I began looking at the layout of the road. We were in a hilly area, and there were two lanes going up the side of the hill we were climbing. Only one lane came down in the other direction. The extra lane in our direction was a passing lane because of the steep grade.

I began wondering about the downhill side. Sometimes on a steep incline, I knew, large trucks lose their brakes. I wondered what would happen, with only one lane, if a truck lost its brakes and a car was in front of it. It could be a serious situation. I was glad there was no other traffic on the road that night.

After a few moments I again thought about the situation. I was driving in the passing lane and figured a truck without brakes would have to veer into my lane to pass a slower vehicle. A thought came into my mind that the right lane would be safer, just in case something like that happened. But I rationalized that it was late and there was no traffic, so it didn't really matter where I drove. The thought came again as I approached the top of the hill. I

realized that I couldn't see the oncoming traffic, and it couldn't see me either.

Suddenly a sharp voice shouted, "Move!" I was so startled that I jerked the steering wheel abruptly and veered into the right lane. In that instant lights came over the hill and a horn blared. My brother woke up just in time to see the truck pass us in the middle lane. A moment later a station wagon came over the hill in the far lane. I was so shaken I pulled over on the shoulder of the road to steady my nerves. The realization that my brother and I could have been killed was very frightening.

I was amazed; I had heard that the Holy Ghost speaks with a still, small voice, but this voice had shouted. It was several years later when I realized that the Holy Ghost had indeed spoken in a still, small voice. He had spoken to me as He brought to my mind the possibilities of where a large truck might go, and He had spoken again when He suggested I move to the far right lane. I was dismayed when I realized I had not recognized the still, small voice. Finally there was no time left, and the Spirit had to shout.

After that experience I vowed to always live my life so that I am in tune with the Spirit. I decided I would never again question a prompting but would follow the still, small voice immediately. ■

Deborah Shatto is a member of the Harmony Park Ward, Salt Lake Granite Park Stake.

My Personal Hero

By Jorge Detlefsen

On that November day in 1972 when I got on the bus to go to school, I had no idea this day was going to be one of the most important in my life.

I was 13 and an ordinary student. I mainly tried to have a good time at school, and I had many friends who were like I was. Óscar Italia was not like the other boys. He really did study and, as a result, was on the honor roll. But I didn't know him well. He was a quiet fellow.

When I entered the classroom that day, he was wearing a button on his lapel that read, "I Care. What about You?" At that time the Church in our area had a program to help members share the gospel. They wore this button so when people asked about it, they could explain about family home evening and the family.

I asked Óscar, "What's that?" He explained that he had been baptized three months before and was the only Latter-day Saint in his family.

During the breaks that day he noticed my interest and explained the plan of salvation, and he gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon. He read me the promise in Moroni 10:3-5 and told me that if I prayed, I would feel a burning in my heart that would confirm to me that the Book

of Mormon was true. Óscar was a great member missionary, and I believed him.

The next morning, while my mother was doing her shopping at the neighborhood market, I decided to read the Book of Mormon. When I was almost finished with the first page, I had a desire to pray. I went to my room and knelt beside my bed. I had never prayed before, but I remembered I had to ask God in the name of Christ. I asked if the Book of Mormon was true, and I asked God to tell me if He existed. I expected to feel what my classmate had testified I would feel. After some minutes I heard my mother coming home and was afraid she would find me praying, so I stood up and got ready for school.

As I rode to school a real battle of ideas was going on in my head. “Is it true or not? Nothing happened,” I thought. I had a lot of doubts.

I can’t explain why, but no sooner had I stepped from the bus onto the sidewalk at school than the doubts disappeared, and I knew it was true. It was extremely simple.

Óscar came up to speak with me at the classroom door. I said, “I will be a member of your church.” He couldn’t believe it. A friend of mine was listening, and he told my other friends what was happening. Soon they were all around me, asking me why I was going to change

religions. They told me I was crazy. I couldn’t answer their questions and started to cry. They finally went away, and I was left alone with Óscar. Suddenly I had an overwhelming feeling of joy. I had never felt anything like it before. It was the burning my friend had said I would feel, and it came as a confirmation of the decision I had made.

The next day Óscar brought me a button, and we wore them proudly.

Thirty years later I returned to my hometown to speak at a youth fire-side. I had titled my remarks “How to Be a Hero”

and had intended to analyze how Nephi, Abinadi, and Alma can become our heroes. While waiting to speak, however, I saw my friend Óscar and his mother among those in attendance. I remembered that wonderful day 30 years before and instead told the youth about my personal hero, Óscar Italia, a brave young man who had a determination to share the gospel, a young man who changed the course of my life. ■

Jorge Detlefsen is a member of the Villa Belgrano Ward, Córdoba Argentina Sierras Stake.

W*hen I came to class that day, Óscar was wearing a button on his lapel that read, “I Care. What about You?”*



Food Storage for One Year

The First Presidency recommends that Church members “begin their home storage by storing the basic foods that would be required to keep them alive if they

child’s current age when calculating adequate food-storage amounts. Assess your family’s food-storage needs yearly, keeping in mind that nursing infants share in their mother’s portion. Also, young children, as well as pregnant and nursing mothers, need more milk than other family members.

Additional information, including

a food calculation plan, is available at www.providentliving.org.

ONE ADULT PORTION

Grains—400 pounds (181 kg); includes wheat, flour, rice, corn, oatmeal, and pasta
Legumes—60 pounds (27 kg); includes dry beans, split peas, lentils, etc.
Powdered Milk—16 pounds (7 kg)
Cooking Oil—10 quarts (9 l)
Sugar or Honey—60 pounds (27 kg)
Salt—8 pounds (3.6 kg)
Water (2 weeks*)—14 gallons (53 l)

* Suggested for a two-week emergency reserve.

did not have anything else to eat.” After they have a year’s supply of the basics, they may then add other foods they are accustomed to eating regularly. (See First Presidency letter, Jan. 20, 2002.)

Above are suggested portion guidelines for adults and children for one year, unless otherwise indicated.

Because children are still growing, it is helpful to add one year to a

CHILD PORTIONS

Age	Percentage of Adult Portion
3 and under	50 %
4 to 6	70 %
7 to 10	90 %
11 and up	100 %



Bringing the Past into Focus

Have you inherited a box of old photos or a family heirloom? Not sure what to do with them? A lot of historical information can be gleaned from these precious glimpses of the past. Instead of just leaving them in the box or placing them unidentified in an album, try the following helpful ideas:

- *Enlarge photographs.* My parents and grandparents had many small black-and-white photographs that were taken in the early to mid 1900s. I enlarged them all to eight-by-ten inches to better see the historical details in the background.

- *Identify photographs.* It is important to identify not only the people in the photographs but also the location. Perhaps there is even a story behind the event being photographed. Talk to anyone who may have helpful information if you don’t know it firsthand.

- *Photograph ancestors’ personal items.* When my grandmother died, I inherited her silverware. I wondered when she bought it, how much she paid for it, and on what occasions she used it. Luckily my mother was able to answer many of my questions,

and I included that information when I put my photo of the silverware in a heritage album.

Marlene Cameron Thomas, Pellissippi Ward, Knoxville Tennessee Stake

Working through Grief

All of us experience times when we mourn a loss or must reach out to others in need. For some, asking for help or extending sympathy comes easily, but many wonder what to say or do—sometimes doing nothing. As a licensed clinical social worker in the trauma and critical care units at a hospital, I recommend the following guidance for the bereaved and for those helping them through their grief:

Time. Be careful not to rush the grieving process, which varies for each person. If intense grief persists after eight weeks, preventing normal functioning, seek help from your bishop or through counseling or a support group at a local social services agency. Consider waiting up to a year before making big decisions, realizing that unexpected feelings of grief can surface for an undetermined amount of time.

Talk. In the days and months following a loss, the bereaved may want to share feelings with trusted friends or family members, who should listen and not try to fix everything. Offering genuine condolences of “I’m sorry”



Helps for Young Children

Is it a challenge for your young children to sit quietly and listen during family home evening? It was for our family. Our children would frequently run around or interrupt the lesson to share an off-the-

comment or story. So we decided to provide a constructive outlet for their comments and include music whenever possible.

After the opening song and prayer, we invite the children to each take turns sitting in a designated chair and share anything they want without interruption. Sometimes it’s something exciting they did or learned that day. Other times the children share thoughts and feelings. Once they’ve had

a chance to talk, they are more respectful during the lesson.

Our children also seem to enjoy family night more when we include singing practice. We either learn a new hymn or Primary song or practice one we already know. Usually, we choose a seasonal song, one that addresses the lesson topic, or something that the Primary is learning for the sacrament program.

By considering our children’s needs and desires, we are easily able to adapt our home evenings to include the entire family—even the youngest.

Julie Partington, Georgetown Ward, Lexington Kentucky North Stake



or “I care” is helpful. However, avoid trying to explain why something happened or saying, “I know how you must feel,” since explanations or seemingly insincere comments rarely console.

Touch. When people are experiencing a loss, it’s important that they tell someone if they need a hug. Also, for some people, having a pet for company can bring great comfort.

Tears. Cry, alone or with a friend, silent or aloud—whatever helps to release built-up frustration, grief, or

anger. Many men are often reluctant to show their emotions, and some women worry that crying shows a lack of faith. Crying can be very helpful and should not be viewed as a weakness.

Allow yourself and those you comfort the time and understanding needed to work through the grieving process. Remember to combine your efforts with fasting, prayer, and studying the Savior’s teachings “that your burdens may be light” (Alma 33:23).

Michelle Hanks, Riverside Seventh Ward, Murray Utah North Stake

Members Grateful for the Challenge

By Brittany Karford, Church Magazines

In the last few weeks of 2005, two sisters in the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission posed a familiar question to members, a question that at the time would have resonated with Church members anywhere in the world: “*Manao aboana ny famamkiano?*” they asked. “How’s your reading?”

It is likely that, at the time, more people were reading the Book of Mormon than at any other time in the history of the Church.

And many of those in Antananarivo were among

them. They had not only heeded President Gordon B. Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year; they had already finished and were beginning again. The report of this success in Madagascar, shared by Sister Brittny Jorgensen and Sister Carrie Schow, is one of overwhelming thanks for the guidance and direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley.

When the invitation was published in a First Presidency Message in the August issue of the *Ensign* and *Liabona* magazines, President Hinckley

promised in the same article that those who completed the Book of Mormon by the end of the year, regardless of how many times they had read it before, would experience an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord in their homes and in their lives, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.

With the close of 2005, Sisters Jorgensen and Schow related how they saw these promises fulfilled in the lives of those they teach.

“Even though we are one of the farthest missions from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, the members hear and follow the direction of the prophet just the same,” they said. “We have had the opportunity to see the effects of diligence and obedience in our lives and in the lives of investigators and recent converts.”

One recent convert, they said, showed them the last page in her book where she had marked the date she finished: December 31, 2005, 7:05 p.m.

Whether readers finished on New Year’s Eve or before, meeting the challenge has strengthened them with faith and confidence to share its message.

Members all over the world were blessed by accepting President Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon.

Reading the Book of Mormon cover to cover twice, Elder David Walker, a missionary in Barcelona, Spain, found the renewed testimony of the book he had been searching for. “Now when I give my testimony, even on the street, I can feel something inside reaffirming the things I’m saying,” Elder Walker said.

Similar responses have come from Church members all over the world. Brother Aldemir Guanacoma Ave, a member of the Abundancia Ward, Piray Santa Cruz Stake in Bolivia, said that when he read President Hinckley’s counsel to read the Book of Mormon again, he felt something strong, deep in his heart.

“At that very moment I asked my Heavenly Father to give me the courage to do it,” he said. “And that is what happened. I have achieved that goal, and now I can’t believe what happened to me during the time I was reading it. I came to understand what it means to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I am sure that the Book of Mormon is true.”

Such knowledge comes because “this wonderful book, this book which has come out of the dust, to speak to men of our generation, stands as another witness of the divinity and reality of the Redeemer of the world,” President Hinckley said at the First Presidency Christmas Devotional held in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City in December. “I thank each of you, and I know that you have been blessed.” ■





The exhibit about Joseph Smith at the Museum of Church History and Art drew a record number of visitors.

Museum Says Farewell to Record-Breaking Exhibit

The Museum of Church History and Art's exhibit Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration officially closed January 15, 2006, after running for almost a full year in which the museum broke records for the highest number of visitors in a single year with a total of 437,787 visitors.

"We broke all the records because people wanted to come see Joseph," said Mark Staker, the exhibit curator.

Though the total count hasn't been tallied for the number of visitors in January, more than 200 visitors an hour were reported coming in the evening to see the exhibit during its last days.

"It broke the record for day, for hour, and for the full year," said Darrell Jones, a museum volunteer who worked in the exhibit.

"One night we had 1,800 people between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. You couldn't even move."

From their totals thus far, July and December were the busiest months in the exhibit. During July, 64,452 visitors came to the museum from the United States and around the world.

Opened February 4, 2005,

the exhibit celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith through a combination of original artifacts, documents, art, and media presentations that explored the process by which Joseph was prepared, tutored, and refined to fulfill his prophetic calling.

The exhibit contained revelations from the scriptures as they were originally penned, letters, journal entries, a cloak worn by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and fragments of the vest he was wearing at his Martyrdom. All of these artifacts and more illustrate the context in which the gospel was brought forth.

Hoping to have one last glimpse, Linda Johnson, a museum volunteer, pulled back the curtain to see Walter Rane's painting *Desires of the Heart*, only to find that it, too, had already been taken down. The painting portrayed the boy Joseph kneeling in the Sacred Grove.

"We are sad to see it go," Sister Johnson said. The painting had always struck her as particularly moving.

Brother Staker said the most moving feature in the exhibit varied depending on what each individual visitor most related to, but for many, it was to feel they were in the presence of work Joseph did while on earth.

The museum is now moving on to other exhibits, preparing for the Seventh International Art Competition, which will open March 24, 2006.

"They will all be glorious and grand, but this one is gone. It's a loss in a way," Brother Staker said.

At the end of the exhibit there was a place where visitors could share their testimony of Joseph Smith. These testimonies have all been kept and will be placed in a permanent collection in the Church archives so that future generations can read the testimonies members have shared of the Prophet Joseph Smith during his bicentennial celebration.

"We even had many youth who could not travel to Salt Lake City to see the exhibit write their testimonies and send them in so their testimony could be included as part of the permanent record," Brother Staker said. Those testimonies will continue on as mementos of the event. He added that there are two permanent areas in the museum that continue to celebrate the Prophet Joseph Smith: the Presidents of the Church exhibit and the Birth of the Book of Mormon exhibit. ■



The exhibit included medical instruments similar to those that might have been used in the operation on young Joseph's leg.

Need for Missionary Couples Continues to Grow

By Chad Phares, Church Magazines

While tens of thousands of young men and young women are currently serving the Church as full-time missionaries, the Church has a continually growing need for a more experienced group.

There are more than 2,100 mature missionary couples serving in countries around the world, but the need for more exists and the opportunities are plentiful.

“Along with the need for young elders and sisters, there is a growing need for couples in the mission field,” President Gordon B. Hinckley said. “Older married couples are doing a wonderful work in the missions. Many more are needed. . . . With an increasing number of people retiring while they are still possessed of health and vitality, there are many who can fill a tremendous need in the work of the Lord” (“There Must Be Messengers,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 4).

Addressing the subject during the April 2001 general conference, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that there are four Fs that may hinder couples from volunteering to serve: fear, family concerns, finances, and finding the right mission opportunity.

Fear

Many people fear they do not have the scriptural knowledge or language skills

needed to serve a mission. They are afraid they will not be able to do what is required of them.

Elder Hales said whether they know it or not, couples are already prepared. “Your life is your preparation. You have valuable experience. You have raised a family and served in the Church. Just go and be yourselves” (see “Couple Missionaries: A Time to Serve,” *Ensign*, July 2001, 28–31).

Missionary couples do not normally proselytize and are not expected to maintain the same rigorous schedule younger elders and sisters do. While they may teach many

lessons, those often come from general contact with others, not necessarily from tracting.

Family Concerns

By serving a mission, senior couples are able to set examples for their families even while they may be far away.

“We have learned that the impact on families while grandparents are on missions is worth a thousand sermons,” Elder Hales said. “Families are greatly strengthened as they pray for their parents and grandparents and read letters sent home which share their testimonies and the contribution they are making in the mission field.”

The Lord has promised to look after the families of missionaries. After Thomas B. Marsh was called to serve a

mission in 1830, he was concerned about leaving his family.

In section 31 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord told him: “I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones. . . . Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come. . . . Wherefore, your family shall live. . . . Go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them” (D&C 31:2–3, 5–6).

Finances

Couples who decide to serve a mission will not be assigned to serve in a place more expensive than they feel they can afford. Couples are asked to specify how much they can afford to spend per month, and they will not be asked to spend more than that amount.

While serving a mission can be a financial sacrifice, Elder Hales said there is no way to compare the blessings received with the financial sacrifice made. “The blessings of serving with your eternal companion are priceless and can be understood only by those who have experienced them,” he said.

The Church Missionary Department suggests that before a couple applies to serve a mission, they should review finances together and with family to be sure all things are in order.

Finding the Right Opportunity

There are many ways a couple can serve. Opportunities exist in the



More than 2,100 missionary couples are serving worldwide, but even more are needed.

Church Educational System, public affairs, family history, mission offices, temples, humanitarian services, and a number of other places.

"There is an opportunity to use almost any skill or talent with which the Lord has blessed you," Elder Hales said.

While couples' preferences are taken into consideration, the Brethren hope that members would be willing to serve wherever the Lord assigns them under the

direction of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Couples are encouraged to discuss with their bishops or branch presidents their desires to serve missions.

For more information concerning length of missions, mission opportunities, the process of receiving a mission call, finances, and other matters, members are encouraged to visit www.lds.org/csm and visit with their local Church leaders. ■

Hosts Give Warm Welcome to Visiting Dignitaries

By Walter Cooley, Church Magazines

Salt Lake City entertained the world during the Winter Olympics in 2002. Four years later, many of the world's important and influential people continue to visit Church headquarters, and the Church continues to welcome them.

A small team of Church volunteers hosts the kings, prime ministers, ambassadors, consuls general, legislators, religious leaders, senior business executives, and prominent educators visiting Church headquarters.

"Our job is to escort [dignitaries] to Church sites, answer their questions, and make them feel comfortable," said Norman D. Shumway, codirector of VIP hosting.

Brother Shumway and his wife, Luana Shumway, lead two Church-service missionary couples who welcome about 300 dignitaries to Church facilities in Salt Lake City each year. In the past

year, dozens of dignitaries have visited from every continent but Antarctica.

A tour may last one full day. Dignitaries typically tour Temple Square, Welfare Square, the Conference Center, and the Family History Library. They also visit a local seminary or institute class and have lunch at the Lion House or dinner catered in the Ambassador Room on the 10th floor of the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. On weekend visits, dignitaries may also attend the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's *Music and the Spoken Word* performance.

Government- and university-sponsored programs draw dignitaries to Salt Lake City.

One program, funded by the U.S. Department of State, brings future and potential leaders from countries throughout the world to visit Salt Lake City and participate in the International Visitor



While visiting Utah, Salem Al-Sabah, ambassador of Kuwait to the United States, greets the Mormon Tabernacle Choir during a choir rehearsal.

Leadership Program. Utah's capital is one of the program's many cities that give foreigners a firsthand look at America. In the past, some of the program's participants have become chiefs of state or cabinet-level ministers.

Other dignitaries, particularly ambassadors or consuls general, visit Church headquarters by invitation from Brigham Young University. Each year BYU invites 6 to 12 ambassadors to visit the university in Provo, Utah. After the ambassadors speak at BYU and tour its campus, the Church hosts the ambassadors in Salt Lake City.

When appropriate, officials are met by a General Authority. Often the hosting General Authority will have lived in or visited the official's country and will be able to speak of places he has visited or people he has met.

As part of a typical tour, dignitaries may visit the Church's Humanitarian Center. Almost all the visitors express gratitude for humanitarian aid the

Church has donated to their countries. Brother Shumway said that during tours of the facility, some visitors become emotional upon realizing how the aid for their country is obtained. The number of Church volunteers and the Church's distribution system also impress many visitors.

Watching visitors feel the Spirit is what the Church hosts enjoy most.

"You can always tell that people are surprised," Brother Shumway said. "They use words like *incredible, stupendous, and tremendous.*"

Sister missionaries serving on Temple Square lead dignitary tours. But unlike other tours on Temple Square, the tours are not aimed toward proselytizing; instead, they are focused on historical events.

"Our purpose is not to convert them," Brother Shumway said. "As part of Public Affairs our job is to build bridges of friendship and understanding."

However, tours often lead to questions about the Church. Some frequently asked questions are: How do you choose a prophet? What does the prophet say? Why can't we go into the temple? How do you fund the welfare program? How do you get members to volunteer?

Before leaving, all dignitaries receive a copy of *The*

Family: A Proclamation to the World and *The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles* in their language, as well as other items, as appropriate.

Preparing for dignitary visits keeps the hosting couples busy. Before each visit, they review the culture, diets, traditions, religion, and current events of the visiting

dignitaries' country. Showing Church programs and principles to visitors who are not familiar with the Church strengthens the testimonies of the Church hosts.

"When we see the Church through the eyes of others, it verifies to us that the Church's programs are guided by prophets and revelation," Sister Shumway said. ■

work to be customized for a particular area. As part of the worldwide standard plan program, a new consistent model for urban meetinghouses was established. It is a unique multistory design that ranges from two to five stories but still leaves room for diversity in design.

In creating the plan, Church architects carefully evaluated the needs of units of various demographics. The capacity of the chapel, the classrooms, and the Relief Society, Primary, and Young Women rooms were then planned accordingly, taking into account the fact that the size of a Relief Society, Primary, or other organization may be above average for a given congregation.

Standardized Meetinghouses Give a Place for More Members to Meet and Worship

By Nicole Seymour, Church Magazines

In Hong Kong and New York City—cities of skyscrapers—often the only direction to build is up. Looking at both cities' temples, one can see that an innovative approach had to be taken in order to fit the temples into these urban areas. Similarly, where a traditional meetinghouse layout is not practical, members must still be accommodated.

In areas where land is at a premium, a typical meetinghouse layout must be adjusted to fit a smaller plot of land. Both New York City and Hong Kong have recently received new multistory meetinghouses based on the Church's worldwide meetinghouse standard plan program.

Rolling Out A Standard Plan

Whether large or small, multistory or not, regardless of location, meetinghouses throughout the world all have a standard look based on design guidelines set forth by the Church.

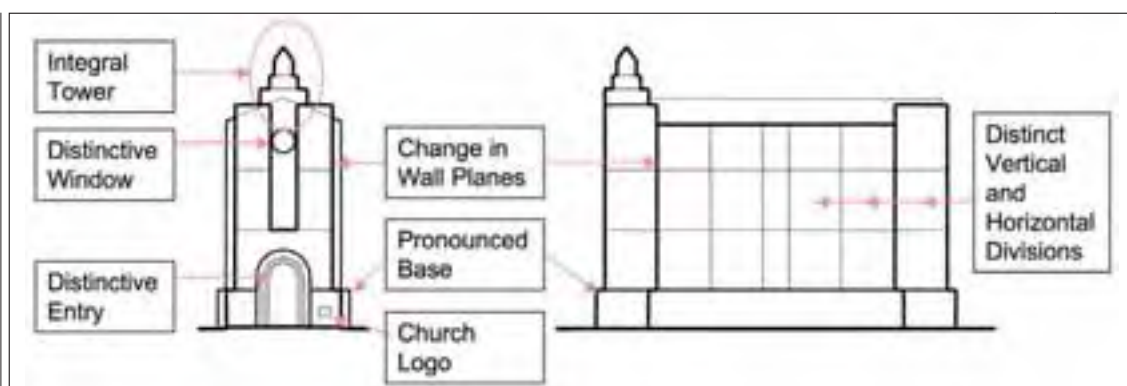
In 2002 the Church released guidelines to areas

throughout the world for a general design of Church meetinghouses. This plan, the worldwide standard plan, provides essential elements and general layouts for

meetinghouses to meet the needs of rural, suburban, and urban areas. The plan establishes a universal look for Church meetinghouses while still allowing for the detail



Multistory buildings based on the worldwide meetinghouse standard plan program may look like this rendering.



Church architects identified elements of famous religious buildings that help identify a structure as religious in nature.

Under the worldwide standard plan program, most building options can be expanded according to growth. If substantial growth is anticipated in an area, a “phased” building may be built. When the need arises to expand the building to accommodate larger or additional wards, the original building can be added to, with each phase being added like another puzzle piece. For example, in phase one a chapel may be “multiuse” with removable seats. Phase two would add a cultural hall and additional classrooms, making the chapel of singular use with fixed pews.

The program establishes a uniform look for the Church and a way for meetinghouses to be built more efficiently and economically.

An example of this efficiency is reflected along the Wasatch Front in Utah, where the Church continues to build a large number of meetinghouses to accommodate growth. Standardization has cut building costs by as much as 20 percent.

“These are sacred tithing funds, and we are trying to

stretch them as far as possible,” says Randy Stenson, a manager in the Architecture and Engineering Division of the Church Physical Facilities Department.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said of the standard meetinghouse plans: “This tremendous building program is phenomenal. I know of nothing equal to it. Our structures are beautiful. . . . We have had long experience in constructing houses of worship, and out of that vast experience we are producing better buildings than have ever previously been constructed in the Church. They combine beauty with great utility. If they look much the same, it is because that is intended. By following tried and tested patterns we save millions of dollars while meeting the needs of our people” (“Condition of the Church,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 4).

Implementing the Plan

Brother Stenson says the worldwide standard plan program provides design guidelines and conceptual floor plans to local architects hired

by the Church to build a meetinghouse in a particular area. These become the framework around which are created plans unique to the area and its needs. The details are decided locally, such as what materials will be used and whether the building will have a natural or mechanical ventilation system.

Wherever a meetinghouse is built, certain considerations must be made in creating the look and feel of the building. An architect must take into account the culture, the surroundings, and the building regulations of a particular area.

Areas often adapt a building’s look to blend in with its surroundings or to establish a certain image. A meetinghouse in Eastern Europe may be entirely different than one in the Australian outback, while both plans follow the same guidelines and principles set forth in the worldwide standard plan program.

Some customization may be necessary based on a particular site. Brother Stenson says location is a very important consideration.

“We would rather choose

the right site and adapt our plan to it than choose the wrong site and use the standard plan,” he says. “The right site is key to exposure to the Church and accessibility by the Saints in getting to that site.”

Meeting Urban Needs

In some urban areas, a multistory building is more practical than a single level meetinghouse. Where an average meetinghouse is built on 2 1/2 to 5 acres (1 to 2 ha), these multistory meetinghouses are approximately 43 feet (13 m) wide and can fit on a plot of land as small as a quarter of an acre (.1 ha). Multistory meetinghouses are composed of the same number of rooms with the same capacity as single-level meetinghouses housing units of comparable sizes, but they are simply built in a vertical fashion. They are being built in cities across the world to provide facilities sufficient to meet the needs of Saints in urban areas.

In New York City, members in Harlem were meeting in a marginal industrial building. A new five-story building was approved, with room to accommodate anticipated growth in the unfinished upper two levels. In Japan, a three-story meetinghouse was built recently. The building’s design allows for the construction of additional floors if the need arises.

A five-story layout may consist of parking on the first level, the chapel on the second, classrooms and

offices on the third and fourth levels, and a cultural center on the fifth level.

For the multistory meetinghouse, architects at Church headquarters knew that they needed to use elements that would identify the building as a church rather than an office building and would provide a consistent, ecclesiastical look for the Church. They studied classics in ecclesiastical architecture, including historic temples and cathedrals. From those buildings, key design elements of a religious nature were established as standard items for the multistory meetinghouse, says Wayne Balle, worldwide meetinghouse client manager for the Architecture and Engineering Division.

Those essential elements

include, for example, a tower and steeple, a distinctive front window, a distinctive entry, a pronounced base, and the Church logo sign. Area architects then determine their approach to the core elements, the structure, the materials, the colors, and other details as appropriate.

Meetinghouses as a Place of Worship

Brother Balle says that regardless of a meetinghouse's style, height, or location, the worldwide standard plan program is meant to help the Church's Physical Facilities Department fulfill its purpose to "serve priesthood leaders by providing them with temples, meetinghouses, and other facilities for their use to help bring souls unto Christ." ■

Call for Articles

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

I have difficulty distinguishing between promptings of the Spirit and my own personal feelings. How can I tell the difference?

Please send your submission (500 words or less) by April 17, 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 "Spiritual Promptings," 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. ■

In the Service of Your God DVD Available in Spanish

The *In the Service of Your God* DVD is now available in Spanish, the first DVD produced by the Church Welfare Services Department to be offered in a language other than English. The translated version, *Al Servicio de Vuestro Dios*, will aid Spanish-speaking congregations worldwide as a resource to help members and leaders learn and apply welfare principles.

Originally produced and distributed to English-speaking areas in 2004, the DVD complements new welfare training lessons available online at www.providentliving.org. Welfare Services reports that the lessons have been used extensively and parallel nicely with training activities for Church leaders.

While the emphasis is on training, the DVD contains material applicable to a broader audience that can be useful for family home evening or youth instruction.

The multifaceted content is divided into three segments. The first uses scripture stories and testimonial vignettes to show how welfare principles should be taught. Clips from this section, such as the dramatization of the parable of the

good Samaritan, illustrate what it means to show true compassion to the less fortunate. The second segment features general conference addresses on welfare topics dating from 1986 to 2004, giving latter-day counsel on issues such as debt, fasting, and welfare activity. While the first and second segments resonate with a wide audience, the third segment is tailored to training committees. It explains the responsibility of the welfare council.

Overall, the three segments include 13 video presentations, a total of nearly four hours of footage.

Though some of these clips have been translated to Spanish individually prior to the release of *Al Servicio de Vuestro Dios*, the DVD debuts four newly translated segments: *On the*



Road to Jericho, Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath, The Good Samaritan, and Administering Welfare through the Relief Society.

The voice-over for the Spanish version was produced in Colombia. Although the translation process is challenging, additional languages are now being considered.

The overriding message of the DVD is stated on the cover: “*Cuando os balláis al servicio de vestros semejantes, sólo estáis al servicio de vuestro Dios*—When ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Copies of the DVD in both Spanish and English are available through Church Distribution, priced at \$4.50 for individual copies or at \$75 for a case of 50. ■

Comment

A Happy Gathering

The article “A Happy Gathering of Sisters” (Jan. 2006) was a real treat. It reminded me of the many reasons why I love Relief Society. I was converted at the age of 14 in the Philippines.



I still remember the classes I attended, the teachers we had, and their beautiful lessons. My insights, values, and convictions came from consistent attendance in those classes. I soon became a teacher myself. I live in California now, away from home, but I still teach the Relief Society class once a month. I feel it is a special calling that the Lord has asked me to fulfill, and I love it.

There is so much learning that takes place in every class and enrichment meeting. They can be fulfilling and enlightening experiences. We are truly blessed to be members of this divine organization. Indeed, it is a “happy gathering of sisters,” and I am so grateful to be a part of it. Deanna June Alcazar, California

Mr. Krueger’s Christmas

One of my most treasured Christmas gifts this past December was the *Ensign* containing the special Christmas DVD *Mr. Krueger’s Christmas*. Every time I watch it, my heart soars with love for our Savior Jesus Christ, and I am overcome with joy and happiness at the Savior’s



sacred birth. The accompanying music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir makes my spirit sing. Please accept my humble thanks.

Ponda Anderson, Arizona

Marital Violence and Abuse

“For Newlyweds and Their Parents” in the January 2006 issue is a wonderful summary of the keys to adjustment for the new couple and their relatives and friends. It is important to note, however, that domestic violence and other serious abuse should not be kept secret under the guise of proper marital confidentiality.



Those concerned should appropriately seek counsel and protection.

Gayle B. Adams, Utah

Stop Walking on Eggshells

I was very much interested in the January *Ensign* article entitled “He Offended Me.”

About 40 years ago I came to a personal decision about offending people. I decided to stop walking on eggshells when talking to people. I have never purposely tried to offend anyone, and it didn’t seem to matter to anyone else if what they said or did offended me. So I determined



to do what the person in this article very apparently did—I started learning how to deal with offenses toward me.

I think a vast majority of Heavenly Father’s children truly do not try to offend anyone on purpose, for we do not really know what will offend another. I think offenses are normally given in innocence. So it is, I think, incumbent upon each of us to give the offending party the benefit of the doubt. If, in fact, the offending party did mean to offend, then I find the offense more easy to just ignore. If I feel terribly offended, I normally say, “That offends me. Why did you do (or say) that?”

I think we teach too often about not offending people when we need to be teaching how not to be so sensitive, to turn the other cheek.

If I were to act upon all the offenses I have received over the years, even by other Church members, I probably wouldn’t be where I am today. I must also say that when a person continues to purposely offend, I simply remove myself from that environment.

Emmett E. McKinney Sr., South Carolina



MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

M A R C H 2 0 0 6

for Isabelle Cluff has instead been richly blessed. Why? Because she stepped outside with her children to share the beauty of God's sunrises and sunsets. See page 24.

For Sisters in Relief Society BELLE S. SPAFFORD

From 1945 to 1974, Belle S. Spafford served as general president of the Relief Society. During those years, sweeping changes occurred in the status of women, and the Relief Society grew from a largely western United States organization to a worldwide sisterhood of nearly a million women in 65 countries. See page 44.

THE SOUND OF RELIEF SOCIETY

"My favorite sound of all [is] the sound of righteous women rejoicing together, loving each other, and celebrating our common sisterhood as daughters of a loving Heavenly Father." See page 54.

The Sound of Relief Society, p. 54



If You're Facing Adversity I NEEDED HIS HELP

"I wondered, 'How can I assist the Lord in this great work if I cannot hear or even walk?' . . . I felt completely alone. I needed a miracle." To find out how the Lord answered Sister Bonnie D. Parkin's prayer, see "Blessed in My Affliction," page 8.

BLESSINGS IN ADVERSITY

Because she suffers from a genetic skin disorder, Jamie Gibson's trial is constant. But she is quick to express gratitude for her blessings and to touch lives with her optimism and faith. See "A Talent for Touching Lives," page 11.

Latter-day Saint Voices

A blood clot settled in Kirsten Diener's brain, causing permanent damage, but Kirsten's love of life and her reaching out to others make her an example to all who know her. See "Kirsten's Challenge," page 66.

Growing in the Gospel AGENCY

Satan sought to destroy our agency in the premortal world, and he continues to undermine it here on earth. Why is this doctrine so important, and why are we not able to progress without it? See page 18.

LIKE A PERFECT PUZZLE

Jack Brown almost gave up his search for the truth. But the missionaries knew they were supposed to talk with him. When they did, all the pieces fell in place. See page 14.

A NEW TEMPLE IN COPENHAGEN



The Church has a long history in Denmark, and a new temple is helping members share their faith and come unto Christ. See page 34.

For Home, Visiting Teachers

Find the monthly messages on pages 2 and 55.

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For Families SACRED RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

"To parents everywhere, my counsel is simple: Get a copy of 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World.' Read it and strive to align your marriage and your family to its inspired, revealed direction from the Lord." To read more of Elder M. Russell Ballard's counsel to parents, see page 26.

WORDS THAT HURT

What is verbal abuse? Do you ever use words that hurt your children? To learn how controlling your tongue can help your children grow up to be secure and confident adults, see page 58.

For Singles WILL I EVER MARRY?

Have you ever wondered how you can hope to marry when you rarely date? Readers offer counsel to those who find themselves in this situation. See page 20.

SUNRISES AND SUNSETS

What could have been a long and lonely widowhood



Why Seek Ye the Living among the Dead? by Jan Astle

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they [Mary Magdalene was among them] came unto the sepulchre, . . . and they found the stone rolled away. . . . Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. . . . They said, . . . Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:1-2, 4-6).



The Copenhagen Denmark Temple has become a focal point of faith in the lives of Danish members like Bishop Tim Jensen and his family of the Frederiksberg Ward (front cover) and young members like David Jansen and Camilla Hornslet (above) of the Søborg Ward.