

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • FEBRUARY 2007

Ensign

A photograph of a temple spire, likely the Salt Lake Temple, with a golden statue on top. The spire is illuminated from below, creating a warm glow. The background is a clear blue sky, and the silhouettes of palm trees are visible on the left and right sides of the frame.

COVER STORY:

The Temple

**The Blessings of
Temples, pp. 12–23**

**The Good
Samaritan and
Salvation, p. 40**



MAY NOT BE COPIED

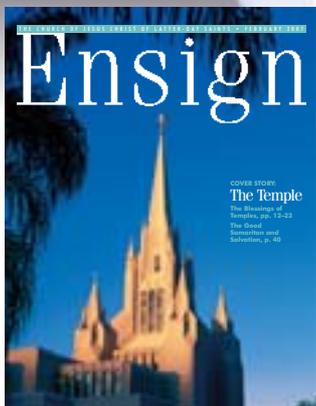
Ice Skating in the Park, by Eric Dowdle

Overlooking the town of Logan, the Logan Utah Temple was dedicated on May 17, 1884. Ninety-five years later, on March 13, 1979, the temple was rededicated after extensive remodeling. This painting shows townspeople skating by moonlight at the turn of the century.



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Our experiences in the temple are more meaningful when we understand how the Lord teaches us.



ON THE COVER
San Diego California Temple
by Jonas Otsuji



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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

The Ensign welcomes submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in the lives of Latter-day Saints, especially articles with personal experiences and gospel insights. This month we invite you to share with us narratives about how your life is influenced by your testimony of the Savior. How do you live because you believe in Christ? Please limit submissions to 500 words, and label them "Testimony."

Send them by March 16 to ensign@ldschurch.org or Ensign Editorial, 50 E. North Temple Street, Room 2420, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA. Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and ward and stake (or branch and district).

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Ensign

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USING THIS ISSUE

Recognizing blessings.

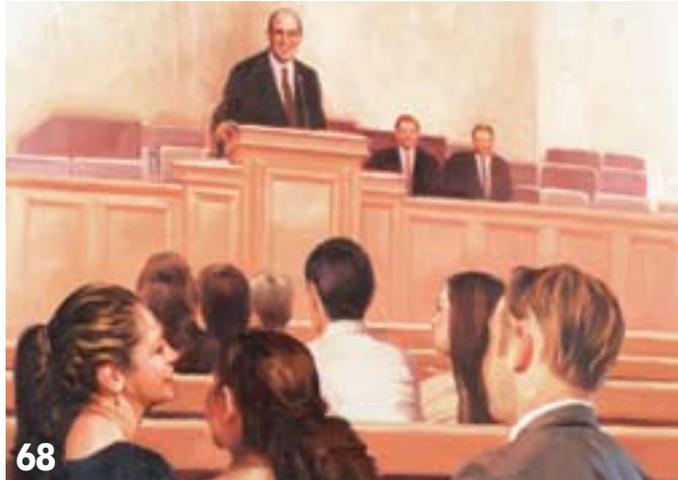
Read “Prayer of Thanks” (p. 63), and then listen to or read the words of “Count Your Blessings” (*Hymns*, no. 241). How do you experience the Lord’s hand in your life? How might you express more gratitude?

Replacing strife with service.

Consider the story of the missionaries in “Turning the Other Cheek” (p. 48). In family home evening, identify situations in which you might ask, “What can I do for you?” Follow up the next week to find out whether the question came up, and discuss how you felt as a result.

Feeling more peace.

Have you felt emotions similar to those described in “Sweet Is the Peace the Temple Brings” (p. 18)? How has attending the temple or preparing to do so strengthened you?



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ELDER H. BRYAN RICHARDS

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COMING IN MARCH

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- Forgiving “all men”—including yourself.
- Preparing prospective missionaries physically and mentally.
- Finding confidence in the Lord’s timeline for you—whether you’re single or married.

72 RANDOM SAMPLER

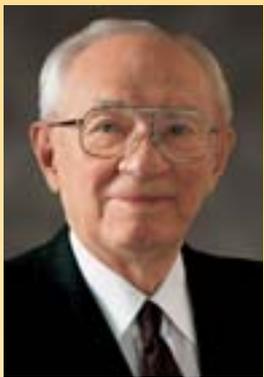
Love-focused family celebrations, family history storybooks, questions at Sunday dinner, and family home evening surprises.

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Inspirational Thoughts



Each of you has the responsibility of standing as a witness of the everlasting truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your responsibility is to open the eyes of others “and to turn them from darkness to light.”

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Testimony

“I want to give you my testimony. I know that God our Eternal Father lives, that He is the great Governor of the universe, and that we are His children, and that somehow He hears and answers the prayers of His children. I want you to know that I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that He left His royal home on high and came down among men—hated and abused of men—and that He went about doing good [see Acts 10:38]. He was crucified out of the hatred of the people; He rose the third day—‘the firstfruits of them that slept’ (1 Corinthians 15:20). I want you to know that the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph Smith and ushered in this marvelous dispensation—the greatest dispensation in the history of the entire world” (member meeting, Seoul, South Korea, July 31, 2005).

His Sacrifice in Our Behalf

“I am so profoundly grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ, for a testimony of the Atonement of the Savior. I believe in it with

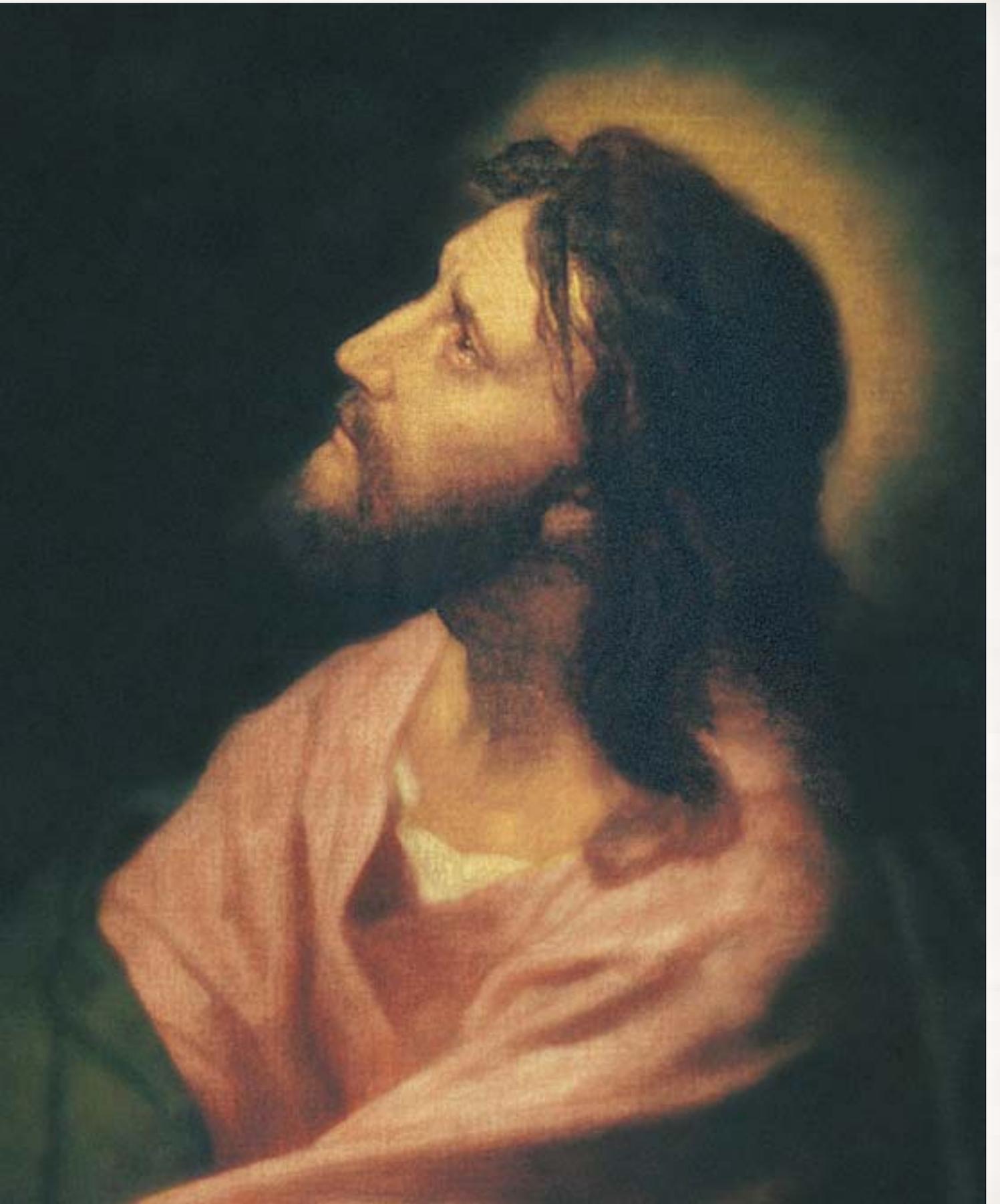
all my heart, and I live for it, and I bear witness of it this day. Of all of the events of human history, none other approaches the Atonement of the Savior in its meaning and in its results. God be thanked for the gift of His precious Son, to whom we all owe thanks for His sacrifice in our behalf” (member meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 22, 2004).

Divine Mission of Jesus Christ

“We are a great family bound together in a unity of love and faith. Our blessing is great, as a people and as individuals. We carry in our hearts a firm and unshakeable conviction of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“He was the great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Creator who, under the direction of His Father, made all things, ‘and without him was not any thing made that was made’ (John 1:3). He was the promised Messiah, who came ‘with healing in his wings’ (Malachi 4:2). He was the worker of miracles, the great healer, the Resurrection and the Life. His is the only name under heaven whereby we must be saved [see Acts 4:12]. . . .

“He came as a gift of His Eternal Father. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his



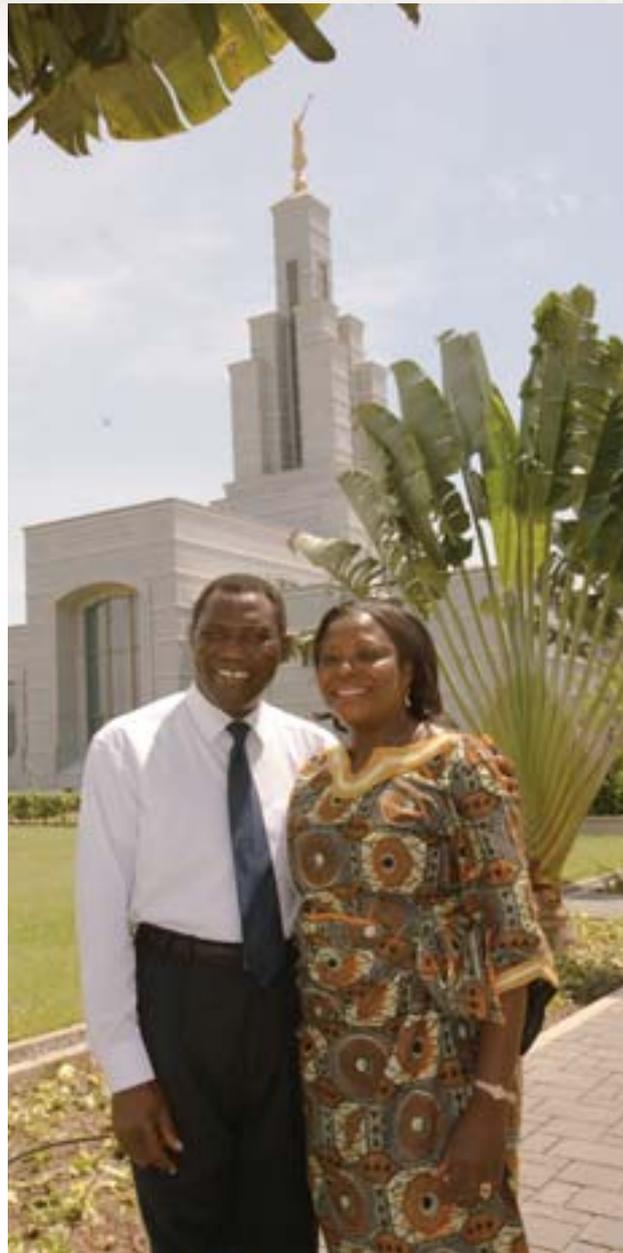
only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16).

"He condescended to leave His throne on high and come to earth to be born in a stable, in a conquered nation. He walked the dusty roads of Palestine, healing the sick, teaching the doctrine, blessing all who would accept Him. . . .

"On Calvary's hill He gave His life for each of us. That is the greatest gift that any of us can ever receive. It is the gift of the Resurrection and eternal life [see D&C 14:7].

"We honor His birth. But without His death that birth would have been but one more birth. It was the Redemption, which He worked out in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross of Calvary, which made His gift immortal, universal, and everlasting. His was a great atonement for the sins of all mankind. He is the Resurrection and the Life, 'the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20). Because of Him all men will be raised from the grave.

"We love Him. We honor Him. We thank Him. We worship Him. He has done for each of us and for all mankind that which none other could have done. God be thanked for the gift of His Beloved Son—our Savior, the Redeemer of the world, the Lamb without blemish who was offered as a sacrifice for all mankind" (missionary devotional, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, Dec. 15, 2002).



W*e live in terribly complex times. Our refuge, our peace, our well-being lie in walking in the way of the Lord.*

a witness of the everlasting truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your responsibility is to open the eyes of others 'and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God'" (member meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, Aug. 4, 2005).

Our Refuge, Our Peace

"We live in terribly complex times. We are confronted by very serious problems. Some of us are faced with sickness, with economic difficulties, with worry and concern over

Stand as a Witness

"I think tonight of the great occasion when Paul describes his experience on the road to Damascus. He saw a light from heaven and heard a voice speaking unto him. And he fell to the ground and said, 'Who art thou, Lord?'

"And Jesus said, 'Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee . . . to make thee a minister and a witness . . . ,

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God' (Acts 26:15–16, 18).

"Now, I believe that same injunction given by the Lord to Paul applies to each of us. 'Rise,' He says, 'and stand upon [your] feet: for I have appeared unto thee . . . to make thee a minister and a witness.'

"Each of you has the responsibility of standing as

many matters. Our refuge, our peace, our well-being lie in walking in the way of the Lord” (Australia stake conference satellite broadcast, Feb. 12, 2005).

Worthy to Attend the Temple

“I challenge every father and husband to see that he is worthy to take his wife and children to the temple. There is nothing in all this world that will substitute for it. It is the greatest blessing that can come to any couple. Don’t put it off. If you need to repent, begin today and qualify to receive a temple recommend” (member meeting, Santiago, Chile, Mar. 11, 2006).

Example of Righteous Living

“We’re coming to be recognized as a good people, a people of kindness, of love and willingness to reach out and help and bless those all around us. Heaven is smiling upon us, and it behooves every one of us to reciprocate with the living of a righteous life and doing the will of the Lord” (stake conference, St. George, Utah, USA, Feb. 27, 2005).

Stand Taller

“We live in a world of filth and immorality and trouble. Rise above it, stand taller, leave the world behind you, and walk as the Lord would have you walk. . . .

We’re coming
to be
recognized
as a good people,
willing to reach out
and help.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REIER; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY; PHOTOGRAPHS POSED BY MODELS

“We have so much to offer. Just think of what we have to offer. Other people do not understand the true nature of God. They are still bound by the old Nicene Creed of the fourth century, which I cannot understand. But we have a perfect knowledge of the nature of God that has come through the First Vision of the Prophet Joseph. He saw God.

THE FIRST VISION, BY GARY KAPP



He heard Him speak. He saw His Son. He heard Him speak, and he could speak to Them. There was no question in his mind about the true nature of God. What a tremendous thing that is. The scripture says, ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3).

“That is a great and marvelous gift, which we have to give to the world—a true understanding of God. We are His children. It does not matter our nationality. It does not matter where we were born. It does not matter whether our hair is light or dark. It does not matter the shape of our eyes. Each of us is a child of God. He is the great God of the universe, but He is also our Father, to whom we may go in prayer. We know, I know, you know, that He hears and answers our prayers. . . . What a wonderful and marvelous thing that is” (member meeting, Vladivostok, Russia, July 31, 2005).

Preach the Gospel

“Go out and preach the work. The first obligation laid upon this Church, even before it was organized, was the obligation to go out and teach the gospel. That obligation has never been lifted. It has been with us ever since” (missionary meeting, Columbia, South Carolina, USA, Nov. 20, 2004).

This Last Dispensation

“How wonderful it is that [God] has smiled with favor in this the last dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness

of times, when He has restored His work with all of its powers, with all of its glory and all of the truth and all of the authority of all previous dispensations in this great and final period of time. . . .

“I know that God our Eternal Father lives and loves us; that Jesus is His Beloved Son, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Lord,

our Friend; that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet; that this Church is true; that it is Their work restored to the earth for our blessing and our happiness” (regional conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, May 4, 2003). ■

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. Have a family member read aloud one or two paragraphs about the Savior from each of the first three sections. Invite family members to share their feelings about the Lord, His sacrifice, and His mission. Also share your own testimony.
2. Share with family members the selections that contain a challenge from President Hinckley. Have family members listen for and identify each challenge given from the prophet. Invite the family to choose one challenge to work on together.
3. Show the family one picture from the article. Ask them what is happening in the picture, why it is important, and what we can learn from it. Read the words from President Hinckley that relate to the picture. Conclude with your testimony.

Tell Me IT ISN'T TRUE

BY ANTHONY ATKINS

Some life-changing days take you by surprise. April 19, 2003, was one such day for me. I was working as a chaplain for the Church of England in South Yorkshire and was happy in my work. I had been a priest for nearly 14 years and imagined I would remain so until I died.

It was the day before Easter Sunday, and since we did not have special services in the chapel of the hospital where I worked, I went to the local parish church. During the service, two Latter-day Saint missionaries entered the building. It was obvious that they were missionaries because of their haircuts, suits, and badges. I knew no one would speak to them after the service, as many Christians in England view Latter-day Saints with a great deal of suspicion. But I wondered why they had come to the service, and I wanted to let them know what true Christianity was like.

I chatted with them for a while, and they told me a little about their beliefs. As the conversation came to an end,



*At first I was resistant to the message
of the restored gospel.
If it was true, I would lose my job,
my house, and many friends.*

Elder Spencer said they would like to visit with me again and teach me more. I agreed, thinking that an hour spent with me was one less hour they could spend with some unfortunate person who might be taken in by their misguided ideas.

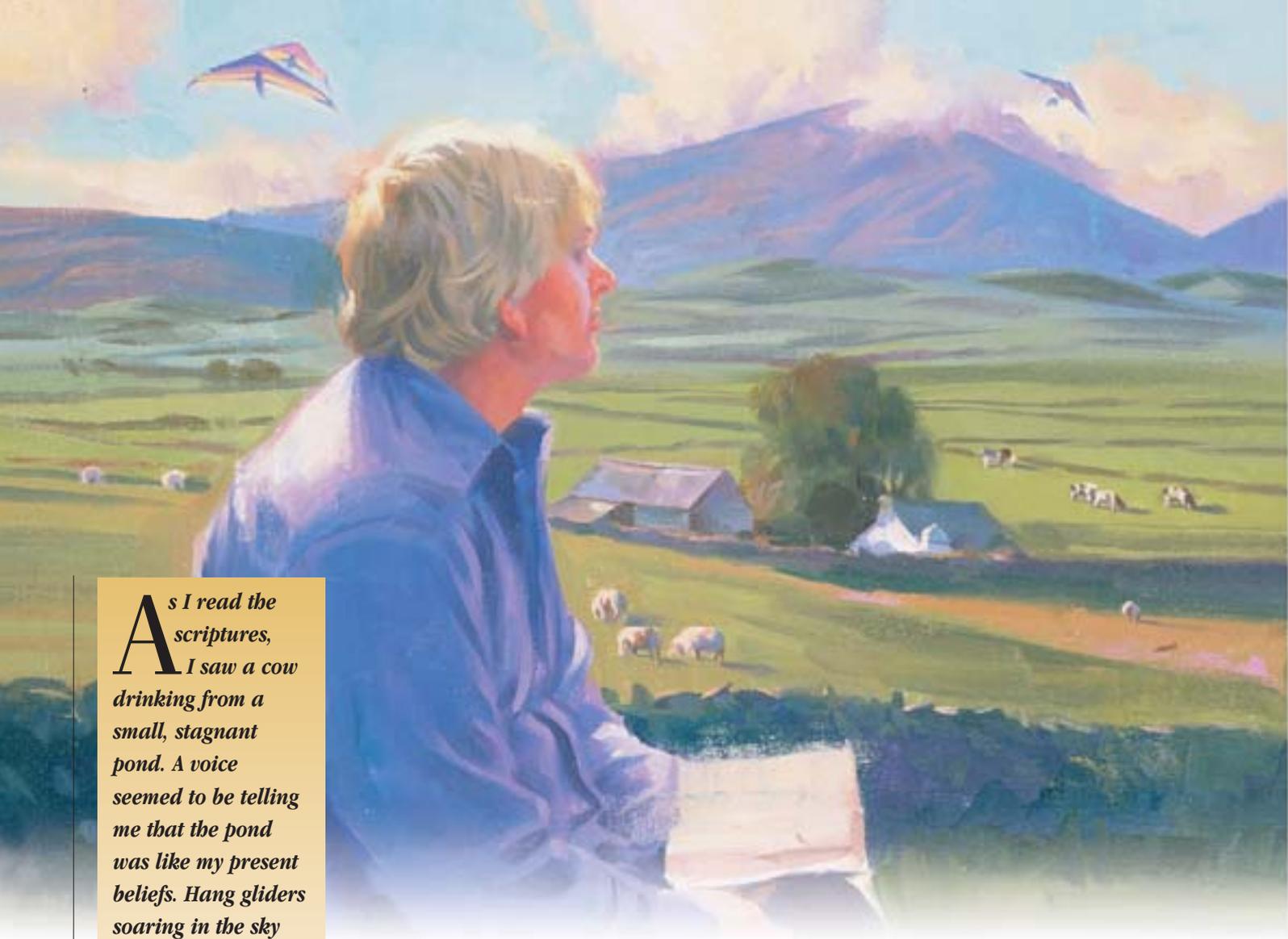
“By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”

The following Thursday, the elders met with me as planned. They taught me about the Savior, and I knew it was the same Jesus I had loved all my life. The phrase “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20) went round in my head. I could not find fault with anything they said.

They gave me a Book of Mormon and asked me to pray about Moroni’s promise (see Moroni 10:4). I

agreed. To my surprise, I also agreed to a return appointment, even though that was not part of my plan.

From that day forward I began to read the Book of Mormon. I felt guilty doing so. For every page I read, I also read a page from the Bible to offset it. As promised, I did



As I read the scriptures, I saw a cow drinking from a small, stagnant pond. A voice seemed to be telling me that the pond was like my present beliefs. Hang gliders soaring in the sky above me seemed to represent an offer from the Lord to go to a higher place.

the Book of Mormon to be a deeply spiritual book that testified of the Savior. Yet I struggled with many of the book's teachings, as well as the belief that there are prophets today and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

Elder Spencer and Elder Stefan continued to teach me. I asked them many questions, and I felt the Spirit as they taught, although I did not recognize it at the time. I enjoyed their visits but thought it was because they were nice people. It was humbling to be taught eternal truths by two 20-year-olds. They had spent three weeks in the Missionary Training Center, and I had spent three years in theological college. But Heavenly Father had prepared Elder Spencer to love the Bible and to use it, along with the Book of Mormon, to teach me. Still, I was resistant to

pray about the book, but I asked Heavenly Father to reveal to me that it wasn't true. I did not receive that answer. I found

the message of the restored gospel. If it was true, I would lose my job, my house, and many friends.

What also made it difficult was that the Savior was already part of my life. It is hard to see the light when one is already in the light. I needed to be sure. I had good days, and I had bad days when I wished I had never met the elders. But even though I did not yet have a testimony of the Restoration, I could not stop reading the Book of Mormon.

As I continued to read the Bible, it supported all the elders had taught me. What they taught challenged many of my beliefs but also confirmed many others and clarified some of my beliefs that I had not fully understood.

"The Lord Is on Thy Side"

This was a challenging time for me. Facing such huge changes was not easy, but I knew Heavenly Father had taken care of me before and would continue to do so. The words of the hymn "Be Still, My Soul" became special to me:

*Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain. . . .*

*Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as he has the past.¹*

I had planned to spend some time at a monastery in France, but due to a train strike I was unable to go. I was disappointed, as I thought that was where I would get the answer to my searching. I decided to have a spiritual day in one of my favorite places in the countryside. After lunch I was driving and listening to a general conference talk by President Gordon B. Hinckley called “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith.” It ends with an invitation to those willing to listen to the message of the Church: “To these we say in a spirit of love, bring with you all that you have of good and truth which you have received from whatever source, and come and let us see if we may add to it.”² At this point my heart began to pound, and I felt ill.

I parked the car and stood outside till the feelings subsided. I felt impelled to walk down a country lane. There was nowhere to sit other than on a gatepost, but I knew that was where I should stay. I opened my Bible and there saw the account of the Apostasy in Thessalonians (see 2 Thessalonians 2). I tried again and got Peter’s account (see 2 Peter 2). This was not what I wanted, so I read from the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon.

As I read, I noticed a small, algae-covered pond across the road. A cow came and began to drink from it. It seemed as though an inner voice were telling me that the pond was like my present beliefs, which gave me sustenance, but they were not the springs of living water the Savior was now offering me. I looked up and saw

hang gliders soaring in the sky above me, and I sensed that the Lord was offering to take me to a higher place.

I began to suspect that the Church was indeed true. Two days after this experience in the country, I attended my first baptism. The Spirit was so strong that it was the greatest spiritual experience I had ever had. My tears flowed. I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to leave, but I had given a ride to the elders, so I had to stay.

Even after all this, the thought of leaving my job and my home was almost too much to contemplate. I visited a ward where I was introduced to a friend who helped me explore possible careers. After much prayer and reflection I eventually settled on seeking training as a social worker, and I obtained a place at a university.

A New Life

Finally I ended my service as a priest and went off into the unknown. I moved into a new flat and started at the university. I entered the waters of baptism and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was the greatest day of my life. Words can never describe what an amazing occasion it was.

I have since been ordained to the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods and have received my endowment in the temple.

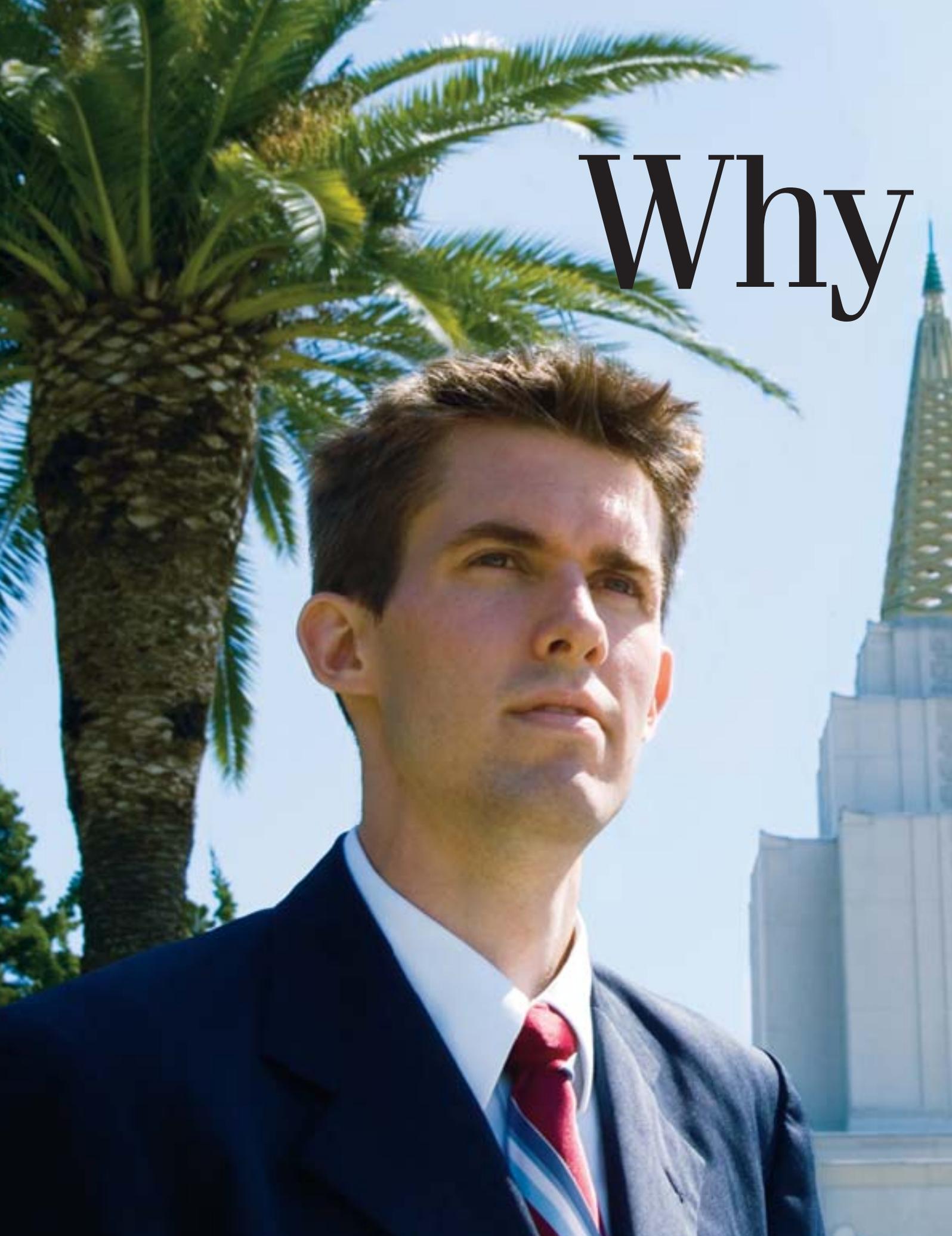
I know the Lord’s Church has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that it has the true priesthood authority. I love the missionaries of the Church for the work they do. I am eternally grateful for all those who taught me and who did not give up on me, knowing what was in my heart even when I did not know myself. ■

NOTES

1. *Hymns*, no. 124.
2. *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.



I know the Lord’s Church has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that it has the true priesthood authority.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie, is looking upwards and to the right. The background features a large palm tree on the left and a skyscraper with a pointed top on the right, all under a clear blue sky.

Why

Symbols?

The Lord uses symbols to teach eternal truths in the temple. Here's why.

Temple worship offers the opportunity to learn in ways we are not used to. “Each temple is a house of learning,” explains Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “There we are taught in the Master’s way. His way differs from modes of others. His way is ancient and rich with symbolism. We can learn much by pondering the reality for which each symbol stands.”¹

A gospel symbol can be an object, event, action, or teaching that represents a spiritual truth. The bread and water of the sacrament, for example, represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Symbolism as a mode of teaching is as ancient as Adam, who was taught by an angel that the firstlings of his flocks, which he was commanded to sacrifice, were “a similitude of the sacrifice of the

Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7). Just as Adam needed help in understanding the symbolism of sacrifice, we may need some guidance in understanding the “ancient and rich” method the Lord uses to teach us the highest priesthood ordinances of the gospel.

The following information from the scriptures, Church leaders, and Latter-day Saint scholars can help us better understand the rich symbolism found in the temple.

Why Does the Lord Use Symbolism?

“Behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth” (Moses 6:63).

“Symbols are the universal tongue. . . . Symbols bring color and strength to language, while deepening and enriching our understandings.



Symbolism as a mode of teaching is as ancient as the Lord's instructions to Adam and Eve.

From the clothing worn in the temple to the decor to the ceremonies performed there, symbolism plays a central role in teaching us about our true nature and the divine plan God has for our exaltation.

Symbols enable us to give conceptual form to ideas and emotions that may otherwise defy the power of words. They take us beyond words and grant us eloquence in the expression of feelings. Symbolic language conceals certain doctrinal truths from the wicked and thereby protects sacred things from possible ridicule. At the same time, symbols reveal truth to the spiritually alert.

“ . . . Symbols are the language in which all gospel covenants and all ordinances of salvation have been revealed. From the time we are immersed in the waters of baptism to the time we kneel at the altar of the temple with

the companion of our choice in the ordinance of eternal marriage, every covenant we make will be written in the language of symbolism.”²

“Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer. Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews our memory of the Savior’s broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever.”³



What Are Some Symbols Used in the Temple?

“In the temple all are dressed alike in white. White is the symbol of purity. No unclean person has the right to enter God’s house. Besides, the uniform dress symbolizes that before God our Father in heaven all men are equal. The beggar and the banker, the learned and the unlearned, the prince and the pauper sit side by side in the temple and are of equal importance if they live righteously before the Lord God.”⁴

“There is [a] . . . special under-clothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of The

LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH OF VERNAL UTAH TEMPLE BAPTISTRY BY TAMARA RATTIETA; PHOTOGRAPHS OF NAUVOO ILLINOIS TEMPLE CREATION ROOM, GARDEN ROOM, WORLD ROOM, AND CELESTIAL ROOM BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN, © IRI, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH OF COUPLE BY CHRISTINA SMITH; POSED BY MODELS; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS OF LUXOR TEMPLE COMPLEX, EGYPT (LEFT), AND KARNAK TEMPLE COMPLEX, EGYPT (RIGHT), BY RICHARD CLEAVE

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment. This garment, worn day and night, serves three important purposes: it is a reminder of the sacred covenants made with the Lord in His holy house, a protective covering for the body, and a symbol of the modesty of dress and living that should characterize the lives of all the humble followers of Christ.”⁵

Why Is Some of the Symbolism Connected with the Temple Found Elsewhere in the World?

“Let me suggest that the reason why temple building and temple worship have been found in every age, on every hand, and among every people, is because the gospel in its fullness was revealed to Adam, and that all religions and religious practices are therefore derived from the remnants of the truth given to Adam and transmitted by him to the patriarchs. The ordinances of the temple in so far as then necessary, were given, no doubt, in those early days, and, very naturally, corruptions of them have been handed down the ages. Those who understand the eternal nature of the gospel—planned before the foundations of the earth—understand clearly why all history seems to revolve about the building and use of temples.”⁶

“The same comparative studies that discovered the common pattern in all ancient religions—a phenomenon now designated as ‘patternism’—have also demonstrated the processes of *diffusion* by which that pattern was spread throughout the world—and in the process torn to shreds, of which recognizable remnants may be found in almost any land and time. . . .

“Did Joseph Smith reinvent the temple by putting all the fragments—Jewish, Orthodox, Masonic, Gnostic, Hindu, Egyptian, and so forth—together again? No, that is not how it is done. Very few of the fragments were available in his

day, and the job of putting them together was begun, as we have seen, only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even when they are available, those poor fragments do not come together of themselves to make a whole; to this day the scholars who collect them do not know what to make of them. The temple is not to be derived from them, but the other way around. . . . That anything of such fulness, consistency, ingenuity, and perfection could have been brought forth at a single time and place—overnight, as it were—is quite adequate proof of a special dispensation.”⁷

How Do We Learn What God Would Have Us Learn in His Holy House?

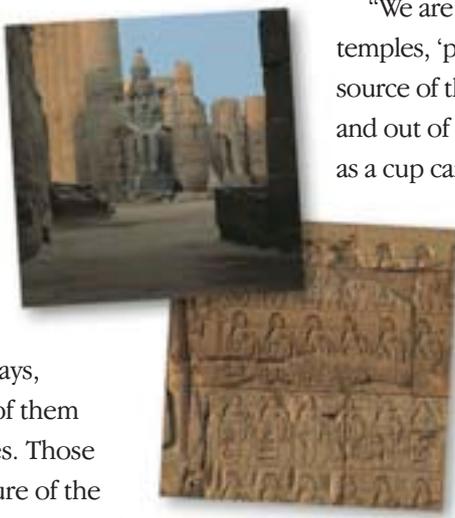
“We are to receive in temples, through temples, from temples, ‘power from on high’ (D&C 95:8). Christ is the source of that power. The temple is His. Every symbol in and out of that sacred structure points toward Him and, as a cup carries water, transmits the Holy Spirit.”⁸

“No man or woman can come out of the temple endowed as he should be, unless he has seen, beyond the symbol, the mighty realities for which the symbols stand. . . .

“To the man or woman who goes through the temple, with open eyes, heeding the symbols and the covenants, and making a steady, continuous effort to understand the full meaning, God speaks His word, and revelations

come. The endowment is so richly symbolic that only a fool would attempt to describe it; it is so packed full of revelations to those who exercise their strength to seek and see, that no human words can explain or make clear the possibilities that reside in temple service. The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation; and to those who seek most vigorously, with pure hearts, will the revelation be greatest.”⁹

“Balance the interpretation of symbolism with other revelation and gospel knowledge. . . . Fit the interpretation of any symbol into the overall scheme of gospel knowledge. No matter how clever, or how logical, or how ingenious our interpretation of a particular symbol may be,





Before we enter the temple, we must be prepared spiritually to appreciate and understand the education we will receive. Consequently, a process exists by which Church leaders can assess our worthiness and readiness to participate.

if it contradicts what is revealed in other places, we can assume it is wrong.”¹⁰

“If you will go to the temple and remember that the teaching is symbolic, you will never go in the proper spirit without coming away with your vision extended, feeling a little more exalted, with your knowledge increased as to things that are spiritual. The teaching plan is superb. It is inspired. The Lord Himself, the Master Teacher, taught His disciples constantly in parables—a verbal way to represent symbolically things that might otherwise be difficult to understand.”¹¹

“Temple attendance is not a guarantee that we will become better, but it provides a powerful and pointed invitation to become better. The ways of the world receive constant reinforcement—should not the ways of heaven?

“Temple work is not an escape from the world but a reinforcing of our need to better the world while preparing ourselves for another and far better world. Thus, being in the Lord’s house can help us to be different from the world in order to make more difference in the world. . . .

“Teachings in the temples take us beyond present time and space. We learn of special things therein, sometimes ‘things too wonderful for [us]’ (Job 42:3) which require repeated attendance and prayer before meanings emerge.”¹²

Why Do People Say the Temple Ceremony Is Sacred, Not Secret?

“In one of the early revelations in this dispensation, it was made known by the Lord that it was His will that a holy House should be built with the promise that His

glory would rest upon it and His presence would be here and He would come into it, and all the pure in heart that should come into it should see God on one condition. That condition was that they ‘do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled.’ ([D&C] 97:15–16.) Obedient to that instruction these holy temples are carefully safeguarded, not because of the necessity of secrecy but because of the sacredness of the work performed therein, by forbidding those who by the measure of the Lord’s standards may be considered ‘unclean’ in that they do not keep His commandments.”¹³

“The ordinances [of the temple] are not deep, dark secrets to be kept as such from the world. . . . The basic idea of the ordinances from Moses back to Adam is separation from the world. The endowment represents steps by which one disengages from a corrupt, secular, imprisoned environment. . . .

“. . . The important thing is that *I* do not reveal these things; they must remain sacred to *me*. I must preserve a zone of sanctity which cannot be violated. . . . For my covenants are all between me and my Heavenly Father.”¹⁴

“We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. But it was never intended that knowledge of these temple ceremonies would be limited to a select few who would be obliged to ensure that others never learn of them. It is quite the opposite, in fact. With great effort we urge every soul to qualify and prepare for the temple experience. . . .

“The ordinances and ceremonies of the temple are simple. They are beautiful. They

are sacred. They are kept confidential lest they be given to those who are unprepared. Curiosity is not a preparation. Deep interest itself is not a preparation. Preparation for the ordinances includes preliminary steps: faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, worthiness, a maturity and dignity worthy of one who comes invited as a guest into the house of the Lord.”¹⁵ ■

NOTES

1. “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” *Liabona*, July 2001, 38; *Ensign*, May 2001, 33.
2. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (1990), 1.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35.
4. John A. Widtsoe, “Looking toward the Temple,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1962, 710.
5. Carlos E. Asay, “The Temple Garment: ‘An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,’” *Liabona*, Sept. 1999, 35; *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 20.
6. John A. Widtsoe, “Symbolism in the Temples,” in Archibald F. Bennett, ed., *Saviors on Mount Zion* (1950), 163.
7. Hugh Nibley, “What Is a Temple,” in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 4—Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (1987), 366–67, 383.
8. Truman G. Madsen, *The Radiant Life* (1994), 118.
9. John A. Widtsoe, “Symbolism in the Temples,” 168.
10. Gerald N. Lund, “Understanding Scriptural Symbols,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, 24.
11. Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” *Tambuli*, June 1992, 18; *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 34.
12. Neal A. Maxwell, “*Not My Will, But Thine*” (1988), 133–34.
13. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (1973), 137.
14. Hugh Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Vol. 12—Ancient History, Temple and Cosmos*, Don E. Norton, ed. (1992), 61, 64.
15. Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” *Tambuli*, June 1992, 17; *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 32.

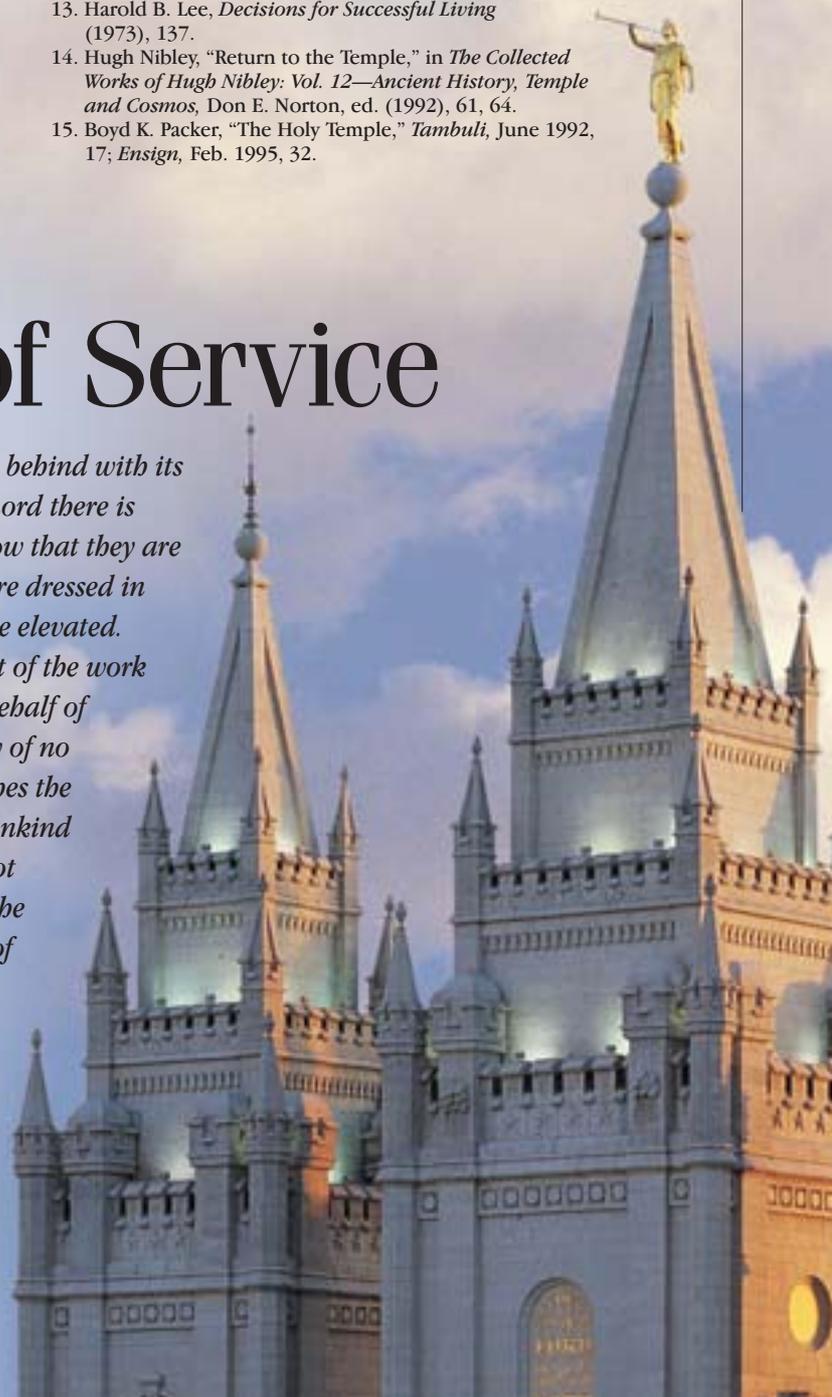
A Sanctuary of Service



“Inside the temple . . . the world is left behind with its clamor and rush. In the house of the Lord there is tranquillity. Those who serve here know that they are dealing with matters of eternity. All are dressed in white. Speech is subdued. Thoughts are elevated.”

“This is a sanctuary of service. Most of the work done in this sacred house is performed vicariously in behalf of those who have passed beyond the veil of death. I know of no other work to compare with it. It more nearly approaches the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God in behalf of all mankind than any other work of which I am aware. Thanks is not expected from those who in the world beyond become the beneficiaries of this consecrated service. It is a service of the living in behalf of the dead. It is a service which is of the very essence of selflessness.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Salt Lake Temple,” *Tambuli*, Nov. 1993, 5–6; *Ensign*, Mar. 1993, 5–6.





Sweet Is the Peace the Temple Brings

Members share the peace they have found through temple attendance.

The Joy of Temple Marriage

Since childhood, we both have had a desire to be married in the temple. We had prepared and kept ourselves worthy to enter into a holy temple one day. When we decided to get married, a great blessing came: another couple made it possible for us to go to the Hong Kong China Temple, so far away from our home in Indonesia, and we were sealed there on February 17, 2004.

We felt a great joy as we knelt before the altar and had a surety that our love was eternal and that we would be a couple for time and eternity. We are grateful for experiencing the blessings of the temple. We are grateful for being able to be baptized in behalf of our ancestors and making it so that they can receive the endowment and be sealed as eternal families. There is no other happiness that can replace the joy of performing temple ordinances.

Edi and Lisa Rochadi, Indonesia

Far from the World

When I lived in Argentina, I traveled twice to the Buenos Aires temple—once to receive my own endowment and once to perform ordinances for the dead. Words cannot express what I feel when I am in the temple. What I can tell you is how far away from the world I feel there and how happy it makes me to think about going back to the temple. I can testify of the companionship, love, and comfort of the Holy Ghost. I know for a surety of the love our Heavenly Father has shown for me and my brothers and sisters by giving us the gospel and the prophets.

Norma Rodríguez, Israel

Breathtaking Blessings

While I lived with my husband and two little boys in San Diego, California, I had the marvelous opportunity to visit the temple weekly. One time, as I was participating in temple ordinances on behalf of a deceased sister, I felt as if I were experiencing the

ordinances for the first time. I sat with eyes wide open, soaking up everything I learned. My soul truly thirsted for everything being taught. It was breathtaking to think about the blessings promised to this sister and her posterity through the temple ordinance. The feelings of joy and gratitude that I had are almost impossible to describe. I wept openly. I wanted to shout for joy and hug everyone I saw!

As I returned to the dressing room, I hugged a surprised temple worker and told her of my feelings. I was surprised how literally I had been an instrument in bringing eternal truths to someone who had passed on.

Ritva Hokkanen, Finland

Miracles in the Temple

In August 2002, President Gordon B. Hinckley unexpectedly came to New York City and spoke to us, saying, “Today we want to announce to you that in two years you will have your temple. I hope



to be here to see it.” Time went by, and our expectations grew. Finally, it was announced that the open house would begin in early May 2004. I put my name on every volunteer list I could find, and because I had accumulated vacation days at work, I was able to work for 11 uninterrupted days in the temple.

As a tour guide, I felt the Spirit on each tour, and the best reward was hearing visitors’ comments. I remember one stout man, who walked with a cane. After the tour, with eyes shining, he said, “I never thought I would find a place that emanated as much peace as I have felt here today.” The temple open house brought many miracles like this one. It moved many hearts and caused many to reflect and feel the very special spirit that reigns there.

One day I met a young lady from Chile working as an usher during the open house. She was very excited and offered to help wherever she was needed. She told me she was in the United States sightseeing for only a few weeks, and she would soon be returning to her country. I asked her how long she had been a member of the Church and was astonished when she told me she hadn’t been baptized yet.

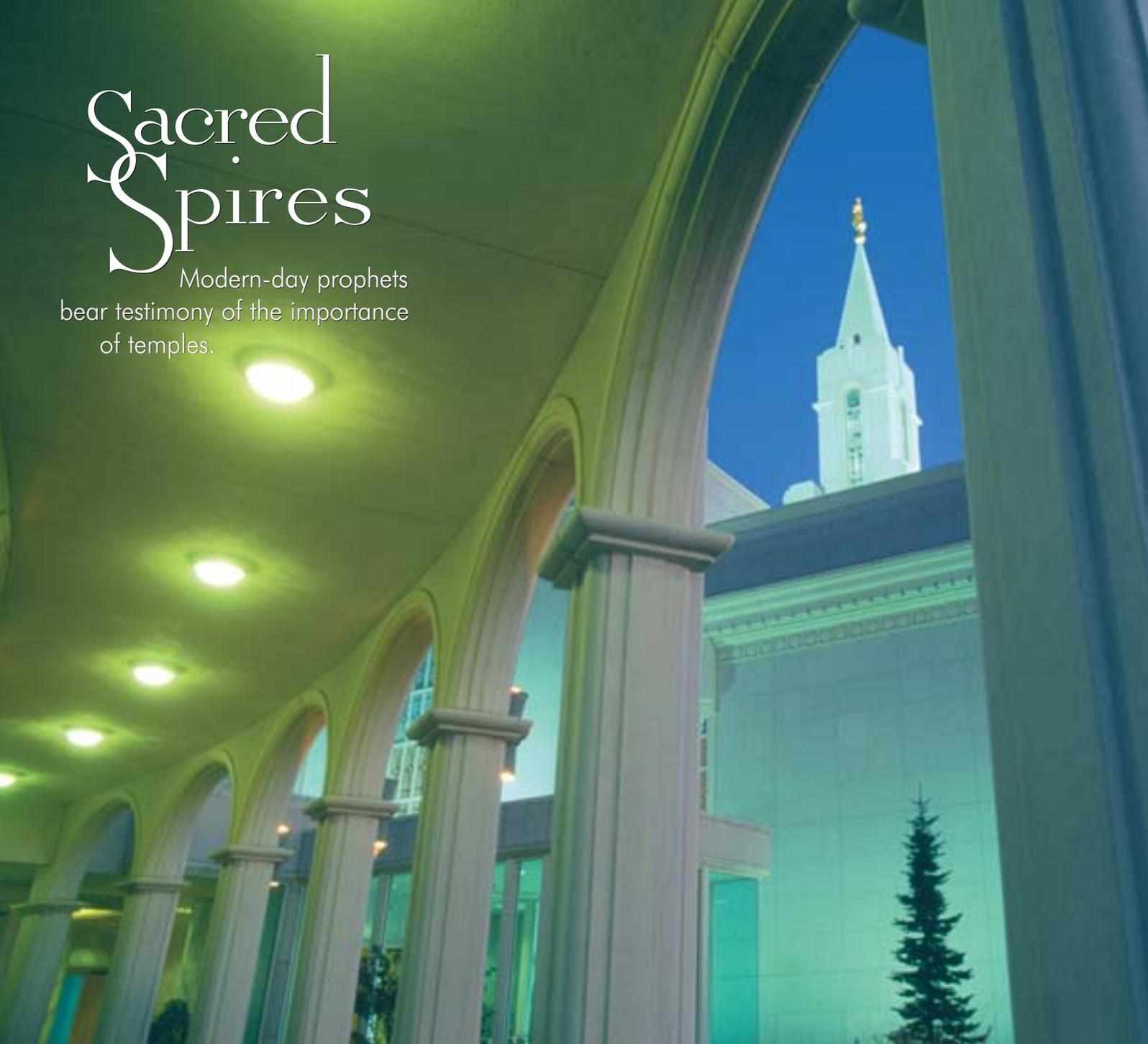
She must have noticed I was speechless, so she told me her story. On the second day of her vacation, she had seen an ad in the newspaper announcing the temple open house. She was curious and decided to visit. During the tour she felt so moved by the beauty and peace she felt that she could not hold back her tears. When the tour was over, she asked

the missionaries to tell her more about the Church. After being taught, she made the decision to be baptized. She had come here on vacation, and the Lord prepared a way for her to hear the gospel. And even though she wasn’t a member yet, she had asked to work as an usher for the open house!

Without a doubt, miracles go on in the temple, every time someone receives the endowment or is baptized on behalf of a deceased ancestor or a loving young couple are sealed for time and eternity. And even before the Manhattan New York Temple was dedicated, the Spirit dwelt there. In the words of President Hinckley: “This is a place of light, a place of peace, a place of love, where we deal with the things of eternity.”
Carlos González, Mexico ■

Sacred Spires

Modern-day prophets
bear testimony of the importance
of temples.



Bountiful Utah Temple by Jonas Otsuji



Salt Lake Temple by Alan Yorgason



St. George Utah Temple by Jonas Otsuji



COURTESY COMMUNITY OF CHRIST ARCHIVES

Joseph Smith (1805–44)



“The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances

of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose” (*History of the Church*, 5:423).

Brigham Young (1801–77)



“We are trying to save the living and the dead. The living can have their choice, the dead have not.

Millions of them died without the Gospel, without the Priesthood, and without the opportunities that we enjoy. We shall go forth in the name of Israel’s God and attend to the ordinances for them. . . . We will build temples and officiate therein for those . . . who would have received the truth if they had had the opportunity” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 404).

John Taylor (1808–87)



“We have now finished this temple, and some people inquire, what is it for? For many things: that our sealings and

ordinances may be performed in a manner that will be acceptable before God and the holy angels; that whatsoever is bound on the earth according to the laws of the eternal priesthood shall be bound in the heavens; that there may be a connecting link between the living and the dead” (in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Latter-day Prophets Speak* [1948], 134).

Wilford Woodruff (1807–98)



“We have blessings which have never been given to any other generation since the days of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. . . .

You hold the keys of the destiny of your fathers, your mothers, your progenitors, from generation to generation; you hold the keys of their salvation. God has put that power into your hands” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1897, 47).

Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901)



“We feel when we go into these temples that we enjoy the Spirit of the Lord more fully than in any other place.

They are the Lord’s buildings, and His most important work is carried on within their walls” (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 96).

Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918)



“We hope to see the day when we shall have temples built in the various parts of the land where they are needed for the

convenience of the people: for we realize that one of the greatest responsibilities that rest upon the people of God today is that . . . they may be joined together fitly in the bond of the New and Everlasting covenant from generation to generation” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1902, 3).

Heber J. Grant (1856–1945)



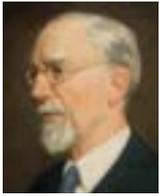
“One of the great works in this Gospel of salvation, devolving upon us as Saints, is to labor in the temples

of God for the salvation of our dead” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 87).

Nuku’alofa
Tonga Temple
by William
Floyd Holdman



George Albert Smith (1870–1951)



“Each of [the temples] has been built to one great eternal purpose: to serve as a House of the Lord, to provide a

place sacred and suitable for the performing of holy ordinances that bind on earth as in heaven—ordinances for the dead and for the living that assure those who receive them and who are faithful to their covenants, the possession and association of their families, worlds without end, and exaltation with them in the celestial kingdom of our Father” (“The Tenth Temple,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1945, 561).

David O. McKay (1873–1970)



“Temples are built for the performance of sacred ordinances—

not secret, but sacred. A temple is not a public house of worship. It is erected for special purposes” (*The Teachings of David O. McKay*, comp. Mary Jane Woodger [2004], 180).

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972)



“Marriage for eternity can be performed only in the temples. It cannot be performed anywhere else. Authority by

which such marriages are solemnized must be vested in the one who performs the ordinances, by virtue of appointment by the one who holds the keys” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:73–74).

Harold B. Lee (1899–1973)



“In these temples, as in all others, Saints receive sacred ordinances and additional gifts and blessings of the Lord Jesus

Christ. Young people go for baptismal work for the dead, and their parents go to perform the essential endowment work. Attendance at the temple can always be a great spiritual experience” (“Your Light to Be a Standard unto the Nations,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 4).

Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985)



“Having in mind the importance of temple work, wouldn’t it be wonderful if every Latter-day Saint home had in the bedroom

of each boy and each girl, or on the mantle of the living room, a fairly good-sized picture of a temple which would help them recall, frequently, the purpose of these beautiful edifices” (“The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 7).

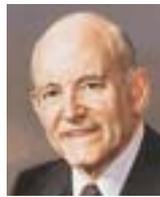
Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994)



“I hope you would teach this truth about the temple to your children and your grandchildren. Go to the

temple—our Father’s house—to receive the blessings of your fathers that you may be entitled to the highest blessings of the priesthood” (“What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 10).

Howard W. Hunter (1907–95)



“Truly, the Lord desires that His people be a temple-motivated people. It would be the deepest desire

of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it” (“The Great Symbol of Our Membership,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 5).

Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–)

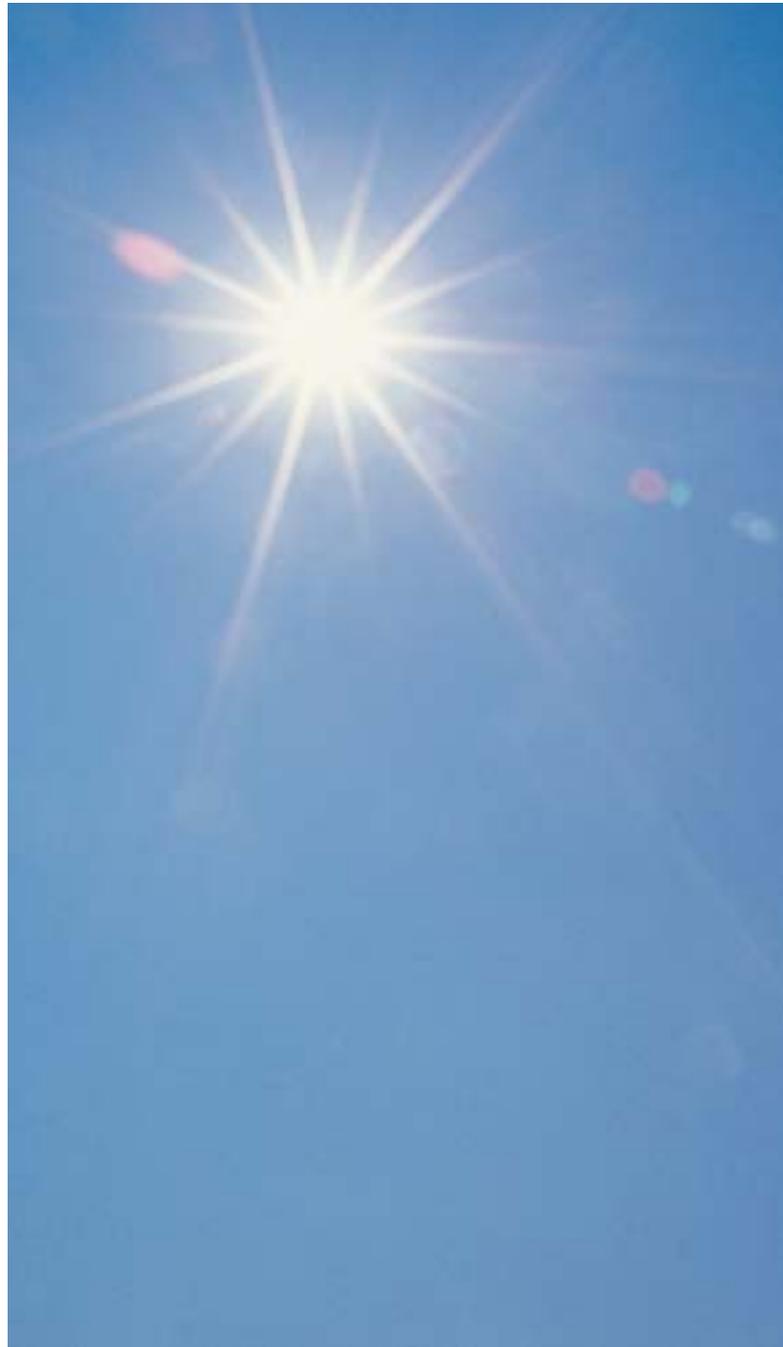


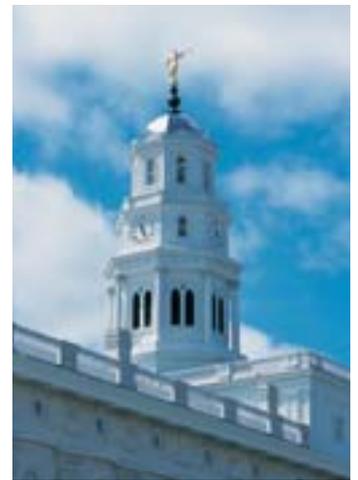
“A temple is a house of God, and he is Everlasting. It was he who required that special houses be built in

which to administer these eternal ordinances. There is no adequate substitute on all the face of the earth” (“Temples and Temple Work,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 4).



Idaho Falls Idaho Temple by Steve Tregeagle





Nauvoo Illinois Temple
by Welden C. Andersen

Above left: Mount Timpanogos Utah
Temple by Jonas Otsuji

Above right: Provo Utah Temple
by Jonas Otsuji

Left: Washington D.C. Temple
by Jonas Otsuji

It was a cold, sunny winter day in war-devastated Germany. Though it was nearly 60 years ago, I remember it like it was yesterday.

My mother, grandmother, brother, and I worried about the welfare of my father, who was in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp. Other families in our small Latter-day Saint branch also prayed for their missing and imprisoned men. Widespread poverty and the resultant lack of provisions compelled our family to carefully maintain a garden and raise animals for our use. Despite our best efforts at self-reliance, our economic situation at war's end left us in need of basic food supplies. I didn't know until that winter day that Church members halfway across the world would help answer our fervent prayers.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, came to Europe to counsel and encourage the Saints and to give us donations of food. Our brothers and sisters in the United States had reached out to us in heartfelt kindness, despite the tragedies of World War II.

When we received food authorization papers from our branch president, I could hardly believe it. I eagerly agreed to help Mother push our two-wheeled handcart to the branch president's home, where the food shipment awaited us.

The seven-mile journey on foot was a small price to pay for the load of canned and bagged goods we received for our household of four. I can still vividly recall the Welfare Square logo on the cans and the pictures indicating the contents—peaches, pears, and applesauce. There were also sacks of cracked wheat, flour, sugar, and many other items, including something called pumpkin pie filling. We marveled at the abundance of goods as we tried to pronounce the English words on the labels.

With our cart loaded, we embarked on our return journey, soon to discover we would need the Lord's help to safely arrive home with our supplies. In the late afternoon hours, the weather had turned even colder, and the cobblestone road had become very slick. Part of the trek involved going under a railroad overpass. Going down was manageable, but when we tried to ascend the slick slope with our

cart, we struggled. I exerted all my nine-year-old strength, and we somehow reached the top—only to be confronted by a gruff policeman. The policeman, wearing a dark overcoat and a helmet with the police insignia, seemed to have appeared from nowhere.

“What's in the cart?” he demanded. Mother pulled back the blankets covering the wagon to reveal our precious load. He immediately wanted to know how we had obtained such an array of supplies, for none of them were to be found anywhere in the area. Mother explained that our church had sent the food and that she had authorization papers at home to prove it.

Unfamiliar with our religion and suspicious of how we had obtained the food, he insisted that we bring the wagon and accompany him to police headquarters. I started to cry. I knew they were going to take our food away. But we did as we were told. Mother received permission to return home for the papers, and I went with her,

WHAT'S IN THE CART?

BY ALFRED W. KOCH

Unfamiliar with our religion and suspicious of how we had obtained the food, the policeman insisted that we leave it behind.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT T. BARRETT



remaining at home while she went back to police headquarters with the authorization papers. I was upset, discouraged, and afraid. But I had been taught to pray, so I prayed that somehow we would be able to keep our food.

Close to midnight we were elated when Mother finally came home—with the loaded handcart. As the events of the evening unfolded, I realized my prayer had been answered in many ways. Mother said the police reviewed her official papers, issued from Salt Lake City and endorsed by the Church. She surmised that they saw the English labels on the food items as additional proof of our legal procurement of the goods. After Mother was allowed to leave headquarters, the handle on our loaded cart broke, making it impossible for her to pull it by herself. A kind man saw her predicament and helped her push and

pull the cart home in exchange for a few cans of food.

We enjoyed the food for a long time, and later, when I moved to the United States as a teenager, I realized that the mysterious pumpkin pie filling we had received years ago—which we reluctantly ate after all the other food was consumed—actually makes a delicious holiday pie.

Since my youth in Germany, I have had many opportunities to be on the giving end of Church welfare assignments, helping with a variety of tasks at local welfare farms and at a Church-owned cheese plant and cannery.

Looking back, I am still warmed by the sunshine experience of that winter day. I am grateful that the Lord has

blessed me with opportunities to return the service rendered to my family. Having come full circle, I know firsthand what a blessing it is to give and to receive. ■



Ten Axioms to Guide Your Life



Here are 10 axioms, distilled from my own experience of living the gospel. I hope they are helpful to you in determining the principles that should guide your life.

BY ELDER ROBERT D. HALES
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Recent events tell us that we are living in the last days. The increasing perplexities of nations recall the words of our Savior Jesus Christ: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: . . . for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:6–7).

It is a challenging but also an exciting time. The gospel is rolling forth as a stone cut out of a mountain without hands. It is filling the earth. (See Daniel 2:44–45.) And now, it is your privilege to help move it forward.

As you go forth to serve, you will find that your greatest success and influence won’t come solely from the knowledge you’ve gained. It will come from what you do with that knowledge—the wise use of agency to make sound decisions.

Of course, there are some decisions that must wait until circumstances change and your understanding develops. But many of the most important decisions can and should be made now. For example, you can decide the principles, or axioms, that will influence your decision making in the future.

Here are 10 axioms, distilled from my own experience of living the gospel. I hope they are helpful to you in determining the principles that should guide your life.



1 Axiom

It’s not the obstacle that counts, but how you overcome it.

Consider, for a moment, that you are the engineer of a train. As your locomotive races down the tracks, you look out the window. In the distance you see a great pile of debris blocking your way. What do you do? Radio ahead for help? Stop the train and take care of the problem yourself? Pour coal into the engine and plow on through?

Now it’s axiomatic that we will all encounter obstacles in our lives. Temporal obstacles make eternal development possible. So we must decide how to meet those obstacles.

Like the engineer, we can call for help. By prayer, fasting, and diligent study, we can



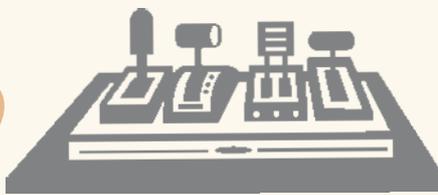
obtain the assistance of our Heavenly Father. He will comfort us, strengthen us, and enlighten us by His Holy Spirit. Often He will give us inspired counsel through parents and priesthood leaders. Sometimes He will smooth our path by removing the obstacle. Sometimes, like a switchman, He will help us get on a different track. But from time to time, the only way to clear debris from the track is to stop the train and remove the problem.

This is always true when the obstacle is of our own making, such as when we violate the Lord's commandments. Repentance is the only way to clear the debris of sin and move forward in our lives. "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43).

Finally, there are times when Heavenly Father directs us to pour on the spiritual coal of faith and hope and plow ahead. Or, to use the more scriptural phrase, "press forward":

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

2 Axiom



Pursue your goals with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. You are doomed to failure if you pursue them in a vacillating manner.

So often we are tentative and don't move forward with conviction. We feel our way along, as if we were afraid in the dark. It is so much better to turn on the light of faith and



It is so much better to turn on the light of faith and move ahead with energy and commitment.

move ahead with energy and commitment.

If our course is wrong, we will quickly recognize it and make the necessary adjustments. But if we pursue a course tentatively and indecisively, it is difficult to know whether it is right or wrong in time to correct it.

The Lord said, “I would thou wert cold or hot” (Revelation 3:15).

We should decide now to make our decisions prayerfully and then move forward with faith, energy, and determination.



Axiom

From a tiny spark can come a large fire.

In the course of moving forward, it is normal to generate a few sparks. Misunderstandings, differences of opinion, and diverse personalities and styles can produce friction. Remember, if we are not careful, little things can easily become big things.

Decide now to extinguish the sparks of conflict by thinking well of others. As the Lord taught, “Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him” (3 Nephi 12:25).

Don’t criticize. What you say about others may (and usually does) get back to them. See the good in people, and develop that goodness by your unwavering friendship, acceptance, loyalty, trust, and love.



Axiom

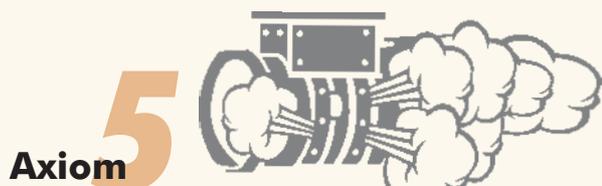
Our greatest strengths can become our greatest weaknesses.

You may be skilled and well prepared in some areas of your life, but that can also become a great weakness if you rely solely on these abilities. If you are not careful, the skills you have gained can be very self-serving when not properly balanced, and they may become very limiting.

For instance, if you cannot get along with other people, you will fail. You must now apply the knowledge you have gained to strengthen the Church, your family, your work, the community, and your friendships.

Our greatest strengths can become weaknesses to us whenever we forget that our gifts, talents, and intellect are given to us by

God—whenever we rely on the “natural man” (Mosiah 3:19) and forget that God is the giver of all the gifts of life. If we would keep our strength from turning to weakness, we must “confess . . . his hand in all things, and obey . . . his commandments” (D&C 59:21).



Axiom

Failure is one of the greatest teachers if we have the faith to learn from it.

The Savior said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” But because He has overcome the world, we can “be of good cheer” (John 16:33)—we can overcome our failures. Therefore, we should embrace the opportunity to learn from our mistakes, analyze where we could have done better, and make plans to improve.

In doing so, we discover that setbacks and disappointments are “but for a small moment” and “shall be for [our] good” (D&C 122:4, 7). With faith, we can take seriously the Lord’s counsel to “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for [our] good” (D&C 90:24).



Axiom

It is not how you start the race or where you are during the race. It is how you cross the finish line that matters.

John Stephen Akhwari, a marathon runner from Tanzania, competed in the 1968 Summer Olympics. Even though he suffered along the way from fatigue, leg cramps, dehydration, and disorientation, a voice called from within to go on, and so he went on. Exhausted and staggering, John Stephen was the last man to enter the stadium. When asked why he would complete a race he could never win, Akhwari replied,

“My country did not send me 7,000 miles [11,200 km] to start the race; they sent me 7,000 miles to finish the race.”

In life, we are not brought to earth just to be born into mortality. We came with a mission and a purpose, and that is to endure to the end.

Remember the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. All of them served the Master, and all received an equal wage. It did not matter that some arrived after others, only that each one finally came. (See Matthew 20:1–16.)

If you have taken missteps in your youth, don’t let discouragement overcome you. The Lord’s judgments are not spiritual grade-point averages—with past sins and mistakes averaged into the final grade. He has promised that “he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

So, if you are not where you want to be, decide today to get there.

Our lifetime degree will be graded on how well we live up to the covenants made in our saving ordinances—baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, washings, anointings, endowments, and sealings.

You *can* cross the finish line with everyone else.

“Go forward and not backward. Courage, . . . and on, on to the victory!” (D&C 128:22).



Axiom

“If you wish to get rich, save what you get. A fool can earn money; but it takes a wise man to save and dispose of it to his own advantage.”¹

It is to our advantage to cultivate genuine happiness in our lives. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that this “happiness is the object and design of our existence.”² Unfortunately, we live in an age of greed—an insatiable, enslaving appetite for temporal things.

Remember, *temporal* means “temporary.” And temporary things cannot bring eternal happiness.

So look ahead. Take the long view. Be patient. Pay your tithes and offerings. And save your money. Do not try to have now what it took your parents years of patient saving to acquire.

Happy are the individuals who can live within their means today and enjoy it.



Axiom 8

You cannot learn the Lord's will without exercising your agency and becoming accountable for your decisions.

Too often we think that with little or no effort on our part, the Holy Ghost will give us answers to our questions. Like Oliver Cowdery, we take “no thought save it [be] to ask” (D&C 9:7). And, regrettably, sometimes we don't even pray.

But this is not the way of the Lord. He has commanded us to “study it out in [our] mind[s]; [and] *then* . . . ask [Him] if it be right” (D&C 9:8; emphasis added).

For example, when choosing an eternal companion, we do not present a list of names to the Lord and ask Him to decide. Instead, we exercise our agency by participating in dating experiences. We get to know the other person's inner attitudes and outward behavior. Then we make a decision and take it to the Lord.

In this way, we become accountable for our decisions and responsible to prayerfully resolve any challenges that may arise.



Axiom 9

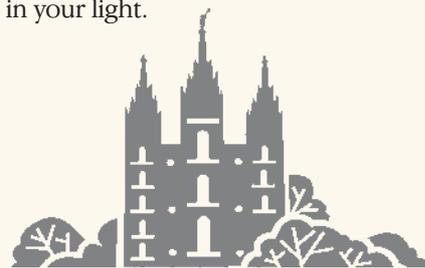
The more things change, the more they stay the same.

In 1975 I spoke to students at Brigham Young University. I held up my left hand and said, “We are here.” Then, moving my right hand away from my left, I said,

“And the world is moving farther and farther away.” At that time, I imagined the world's ways as being hundreds of miles away from the ways of the gospel. Then, referring to my left hand, I said, “But the Church is still here.”

That was almost 32 years ago. Today, the world is a great deal farther away than that. From my perspective, I'd say it is thousands of miles away—maybe farther—but, again, the Church has not moved.

As a member of that Church, you should expect to be different from your peers in the world. You should expect the distance will increase. But don't be dismayed. Those with eyes to see will recognize you as a light on a hill, and they will come through the darkness of these last days to be with you and bask in your light.



Axiom 10

The temple of God is the greatest university.

The knowledge of the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the most valuable knowledge you will ever possess.

Go to the temple. The endowment is the eternal curriculum. In it we are taught where we came from and why we are here on earth, and we are given the promise of achieving life eternal in the celestial kingdom if we obey the commandments and covenants.

With these 10 axioms in mind, I want to bear a personal testimony to you and give you a promise. In striving to be a successful son or daughter of God, you will never have to compromise the things of the kingdom. Where your divinely appointed mission is concerned, you will never be penalized for living the gospel. However, if you compromise God's eternal principles for your own temporal gains, you will lose the eternal blessings that are rightfully yours.

As a New York boy, I grew up as one of only two or three members of the Church in a high school of a few thousand.



At a recent 50-year reunion, my former classmates remembered how I lived according to my values and beliefs. I realized then that one infraction of the Word of Wisdom or transgression of moral values would have meant I could never say, “This is what I believe” and be trusted by my friends.

We can share the gospel only to the extent we live it. During my life at college, in the military as an adjutant and fighter pilot, in graduate school, or in my professional career in sales and marketing, as president of a division, or as a group vice president at corporate headquarters—I was never required to compromise my values or beliefs.

Was it easy?

I don’t know. I wasn’t looking for easy.

Was it hard?

I wasn’t looking for hard either. That is just the way it was.

Were there men and women who challenged me on my beliefs at times?

Certainly.

When I held to my beliefs, did they respect and honor the commitment I had made to live the gospel?

In every instance.

If you will remember who you are and

act accordingly; if you will return with honor from every calling, task, and assignment; if you will be true to the Savior’s name and worthy of His eternal blessings, you will always have the light of the Holy Ghost to be with you, to lead you, to guide you, and to buoy you up. You will never want for what to say or how to act. It will be given you.

How you live, what you represent, how you treat your associates, and how you honor and revere your companion and your family will spread the influence of our Savior Jesus Christ. For there is no greater Christian service than to become like Him, heed the counsel of His Spirit, and do His will.

As the years go by, you will discover more axioms that reflect your own experience of living the gospel. Learn them and live your life accordingly.

May the Lord bless you and keep you that you may have a good life, be what you want to be, and fulfill your dreams now, returning with honor in the eternities. ■

From a commencement address given on August 14, 2003, at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 229.
2. *History of the Church*, 5:134.

Save your money.
Do not try to
have now what
it took your parents
years of patient
saving to acquire.



A Foundation for the Future in **SAN ANTONIO**

BY ERICA LAYNE NIELSEN

Like others who have been pioneers for the Church throughout the world, three families in San Antonio, Texas, gave all they had to the building of Zion in their area.

Wherever the Church spreads, it often begins with a handful of stalwart Saints who are willing to stand alone in their beliefs until others join them. These pioneers know the significance of the name they bear as members of Christ's restored Church, and thus they are willing to endure isolation and, in some cases, persecution. In spite of these challenges, they befriend their neighbors and other members of the community, and through word and example they help bring many unto Christ.

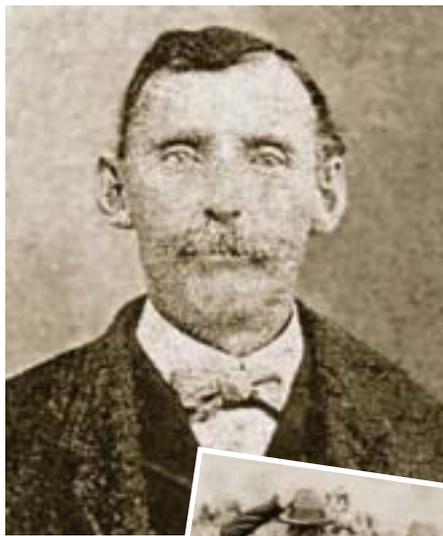
This was the beginning of the Church in south Texas, particularly San Antonio, where a few strong families reached out to their neighbors and helped lay a foundation for the future. The Shaw, Pedraza, and Turley families were among the first Latter-day Saints in the San Antonio area. Three generations later, their descendants recognize their ancestors' contribution to the eventual establishment of four stakes in San Antonio. From two tiny branches established in San Antonio in 1921, this area has blossomed into the home of thousands of members and of a temple of the Lord. Through the sacrifice and dedication of these early pioneers, people throughout south Texas now enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

Rooted in the Gospel

In response to glowing reports about farming in south Texas, John Richard Shaw and Jemima Catherine Murphree Shaw made the trek from Mississippi to Yorktown, Texas, in 1892. A few years later they moved 15 miles away to Cuero, where they made a name for themselves as hardworking farmers who were staunch members of their Protestant church.

When two hungry, tired Latter-day Saint missionaries turned up on the doorstep, John Shaw almost didn't take pity on them because of the strong anti-Mormon sentiment in the region at the time. However, John had never been one to put too much stock in rumors, so he relented, showed them to the barn, and allowed them to drink of his water and rest on the hay.

Over the next couple of days, the young men impressed John with their constant friendliness and their readiness to help out on the farm. When they learned that Jemima Shaw was suffering with a lump the size of a cantaloupe that had grown on her side, they told the family about priesthood blessings and offered to give her one. John, who wouldn't even allow the missionaries to step



Above: John Richard and Jemima Murphree Shaw.

Left: John Richard Shaw (seated) with two missionaries, Elders Nancy (standing, left) and Beckstead, about 1926. Opposite page: One of the old Spanish missions in San Antonio.

inside the house, resolutely refused their offer. But the next morning, Jemima, in agony, begged her husband to let the missionaries administer to her, and he finally acquiesced.

Within minutes of the blessing, she found that the lump had decreased noticeably. It disappeared entirely by the next day. Having faith in the power that healed her, Jemima wished to be baptized. Her husband refused to consider it at first, but his heart soon softened. John and Jemima agreed to have the missionaries teach them, and they were both baptized on August 28, 1900, in a river near Cuero. All of their nine living children were baptized over the years, but because there wasn't an organized branch anywhere nearby, the Shaws had to wait for missionaries to come to town to perform the baptisms for their children.

Georgia Williams, a great-granddaughter of John and Jemima Shaw, lives in San Antonio and treasures the family heritage that began in south Texas with her great-grandparents. "It was my great-grandmother's faith that brought [the family] to the gospel," says Sister Williams. "With faith they endured whatever life handed them and made their way through it."



Top: Members of the first Spanish branch in San Antonio. Above: José Pedraza (right) and a friend during the period when he was a migrant worker. Right: José as a missionary, and the pamphlet that introduced him to the Church.

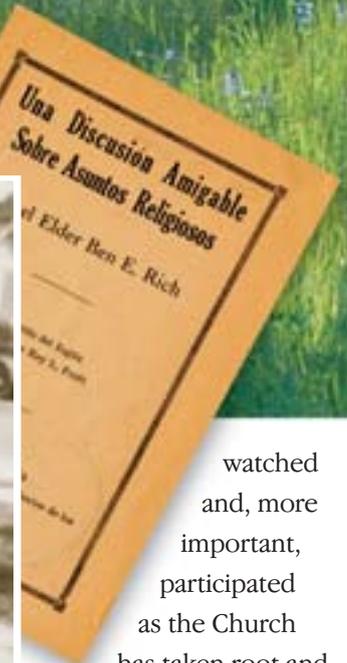
In fact, John and Jemima’s faith sustained them through years of persecution for their membership in the Church.

“Neighboring families became bitter and tried to run them out of the country,” says Sister Williams. “Troublemakers shot holes in their home. The Shaws were persecuted by family friends and sometimes family members who just didn’t understand why they had joined the Church.”

Despite the hostility, John Shaw taught the gospel whenever he could and even helped convert several neighbors.

John and Jemima Shaw were never able to travel to a temple during their lifetime, though their descendants performed their temple ordinances for them after they passed away. Since the San Antonio Texas Temple was dedicated in 2005, Georgia Williams has cherished the opportunity to attend often. She knows what having a temple in their area would have meant to her great-grandparents. She now serves as a temple worker in the San Antonio temple, along with six of her cousins, each of whom descends from a different child of John and Jemima.

The number of John and Jemima’s descendants now exceeds 1,000. While not all are active Church members, Sister Williams says many of the descendants who still live in south Texas have gone on missions and have served in bishoprics, on high councils, and in many other leadership positions in the Church. The Shaw family has



watched and, more important, participated as the Church has taken root and flourished in the area.

Taking the First Steps

Frank Pedraza Jr. says his grandfather José Pedraza left behind a

legacy of sacrifice and dedication to spreading the gospel—a legacy Brother Pedraza is now trying to instill in his own children.

When José Pedraza first heard the Latter-day Saint missionaries preaching on the street in 1921, his heart immediately recognized the power of their words. Yet the taunting crowd that stood between José and the missionaries kept him from contacting them. But several days later, José came in from the fields where he worked as a laborer and found a pamphlet the missionaries had left on the porch.

The Spirit touched him as he read, and he decided to write a letter to the only contact he could find on the pamphlet—the author, Ben E. Rich of Salt Lake City. Though Brother Rich had passed away, the letter went

through several hands and eventually reached the missionaries in the San Antonio area. They searched San Antonio until they finally found José, who unreservedly embraced the gospel and became one of the first members of the Church in south Texas.

“He was one of the first Mexican-American members of the Church in San Antonio,” says Frank Pedraza. “There was no example to follow. He had to take the first step.”

After his conversion, José immediately began spreading the gospel in any way he could. He helped bring many of his fellow Mexican-Americans to the Church.

Frank Pedraza says his grandfather’s example, even in times of trial, showed his steadfastness in the gospel and thus led many people to investigate and join the Church. “He was a laborer, so if he didn’t work, he didn’t get paid and couldn’t feed his family. But he still gave everything he could to the Church.”

José’s dedication to spreading the message of the restored gospel had an impact on hundreds of people, especially those in his own family.

In his later years, after the death of his wife, Crescencia, José lived with his son and daughter-in-law, Francisco and Horténcia Pedraza. José stayed with Horténcia in San Antonio while Francisco—Frank Jr.’s father—was stationed with the military in Japan. Because Horténcia was not a member of the Church, José began teaching her the gospel. After she accepted it, José baptized her while Francisco was still in Japan. Upon his return, Francisco was delighted to learn of his wife’s conversion. The story now reminds José’s descendants of

his insatiable love for missionary work.

As the father of four, Frank Pedraza Jr. shares the legacy of his great-grandfather with his children by trying to live the same way. “I tell them about their grandfather and his sacrifice,” he says. “They all know his story.”

Frank Pedraza’s oldest son, Brandon, served a mission in Boise, Idaho, where he often

used the stories of his great-grandfather as he taught many of the migrant workers in the area. His second son, Ryan, is now serving in the Argentina Bahia Blanca Mission.

The third generation to descend from José and Crescencia Pedraza, these young people are not only strengthening the Church in San Antonio, they are taking José Pedraza’s legacy and sharing it with the world.



Top: Henry Eyring Turley (second from left, back row) with President Heber J. Grant (third from right, back) and other members and missionaries at a San Antonio branch conference in 1924. Above: Henry Turley and wife, Louise, in the 1950s. He was called as patriarch in 1958 when a stake was organized in San Antonio.

Willing to Give

Henry Eyring Turley grew up surrounded by members of the Church in the Latter-day Saint colonies in Mexico, but a series of events landed him in San Antonio, where he joined the ranks of the few but steadfast Saints in south Texas.

After being injured earlier in a logging accident in Mexico, Henry sought help from a chiropractor in El Paso, Texas. He quickly decided that life as a chiropractor appealed to him, so he moved in 1922 to San Antonio to attend the Texas Chiropractic College. He completed his degree and returned to the colonies, where he married Louise Robinson. When the Texas Chiropractic College offered Henry a position on the faculty in 1927, he and his young family moved to San Antonio.

BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

The efforts of pioneering families laid a groundwork for growth that brought a temple to San Antonio.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

Henry taught at that college for 38 years while also fulfilling various leadership callings in the Church.

Henry's son, Herbert Turley, was one year old when his family moved to San Antonio. He said it was an adjustment for his parents to go from being surrounded by members of the Church in the colonies to meeting with a handful of Saints in people's homes in San Antonio.

"Nobody even knew what a Mormon was, except for the stories they had heard," Brother Turley says. He also says his parents were excluded from many community activities primarily because of their religion.

In a place where the Church was just beginning to establish itself, Herbert Turley said his mother and father taught their four children to be loyal to the standards of the gospel, to love the Church and the way it functions, and to be dependable in any capacity.

While Henry was a district president in what was then called the Texas Louisiana Mission, his loyalty, love, and dependability kept him traveling to different parts of his district every weekend. The district over which he presided was about 300 miles long and 250 miles wide, so travel was inevitable.

"We had to go with him sometimes just to be able to see him," Herbert says now.

But Brother Turley recognized the great work his father

was engaged in and the impact it had on so many people in south Texas. "I don't know that I've ever met a man any better than my dad," he says. "I never heard him say a bad word about anyone. He was loved by everyone."

Henry and Louise's posterity—nearly 150 descendants—are now spreading that same love as they serve in many Church capacities. They are following the example of Henry and Louise by doing all they can to strengthen the stakes of Zion.

"We've got four stakes in San Antonio now. We used to get along with 10 or 12 people," says Herbert Turley.

Strengthening the Stakes of Zion

The Shaw, Pedraza, and Turley families were willing to stand alone at first. But they wouldn't allow feelings of exclusion or even moments of persecution to keep them standing alone for long; they extended their love to neighbors and taught the gospel by the way they lived. Like hundreds of others who have been pioneers for the Church throughout the world, these families and a few others living in south Texas in the early 1900s willingly gave all they had to strengthening the stakes of Zion in their area. ■

Information for this article was obtained from author interviews with Georgia Williams, Frank Pedraza Jr., and Herbert Turley; family records from Georgia Williams and Frank Pedraza Jr.; microfilm records of the Kenedy Branch; microfilm records of the Mexican Mission; and mission records of the Central States Mission.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

THE POWER OF A PROMISE

BY ELDER RICHARD G. PETERSON

Area Seventy
Utah North Area

In one of the most dramatic events in the Book of Mormon, Nephi slays Laban and then, masquerading as Laban, orders the slain man's servant to accompany him into the wilderness. The deception is short-lived, however, lasting only until Zoram and Nephi overtake Nephi's brothers. At that point Zoram realizes he has fallen in with

men he takes to be his enemies.

Zoram begins to tremble and turns to flee, but Nephi physically restrains him while attempting to reason with him. "I spake with him," Nephi wrote later, "that if he would hearken unto my words, as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life" (1 Nephi 4:32).

Nephi assures Zoram, "*even with an oath*, that he need not fear; that he should be a free



May each of us emulate the Lord's example in always keeping our commitments, that others may trust us and that we may merit the Lord's approbation.

When the Savior returns at the time of His Second Coming, one of the things that will bring us to our knees, I believe, will be not only a recognition of His grandeur but also an acknowledgment of His absolute honesty.

man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us” (v. 33; emphasis added).

Nephi’s oath and words of explanation have their desired effect on Zoram. He responds with an oath of his own that he will not attempt to flee (see vv. 35–36).

Commenting on this passage, Hugh Nibley explains, “The reaction of both parties makes sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants.”¹

The oaths having been exchanged, Nephi says, “Our fears did cease concerning him” (v. 37).

What a simple and wonderful custom—for the parties to an agreement to simply give their word and then trust that each is duty bound to do what he has promised. In

today’s world, such a thing is rare. Gone are the days when business deals consisted of a verbal agreement and a handshake. The rule now is to get everything in writing. Heads of corporations, celebrities, entertainers, sports figures, and politicians haggle publicly over breached contracts and agreements. And court dockets are clogged with litigation aimed at sorting out broken promises.

Fortunately, there is One on whom we may depend absolutely to keep His word—the Lord Jesus Christ. “For I will fulfil my promises which I have made unto the children of men,” He assures us (2 Nephi 10:17). He invites us to enter into covenants with Him, secure in the knowledge of His word: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say” (D&C 82:10).

The Lord’s constancy is one of the things that enables us to love and trust Him, and it is one of the attributes that compels us to worship Him. For instance, though I find it difficult to entirely comprehend what Jesus Christ revealed about Himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the concept humbles me:

“Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.

“Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.

“His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.

“From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail” (D&C 76:1–4; emphasis added).

As mortals, we are so unlike that.

When He returns at the time of His Second Coming, one of the things that will bring us to our knees, I believe, will be not only a recognition of His grandeur but also



an acknowledgment of His absolute honesty. “Here am I, send me,” He said in the premortal world (Abraham 3:27), promising in that moment that He could be trusted to perform the Atonement and thereby become the Redeemer and the Savior of mankind.

It is unthinkable that He would have failed us. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was confronted at last by the immensity of that awful task, “to suffer, bleed, and die!”² Matthew records that the Savior “fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The resurrected Lord tells us that He kept His word: “Glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19).

One of the greatest blessings of my life is the covenant into which my wife and I entered when we were sealed in the temple. Blessings were pronounced upon us having to do with the years we would spend in mortality, and we are grateful that many of those have already been realized. But if we are faithful, the things we will most treasure lie in the future, beyond this life—sanctification, resurrection, a reunion with parents who are now gone but to whom we have been sealed, the joy of a growing progeny, including not only our children and beloved grandchildren but also descendants who are yet unborn, and the hope of a glorious eternal inheritance in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

How do we know these things will come to pass? Because the Lord has given His word, and on that we may depend.

May each of us emulate His example in always keeping our commitments, that others may trust us and that we may merit the



Lord’s approbation. For “they that deal truly are his delight” (Proverbs 12:22). ■

NOTES

1. *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. (1964), 104.
2. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

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

1. Show the family a legal document. Point out some of the careful wording that is necessary to make it binding. Read the scripture references in the article, and compare the promises of the Lord to the promises of men. Testify of how we can depend on the promises of the Lord.

2. Ask family members if they made any promises during the past week. If they cannot think of any, tell them you know of at least one promise made every Sunday. Ask them to think to themselves how well they have kept their sacramental covenant. Using the last part of the article, testify that the Lord perfectly upholds His part of the covenant.

The resurrected Lord tells us that He kept His word: “Glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”



Stained-glass windows from three cathedrals in France: Chartres (center, with exterior view top right); Bourges (left); and Sens (opposite page). In each window, the parable of the good Samaritan is depicted together with representations of the plan of salvation.

The Good Samaritan

Forgotten Symbols



BY JOHN W. WELCH

Brigham Young University professor,
J. Reuben Clark Law School, and
editor in chief of *BYU Studies*

One of the most influential stories told by Jesus Christ is the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus recounted this parable to a man who had asked, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded by asking, “What is written in the law?”

The man answered, referring to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself.”

When Jesus promised, “This do, and thou shalt live,” the man challengingly replied, “And who is my neighbour?” In answer to this man’s questions, Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan. (See Luke 10:25–35.)

Deeper Levels of Meaning

The Savior spoke often in parables because each has a deeper meaning understood only by those who have “ears to hear” (Matthew 13:9). The Prophet Joseph Smith affirmed that unbelievers did not understand the Savior’s parables. “Yet unto His disciples [the Lord] expounded [the parables] plainly,” and we can understand the parables, taught the Prophet, “if we will but open our eyes, and read with candor.”¹ Knowing this principle invites reflection on the symbolic message of the good Samaritan. In light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this mas-

terful story brilliantly encapsulates the plan of salvation in ways few modern readers may have noticed.

This parable’s content is clearly practical and dramatic in its obvious meaning, but a time-honored Christian tradition also saw the parable as an impressive allegory of the Fall

This parable can be viewed as an impressive allegory of the Fall and Redemption of mankind.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN W. WELCH, EXCEPT AS NOTED. SCENE IMAGES COURTESY OF CL. MUSÉES DE SENS (FRANCE), E. BERRY (GENERAL VIEW), AND J. P. ELE (DETAILS); PHOTOGRAPHS OF BACKGROUND AND BANDAGES BY MATTHEW REIER

Jesus depicts the person as going down not from any ordinary place but from Jerusalem. Because of the sanctity of the holy temple-city, early Christians readily saw in this element the idea that this person had come down from the presence of God.



and Redemption of mankind. This early Christian understanding of the good Samaritan is depicted in a famous eleventh-century cathedral in Chartres, France. One of its beautiful stained-glass windows portrays the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden at the top of the window, and, in parallel, the parable of the good Samaritan at the bottom. This illustrates “a symbolic interpretation of Christ’s parable that was popular in the Middle Ages.”² Seeing this window led me to wonder: what does the Fall of Adam and Eve have to do with the parable of the good Samaritan?

I soon discovered the answer.³ The roots of this allegorical interpretation reach deep into early Christianity. In the second century A.D., Irenaeus in France and Clement of Alexandria both saw the good Samaritan as symbolizing Christ Himself saving the fallen

victim, wounded with sin. A few years later, Clement’s pupil Origen stated that this interpretation came down to him from earlier Christians, who had described the allegory as follows:

“The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord’s body, the [inn], which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. . . . The manager of the [inn] is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior’s second coming.”⁴

This allegorical reading was taught not only by ancient followers of Jesus, but it was virtually universal throughout early Christianity, being advocated by Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, and in the fourth and fifth centuries by Chrysostom in Constantinople, Ambrose in Milan, and Augustine in North Africa. This interpretation is found most completely in two other medieval stained-glass windows, in the French cathedrals at Bourges and Sens.

A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation

Readers gain much by pondering the scriptures, especially as these writings testify of Jesus Christ (see John 5:39). The parable of the good Samaritan testifies of Christ. It teaches of the plan of salvation, the Savior’s atoning love, and our journey toward inheriting eternal life. It can be read as a story not only about a man who went down from

Jerusalem to Jericho, but also about all who come down from the presence of God to live on earth. This meaning becomes most visible in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ restored through His latter-day prophets.

Let us examine the story, starting in Luke 10:30.

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . .”

A certain man. Early Christians compared this man to Adam. This connection may have been more obvious in ancient languages than in modern translations. In Hebrew, the word *adam* means “man, mankind,” “the plural of men,” as well as “Adam” as a proper name.⁵ Thus, Clement of Alexandria rightly saw the victim in this allegory as representing “all of us.” Indeed, we all have come down as Adams and Eves, subject to the risks and vicissitudes of mortality: “For as in Adam all die . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Went down. The early Christian writer Chrysostom saw in this phrase the descent of Adam from the garden into this world—from glory to the mundane, from immortality to mortality. The story in Luke 10 implies that the man went down intentionally, knowing the risks that would be involved in the journey. No one forced him to go down to Jericho. He apparently felt that the journey was worth the well-known risks of such travel on the poorly maintained roads in Jesus’s day.⁶

From Jerusalem. Jesus depicts the person as going down not from any ordinary place but from Jerusalem. Because of the sanctity of the holy temple-city, early Christians readily saw in this element the idea that this person had come down from the presence of God.

To Jericho. Jericho was readily identified with this world. At more than 825 feet (250 m) below sea level, Jericho is the lowest city on earth. Its mild winter climate made it a hedonistic resort area where Herod had built a

sumptuous vacation palace. Yet one should note that the traveler in the parable had not yet arrived in Jericho when the robbers attacked. That person was on the steep way down to Jericho, but he had not yet reached bottom.

Fell. It is easy to see here an allusion to the fallen mortal state and to the plight of individual sinfulness: “Yea, all are fallen and are lost” (Alma 34:9).

Among thieves. The early Christian writers variously saw the thieves (or robbers) as the devil and his satanic forces, evil spirits, or false teachers. The Greek word for “robbers” used by Luke implies that these thieves were not casual operators. The traveler was assailed by a band of pernicious highwaymen in a scheming, organized society that acted with deliberate and concerted intent.

“. . . which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”

Stripped him of his raiment. Early Christians sensed that Jesus spoke of something important here. Origen and Augustine saw the loss of the traveler’s garment as a symbol for mankind’s loss of immortality and incorruptibility. Chrysostom spoke of the loss of “his robe of immortality” or “robe of obedience.” Ambrose spoke of the traveler being “stripped of the covering of spiritual grace which we [all] received [from God].”

The attackers apparently wanted the traveler’s clothing, for no mention is made of any wealth or commodities he might be carrying. For some reason, the robbers seem interested in his garment, something brought down from

the holy place and something they envy and want to take away.

Wounded. This term was seen as a similitude of the pains of life, travails of the soul, and afflictions due to diverse sins and vices. Indeed, the enemies of the soul leave wounds (see Jacob 2:8–9). Transgression has real effects (see Alma 41:10).



Early Christian writers Irenaeus (above), Clement (above, right), and Ambrose (right).

Half dead. The robbers departed, leaving the person precisely “half dead.” We may see in this detail an allusion to the first and second deaths. The person had fallen, had become subject to sin, and had suffered the first death, becoming mortal. But the second death, the permanent separation from God, could still be averted (see Alma 12:32–36).

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.”

By chance. The arrival of the Jewish priest was “by chance,” not the result of a conscious search. His presence there was not by anyone’s plan.

A certain priest . . . and likewise a Levite. The early Christian commentators all saw the priest as symbolizing the law of Moses. In their minds the problem was not that bearers of the Old Testament priesthood did not want to help fallen man, but that the law of Moses did not have the power to save him. Indeed, the law of Moses was only a type and shadow of the Atonement that was yet to come, not its full efficacy (see Mosiah 3:15–17).

The Levite was seen as representing the Old Testament prophets, whose words the Lord came to fulfill (see Matthew 5:17; 3 Nephi 15:2–5). A lesser class of priests, the Levites did chores in the temple. At least this Levite came close to helping; he “came” and saw. He may have wanted to help, but perhaps he viewed himself as too lowly to help; he also lacked the power to save the dying person.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine . . .”

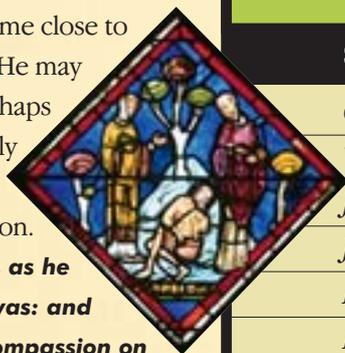
Samaritan. The early Christian writers unanimously saw the good Samaritan as a

representation of Christ. Chrysostom suggests that a Samaritan is an apt depiction of Christ because “as a Samaritan is not from Judea, so Christ is not of this world.”

Jesus’s audience in Jerusalem may well have recognized here a reference by the Savior to Himself. Some Jews in Jerusalem rejected Jesus with the insult, “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan?” (John 8:48). Because Nazareth is across the valley north of Samaria, these two locations could easily be lumped together. And just as the Samaritans were viewed as the least of all humanity, so it was prophesied that the Messiah would be “despised and rejected of men” and “esteemed not” (see Isaiah 53:3).

As he journeyed. It would appear that the Samaritan (representing Christ) was purposely looking for people in need of help. The text does not say that he arrived by happenstance. Origen noted that “he went down intending to rescue and care for the dying man.” The Savior came purposefully with oil and bandages “to bring redemption unto the world” (3 Nephi 9:21).

Compassion. This important word speaks of the pure love of Christ. The Greek word says that the Samaritan’s bowels were moved with deep, inner sympathy. This word is used in the New Testament only when authors wish to describe God’s divine emotions of mercy. It appears



SYMBOLS FROM THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Symbol	An Early Christian Interpretation
<i>Good Samaritan</i>	<i>Jesus Christ</i>
<i>Victim</i>	<i>Man wounded with sin</i>
<i>Jerusalem</i>	<i>Paradise</i>
<i>Jericho</i>	<i>World</i>
<i>Priest</i>	<i>Law of Moses</i>
<i>Levite</i>	<i>Prophets</i>
<i>Beast</i>	<i>Christ’s body</i>
<i>Inn</i>	<i>Church</i>
<i>Manager of the inn</i>	<i>Head of the Church</i>

prominently in the parables of the unmerciful servant, in which the Lord (representing God) “was moved with compassion” (Matthew 18:27), and of the prodigal son, in which the father (again representing God) saw his son returning and “had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Likewise, the Samaritan represents the divinely compassionate Christ, who suffered so “that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12).

Bound up his wounds. Some early Christians said that the bandages represented love, faith, and hope, “ligatures of salvation which cannot be undone.” Others saw the bands as Christ’s teachings, which bind us to righteousness. Latter-day Saints would add that the rescued person is bound to the Lord through covenants (see D&C 35:24; 43:9).

Oil. An olive oil lotion would have been very soothing. While most of the early Christian writers saw here a symbol of Christ’s words of consolation, Chrysostom saw this as a “holy anointing”—which may refer to several priesthood ordinances, the healing of the sick (see James 5:14), the gift of the Holy Ghost (often symbolized by olive oil), or the anointing of a king or a queen.

Wine. The Samaritan also poured wine onto the open wound to cleanse it. Late Christian writers saw this wine as the word of God—something that stings—but the earlier Christian interpretation associated the wine with the blood of Christ, symbolized by the sacrament (see Matthew 26:27–29; 3 Nephi 18:8–11). This wine, the atoning blood, washes away sin and purifies the soul, allowing God’s Spirit to be with us. In addition to



rendering physical help, a truly good Samaritan administers the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel as well. The atoning wine may sting at first, but its effects soon bring healing peace.

“ . . . and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Set him on his own beast. Christ, fulfilling prophecy, bears our infirmities (see Isaiah 53:4; Alma 7:11). The Samaritan’s beast was thought to symbolize Christ’s body. Being placed on his beast is to believe that God became flesh, bore our sins, and suffered for us.

Inn. For the early Christians this element readily symbolized the Church. An “inn” was “a public house open to all.” A public shelter is comparable to the Church of Christ in several ways. A wayside inn is not the heavenly destination but a necessary aid in helping travelers reach their eternal home.

For some reason, the robbers seem interested in the traveler’s garment, something brought down from the holy place and something they envy and want to take away.

Seeing the parable in the light of the gospel invites readers to identify with virtually every character in the story.



Took care of him. The Samaritan stayed with the injured person and cared for him personally the first night. He did not turn the injured person over too quickly to the innkeeper but stayed with him through the dark hours. As Origen commented, Jesus cares for the wounded “not only during the day, but also at night. He devotes all his attention and activity to him.”

“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

On the morrow. Early commentators saw here the idea that Jesus would rise on Resurrection morning. Christ ministered in person to His disciples for a short time.

After His Ascension, He left the traveler to be cared for by the Church.

The host. Accordingly, early commentators saw the host, or innkeeper, as Paul or the other Apostles and their successors. If the inn refers to the Church in general, however, the innkeeper and his staff can represent all Church leaders and workers who are entrusted by the Lord to nurture and care for any rescued soul who seeks healing.

When I come again. The Christ-figure openly promises to come again, a ready allusion to the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek word translated “to come again” appears only one other time in the New Testament, in Luke 19:15, referring to the parable of the Lord who would return to judge what the people had done with the money they had been given. That linkage markedly strengthens this allusion to the Second Coming.

Repay or reward. Finally, the innkeeper is promised that all his costs will be covered: “I will reward you for whatsoever you expend.” Perhaps more than any other element in the story, this promise—in effect giving the innkeeper a blank check—has troubled modern commentators who understand this story simply as a real-life event. Who in his right mind would make such an open-ended commitment to a strange innkeeper? But when the story is understood allegorically, this promise makes sense, for the Samaritan (Christ) and his innkeeper already know and trust each other before this promise is given.

An Eternal Imperative

Because of our difficulty in comprehending His infinite nature and divine fulness,

God speaks to us in similitudes (see Moses 5:7). Symbols draw our finite minds to sacred truths that are embedded in the mystery of Christ's incomparable gospel, and an allegorical understanding of the parable of the good Samaritan adds eternal perspectives to its moral imperatives.

In His parables, Jesus taught the essentials of the Father's plan of salvation. As a type and shadow of this plan, the good Samaritan places our deeds of neighborly kindness here in

mortality within the eternal context of where we have come down from, how we have fallen into our present plight, and how the binding ordinances and healing love of the promised Redeemer and the nurture of His Church can rescue us from our present situation, as we serve and live worthy of reward at His Second Coming.

Seeing the parable in this light invites readers to identify with virtually every character in the story. At one level, people can see

themselves as the good Samaritan, acting as physical rescuers and as saviors on Mount Zion, aiding in the all-important cause of rescuing lost souls. Jesus told the Pharisee, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). By doing as the Samaritan, we join with Him in helping to

bring to pass the salvation and eternal life of mankind.

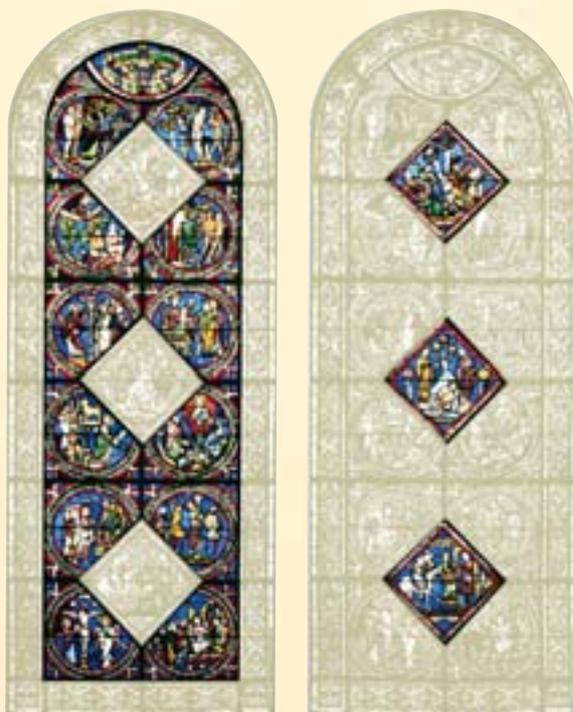
Disciples will also want to think of themselves as innkeepers who have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to facilitate the long-term spiritual recovery of injured travelers.

Or again, readers may see themselves as the traveler. As the parable begins, everyone sympathizes and identifies with the lone and weary traveler. We all need to be saved.

As the story ends, all travelers can feel safe, having learned that, according to this interpretation, He who "was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves" (Luke 10:36) is none other than the merciful Christ. He is the most exemplary Neighbor.

This realization answers the lawyer's second question: "And who is my neighbour?" At the same time, it also answers the first: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Eternal life comes by loving God "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27) and by loving His Son (thy neighbor) as thyself. And that is done by going and doing as the Savior did, in loving our fellow beings, for when we serve them we are only in the service of our God (see Mosiah 2:17). ■

Elements from this window in Sens are organized by the themes they represent. The parable of the good Samaritan (digitally isolated on the right) uses the three central panes of the window, while themes from the plan of salvation, including the Fall of Adam and Eve and the Crucifixion of the Savior (digitally isolated on the left), surround the parable to complete the window.



NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 2:266.
2. Malcolm Miller, *Chartres Cathedral* (1985), 68.
3. For a full discussion of and sources for the quotations in this article, see John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1999, 51–115. Other Latter-day Saints, including Hugh Nibley, Stephen Robinson, Lisle Brown, and Jill Major, have interpreted parts of the parable of the good Samaritan in similar ways.
4. Origen, *Homily 34.3*, Joseph T. Lienhard, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Luke, Fragments on Luke* (1996), 138.
5. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (1980), "adam," 1:10.
6. See *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992), "Travel and Communication," 6:644–46. Because of the high risk of being attacked by robbers while traveling in the ancient world, people would rarely travel alone as the characters in the parable do, which is another clue that the account is well understood as a similitude.



Turning the Other



BY ELDER H. BRYAN RICHARDS

Served as a member of the Seventy from 1998 to 2006

Few of the Savior’s teachings have been so often repeated as this counsel from the Sermon on the Mount: “Who-soever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). On numerous occasions I have observed how this principle can bless lives and heal hearts.

For example, some time ago when I was serving as a mission president, there was considerable contention among priesthood leaders, members, and missionaries in one area of the mission. Harsh words were spoken, unity in the work vanished, and keys to Church buildings were withheld from missionaries. The situation became so intense that the Spirit of the Lord had withdrawn, and the work was at a standstill.

I met with the zone leader in this area to discuss what needed to be done to resolve the situation. We made it a matter of fasting and prayer. A few days later the zone leader called me. “I was reading about Ammon and his experience with King Lamoni,” he said. “Ammon asked one very significant question of King Lamoni, and I believe that question will resolve our situation.” The question: “What wilt thou that I should do for thee, O king?” (Alma 18:14).

The zone leader began encouraging the

missionaries in his zone to ask the members and priesthood leaders, “What can we do for you?” As the days went by, it was amazing how quickly the contention began to ease, how the Spirit of the Lord returned to the work, and how the love and unity between members and missionaries increased. The work began to prosper again, and miracles happened because the zone leader chose to help the missionaries turn the other cheek and put others’ needs before their own.

Long after the zone leader left that area, the missionaries continued asking that same question, and the work continued to flourish as never before.

After a year passed, the local stake president said to me, “We have more full-time missionaries serving from our stake now than we have ever had.” I asked him what he thought was the reason for this. I shall never forget his response: “It is the example of the full-time missionaries. Our young people want to be just like them.”

In our own lives, when we find ourselves feeling offended or experiencing contention and strife, let us consider turning the other cheek by asking the question “What can I do for you?” In many cases miracles will happen, peace will replace contention, and the Spirit of the Lord will be in our hearts. In following the Savior’s counsel, we will become His true disciples. ■

In following the Savior’s counsel, we will become His true disciples.

Cheek



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

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

1. Ask everyone to complete the phrase “Turning the other cheek means ____.” Ask family members to think of times when it would have been wiser to turn the other cheek. Challenge family members to apply the Savior’s counsel.

2. Read the article to find how missionaries in one mission learned to turn the other cheek. Make missionary tags with the phrase “What can we do for you?” to help remind family members to always seek to serve.

Dealing with My Parents' Breakup

NAME WITHHELD

Even as an adult, I found my parents' separation surprisingly painful and difficult.

Mom, why isn't Grandpa at Grandma's house anymore when we go to visit?" I'd known for some time the question would eventually come, yet I still wasn't prepared with an answer. Failed marriages are not uncommon, but the topic had now become more personal as I struggled to understand and deal with my parents' breakup.

As a happily married wife and the mother of several young children, I was surprised by the intensity with which this experience was taking hold in my life. Divorce is a life-transforming experience, not just for the couple who divorce but for their children as well. Researcher and author Judith Wallerstein, whose landmark studies have followed the children of divorced parents over a 25-year period, made the following statement: "One might think that the grown children of such couples might feel sad but not devastated. After all, they're adults. They're not losing the protection of an intact family, familiar surroundings, and other supports. But when we talk to them, they're profoundly distressed."¹

At the time my parents separated, my husband was experiencing serious health concerns, and I quickly became aware that my parents were so enveloped in their own turmoil that they were unable to offer me the emotional support I desperately needed. Instead, their needs were added to my already heavy concerns. I wasn't yet ready to confide in anyone about the difficulties my parents were having, and

as a result, I often felt there was no one I could lean on.

While adult children of divorced parents don't have to experience custody disputes, visitation arrangements, or financial-support issues, they may still face painful emotions and difficulties caused by changing family relationships. Although some couples are able to go their separate ways amicably, many divorces leave parents feeling like enemies on opposite sides of a battlefield. Adult children are often expected to traverse the difficult middle ground with ease. In reality, trying to maneuver between the intricate lines and boundaries of our parents' now separate lives can be a difficult and painful experience regardless of our age.

Just as we grieve at the death of a loved one, we will grieve at the death of an important relationship. When a loved one dies, we have the hope that our family ties will continue beyond the grave. However, when our parents' marriage ends, we can lose hope for that eternal family bond. There is no mortal relationship that is more intricately tied to who we are, and when it ends, grief in all its stages is to be expected.

Fortunately, there is help available to us if we must pass through this experience. While I found great benefit in the help of professional counselors, the most complete and lasting peace has come gradually, through the whisperings of the Spirit of the Lord as I have prayed, attended the temple, studied the scriptures, and counseled with an inspired bishop.



Satan is actively attacking the family. The wedge that had come between my parents caused doubt and discouragement to enter my own marriage.

Fighting Satan's Attacks

Church leaders have repeatedly warned us that Satan is actively attacking the family. Using parental divorce to drive wedges of doubt into children's marriages is one of Satan's tactics. When my parents separated, I felt doubt and discouragement about the security of my own marriage. After all, if this could happen to my parents, wasn't it extremely naive to believe it could never happen to me? I also felt guilty and unjustified in my pain because I still had a loving companion. When I finally recognized Satan as the source of the doubts, discouragement, and unjustified guilt, I was able to put those feelings behind me. I also realized that my husband and I have the power to protect our marriage by making a conscious effort to strengthen the love and commitment we have for each other. We who are married can be proactive in fighting Satan's attacks on our families.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) counseled that happiness in marriage comes “when a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste,

mentally and physically, . . . and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God.”² Judith Wallerstein’s research convinced her that a good marriage, more than any other adult relationship, has great healing potential.³ As I struggled to find peace, I was fortunate to have the powerful support and reassurance of a loving husband whose shoulders were frequently wet from my tears.

Dealing with Challenges

In many cases, divorce will change the relationship between parents and their children. These changes can disrupt our personal and cultural expectations of what a family is or how a family should act. One evening as my husband and I took a walk through our neighborhood, we watched as an older couple in our ward welcomed their grandchildren into their home. That simple experience sent me into an emotional tailspin as I realized that taking my children to see my parents would never be like the scene we had just witnessed. I had to accept the reality that my parents did not fit the role I had always envisioned for them. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (1926–2004) has said, “Within what is allotted to us, we can have spiritual contentment.”⁴ Once I changed my expectations, I was able to accept with gratitude whatever time and attention my parents were able to give to me and my children.

Another challenge is the celebration of special family occasions. In addition to the question of where to spend the holidays and with whom, gatherings such as weddings, birthdays, baptisms, and baby blessings can sometimes be spoiled by tension between parents. We have a right to expect that at these times all involved will put aside their differences and not allow the contentious spirit of the adversary to mar special events. A parent’s unwillingness or inability to respect our desires in this matter may create a need to change long-standing traditions in the celebration of special occasions. We may need to reconsider which family members will be invited or expected to attend.

It is likely that no matter what our course of action in dealing with changing relationships, someone in the family is not going to agree with us. A parent may feel hurt or be-

trayed if we are able to have a comfortable relationship with the former spouse—our other parent.

We may feel overwhelmed by “rules” or expectations that have no basis in reason but are determined entirely by our parents’ emotions. President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) gave valuable counsel when he said, “Measure whatever anyone else asks you to do, whether it be from your family, loved ones, your cultural heritage, or traditions you have inherited—measure everything against the teachings of the Savior. Where you find a variance from those teachings, set that matter aside and do not pursue it. It will not bring you happiness.”⁵

As Latter-day Saints, we face a particularly difficult challenge if a parent has adopted a new lifestyle contrary to our own standards. We may feel that including this parent in our lives compromises our principles. Will contact with the parent and his or her lifestyle confuse our children about the standards we are trying to teach them? President

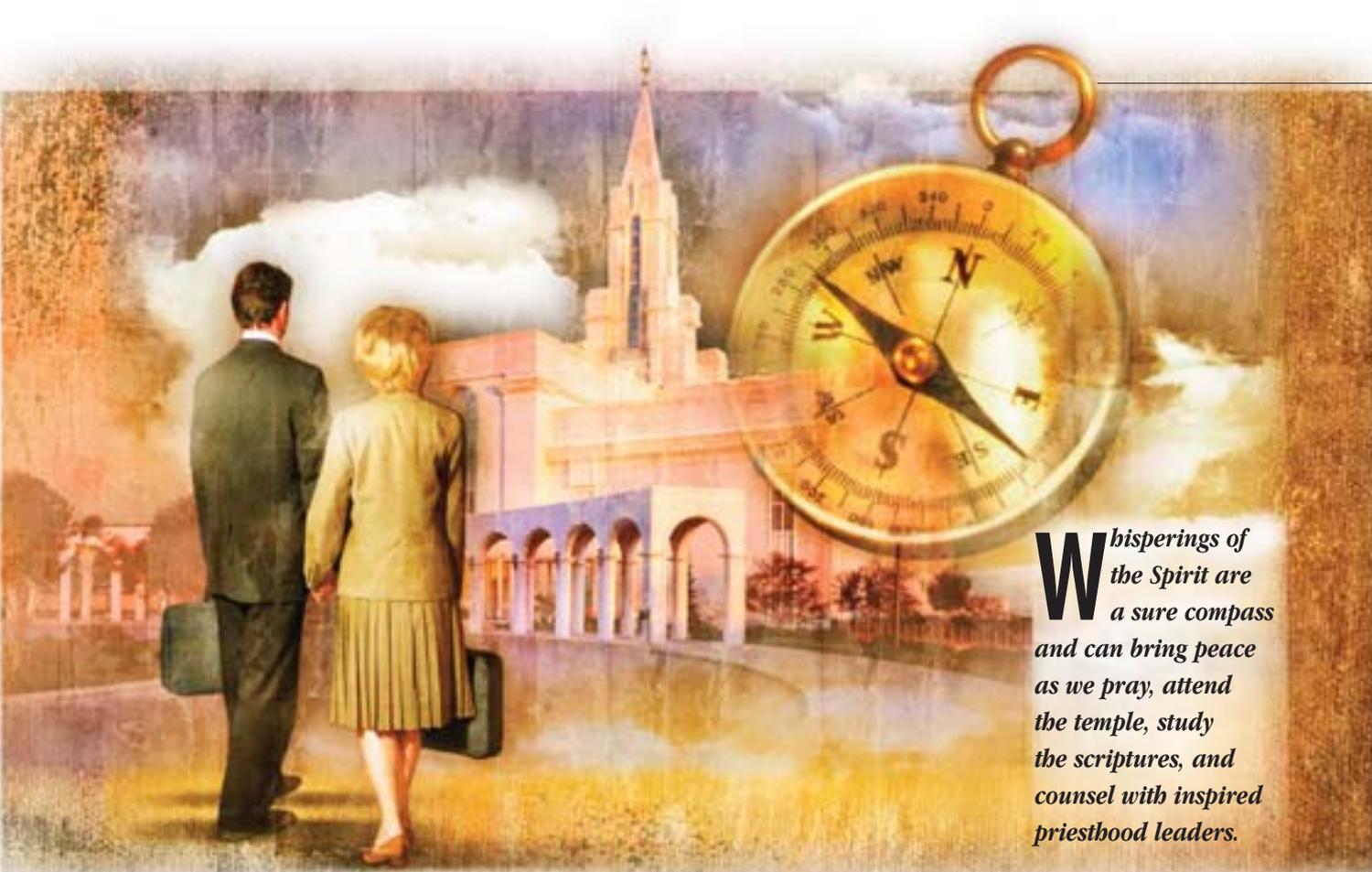
James E. Faust offered some counsel that we can use in answering these questions:

“There are three sources of guidance for making moral judgments. First is the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This is always a sure compass for those who have been baptized and received this supernal gift. The second source is the wise counsel of priesthood leaders whom the Lord has put in place to guide us. Third, the constant demonstration of love should temper all our judgments.”⁶

Healing through the Atonement

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges many children face when their parents’ marriage ends is a deep feeling of anger. Often this anger continues long afterward. Complete healing and peace are not possible until the anger is cleansed from our hearts and we are able to forgive completely. While a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, Bishop H. Burke Peterson wrote, “No one can be classed as a true follower of the Savior who is not in the process of removing from his heart and mind every feeling of ill will, bitterness, hatred, envy, or jealousy toward another.”⁷ It is impossible for us to feel the complete peace the Savior offers His followers unless we are willing to let go of anger and other negative feelings and seek the





Whisperings of the Spirit are a sure compass and can bring peace as we pray, attend the temple, study the scriptures, and counsel with inspired priesthood leaders.

healing that can be found through His Atonement.

The pain of my parents' separation has taught me of the power of the Atonement and of the relationship among justice, love, and mercy. On one occasion an inspired bishop reminded me that justice is not my job. The Savior said, "Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay" (D&C 82:23). The temple has truly become a place of revelation for me, and I have felt the whisperings of the Spirit clearly telling me that it is neither my right nor my responsibility to punish my parents for their decisions. All I need to do is to love them as my parents. The scriptures clearly give the same message: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10).

As I tried to match my actions to my acceptance of my parents' now separate lives, I fervently prayed and studied the teachings of the Savior. One day I found myself listening to a beautiful piece of music which included the following words from St. Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;*

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

A wonderful feeling of peace flowed through me. I have realized that as I follow the teachings of the Savior and seek the gift of charity in my life, I can respond with love to all of my family members regardless of their situation. As I have done my best to be an instrument of peace, I have experienced the healing power of the Atonement. Anger and pain have been replaced by forgiveness, love, and understanding. I know for myself that Jesus Christ bore my grief and carried my sorrow and that through Him I have been healed. ■

NOTES

1. Judith Wallerstein and others, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (2000), 83.
2. *Marriage and Divorce* (1976), 24.
3. See *Legacy of Divorce*, 261.
4. "Content with the Things Allotted unto Us," *Ensign*, May 2000, 72.
5. "Counsel to Students and Faculty," Church College of New Zealand, 12 Nov. 1990; as quoted in Richard G. Scott, "Removing Barriers to Happiness," *Ensign*, May 1998, 85.
6. "The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 54.
7. "Removing the Poison of an Unforgiving Spirit," *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 60.

"MY WAYS ARE NOT YOUR WAYS"

BY ELDER CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN
Area Seventy
North America Northeast Area



When we encounter roadblocks in our efforts to build the kingdom, the reason often is that our solutions are grounded in the wisdom of men—which is foolishness to God.

Many of the Savior's most profound teachings are counterintuitive. "Love your enemies" is an example. The solutions that our minds are prone to develop are often different from those the Lord would have us pursue. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

When we encounter roadblocks in our efforts to build the kingdom, the reason often is that our solutions are grounded in the wisdom of men—which is foolishness to God (see 1 Corinthians 3:19). In this article I will highlight five of the Savior's teachings that seem counterintuitive to the wisdom of men but that have the potential to help the Church and its Saints grow even stronger.

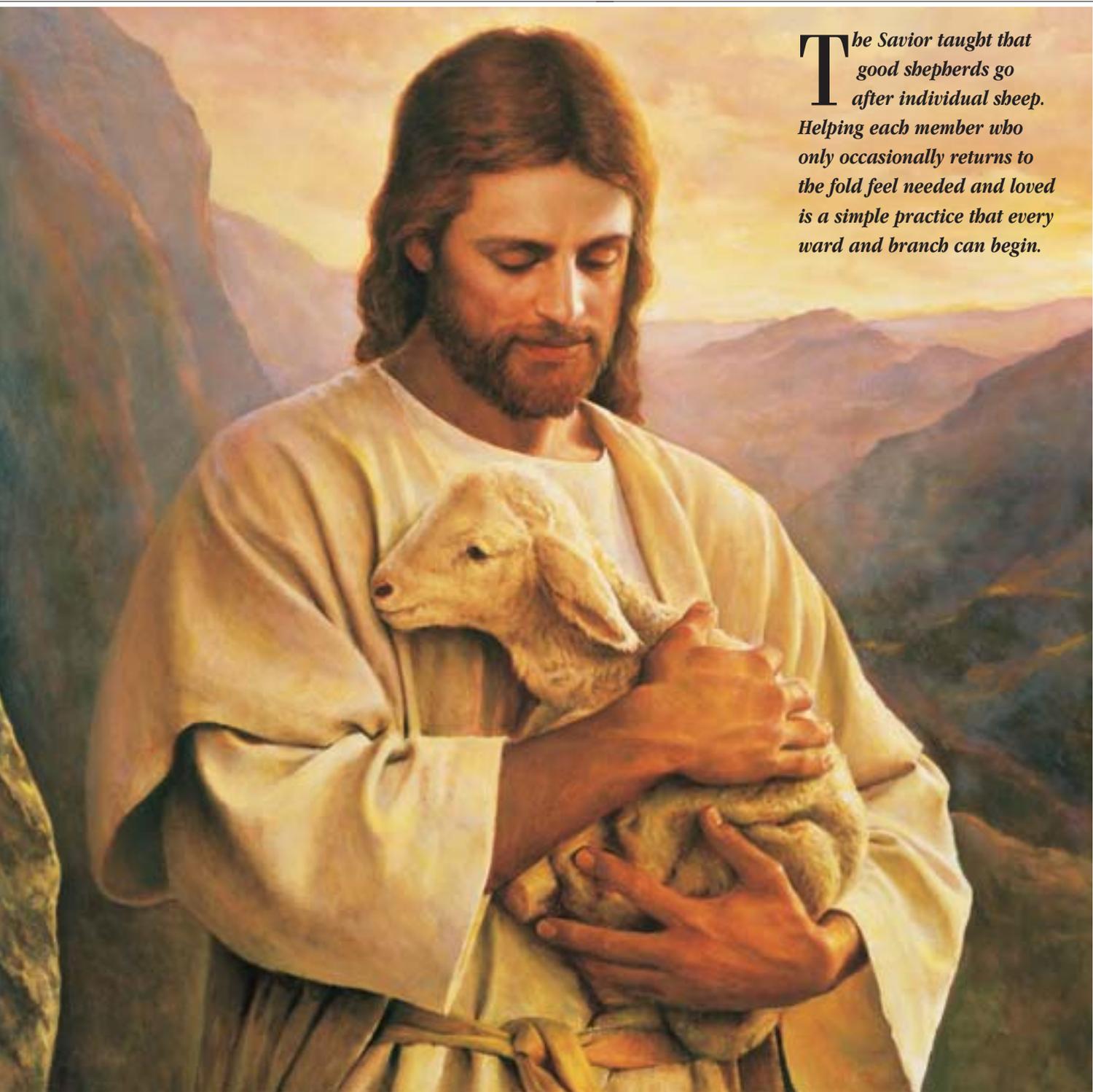
"If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matthew 18:12).

The Savior taught that good shepherds go after individual sheep that don't return to the fold. Yet we frequently focus on the ninety and

nine, leaving those who are lost to continue wandering from the Church. In every sacrament meeting, for example, our clerks count the number of sheep who returned to the fold. They store this number in a safe place for the quarterly report, and then we go home. If we conformed our ways to God's ways, we'd list the names of the individual members who could have returned to the fold on that Sunday but didn't come. Then we'd go find them.

My friend who served as mission president in France instituted a practice like this in one particular district. At the end of Sunday meetings, the branch councils and missionaries together named the members and investigators who could have been there but didn't come. They each took an assignment to contact one of those individuals that same day with this message: "We sure missed you today. Are you OK? It's not the same for the rest of us when you can't come. Can I help? Can you come next Sunday?" Within two years, sacrament meeting attendance in the district increased from 540 to 725—in a region where convert baptisms are infrequent.

We should be careful not to offend members who deliberately do not want to attend. But helping each member who only occasionally returns to the fold on Sunday to feel needed and feel our love is a simple practice



The Savior taught that good shepherds go after individual sheep. Helping each member who only occasionally returns to the fold feel needed and loved is a simple practice that every ward and branch can begin.

that every ward and branch can begin. Many less-active members got that way because they didn't return to the fold one Sunday and nobody seemed to notice.

2 "... by the weak and the simple" (D&C 1:23).

Some wards and branches suffer from inadequate leadership. The reason is often that we rely on the same qualified

people to fill key callings, denying others experiences in which personal growth can occur. When a branch is just emerging and there are no alternatives, leaders extend callings to people who don't fit the traditional mold of talented, capable leaders and invite them to assume important responsibility. During such periods, the branch and its members often grow in exciting ways. Many times, however, there comes a point when a group of talented, experienced

leaders and teachers has coalesced. When there are capable people available to ensure that Church programs run efficiently, we often stop drafting people from the periphery of capability into the positions of responsibility in which they can grow. Because they seem less qualified than those in the experienced core, we leave them on the periphery. The experienced leaders and teachers play musical chairs, exchanging positions of responsibility.

This is not the Lord's way. Building His Church on the backs of the simple and weak (see D&C 1:19) was not a temporary, stop-gap staffing plan to tide the Church over during its early years until enough experienced, committed, qualified leaders had arrived on the scene. The Lord deliberately weakened Gideon's army so that Israel wouldn't get confused about whose power had led them to victory (see Judges 6; 7). None of Jesus's original Twelve Apostles had evidenced adequate experience or commitment when He called them. Enoch, Moses, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Amos, and Joseph Smith were unqualified by the world's standards when the Lord put them to work. But God transformed them.

We will build greater strength and our wards and branches will grow when we stop relying solely on the strongest members—when the experienced and most talented of our leaders are called to supporting roles, to train and help those who can become strong as they serve in positions into which they can grow.

3 *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35).*

The percentage of potential missionaries who serve missions is considerably less than it should be. Mission presidents also find that many of those who accept mission calls are not prepared for the rigors of the work or to teach the gospel with competence and conviction. We've

CHRIST CALLING PETER AND ANDREW, BY JAMES TAYLOR HARWOOD



None of Jesus's original Twelve Apostles had evidenced adequate experience or commitment when He called them.

raised the bar to improve our missionary work. But this doesn't solve the underlying problem, that we're preparing only a small fraction of the young people on our membership rolls to become committed, courageous missionaries.

Why are we not doing better in this crucial area? One reason may be that the focus of many parents and youth leaders is to help our youth *find* their lives. Too often we define strong youth programs as those with a large “critical mass” of youth, well-planned activities, and opportunities for Latter-day Saint friendships. These are good things to have. But while we work so hard to provide enriching experiences for our youth, we sometimes deny them the most important opportunity of all—the chance to *lose* their lives for the sake of the gospel.

The Savior's formula for converting our hearts to His cause is unambiguous. He instructs us to lose our lives in His service. I recently asked a stake Young Women president how she kept her girls active, given the lack of a “critical mass” in some branches in her stake. She responded: “Their faithfulness has little to do with how many girls there are. What matters is whether they learn to love serving God. I grew up in a little branch. When I was 12 our branch organist moved, and though I could barely play the piano, I was called to be the branch organist. I practiced and practiced those hymns. I wouldn't have thought of missing sacrament meeting, because the branch needed me. At 15 I was called to teach Primary. I loved those kids. Do you think I'd have missed church or done something that would have been a bad example? Never. They needed me. My transition from Young Women to Relief Society was easy and natural because I had learned to love serving the Lord.”

A strong youth program is not defined by the numbers of youth. Nor is it defined by the charisma of youth leaders. Rather, it is one that gives every young person the opportunity to lose his or her life for the sake of the Savior.

A few years ago the Young Men leaders in a ward in the Boston Massachusetts Stake, were troubled. Only 3 of 35 young men on the membership rolls were attending church, and it had been years since anyone from the ward had served a mission. Attempts to reactivate and retain these young men through interesting activities fell short, as activities in Boston's schools and community proved to be formidable competitors for these young men's interests. The stake and ward Young Men leaders then began a concerted effort to give their young men opportunities to lose their lives in serving the Lord. The active young men were given assignments each week to contact quorum members who missed Sunday meetings and to arrange transportation for them to come the next week. The boys who began attending church again were given assignments to contact others who weren't attending. Some were called to take the sacrament to shut-in members each Sunday. One was called to set Duty to God Award goals with each young man and to follow up by tracking progress weekly. Within two years 16 young men

were actively attending the ward's Sunday meetings. Each had a calling that made it important for him to be there.

Children whose families provide opportunities to lose their lives for the sake of the gospel generally aren't those at risk. The youth whose lives leaders need most urgently to influence are those whose parents do not regularly enroll them in the Savior's service. A strong youth program isn't one that coddles these at-risk youth. Rather, it will give them opportunities to sacrifice in the service of God, to feel needed in the Church and feel the Spirit as they serve.

If the reason for attending church between ages 12 and 18 is fellowship and fun, then Relief Society and elders quorum can be a

In one stake, leaders began a concerted effort to give their young men opportunities to lose their lives in serving the Lord.





PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINA SMITH

There is a calling far higher than that of stake president, bishop, or Relief Society president. It is to be a doer of good, a disciple of Christ, an intermediary through whom God answers others' prayers.

shock: they aren't very fun. The burden of adult discipleship looms heavy if young people have never shouldered the Savior's yoke. His message "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30) runs counter to the wisdom of man. More of our young people will serve missions and become faithful adults if our ward leaders spot the riskiness of their situation when they are young and invite them to try the yoke on—not just in once-a-year service projects but in serving side-by-side with adults on a weekly basis in callings where they will feel the Spirit as they do the Lord's work.

4 *"Ye must . . . become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:38).*

Few of the Savior's statements are as counterintuitive to the wisdom of man as this one—which invites adults to abandon much of what they have learned about the impossible and to trust in God as innocently as little children do. A factor that often seems to restrain the Church's progress is the reluctance of some of our best and busiest leaders to do this.

I learned an important lesson about

becoming like a child in the context of missionary work. Long ago I had concluded that it was quite simple to administer the mechanics of missionary meetings, but I could not *lead* that work with passion and credibility unless I could speak in present-tense verbs and first-person pronouns about finding people for the missionaries to teach. I have learned to use terms that associate me with Mormonism in my conversations—comments about my mission to Korea, my children's missions, my assignments in the Church, my having attended Brigham Young University, and so on. These comments open the door for a conversation about the Church. Most who notice that I have opened this door choose not to walk through it. A few do, however, usually saying, "So you're a Mormon?" I then ask if they'd like to learn more about us.

In my attempt to lead by example a few years ago, I had set October 15 as a goal by which I hoped to find someone for the missionaries to teach. By mid-September, however, I had not been able to find anyone who expressed any interest. I was extremely busy with my employment and my Church calling and simply could see no way to meet any new people by my date of October 15. I began to feel that because I was doing all I could to serve in the Church, it would be OK if just that once I didn't find someone for the missionaries to teach.

Rather than accept this impossibility, however, I felt impressed instead to follow the Savior's command and seek the faith of a little child. I shifted the focus of my prayers and fasting, pleading that because I had no more time to find someone, I needed someone who wanted to know about the Church to cross my path. I pledged that when I met that

person I would invite him or her to come to our home and meet with the missionaries.

On October 12 my wife, Christine, and I spoke at an institute fireside. A sweet, warm spirit was present. Afterward, a Harvard graduate student approached me and asked: “Professor Christensen, I understand that sometimes when someone wants to learn about your church they can meet with missionaries to take lessons. Is there any way I could do this in your home?” I stood there stunned. It was all I could do to not start crying. She had no idea how directly God had answered my pleadings through her.

When Moroni foresaw that many in the last days would believe God had ceased to be a God of miracles (Mormon 9:15–20), perhaps he had in his view not just those of other faiths but some of us as well. When we are doing all we can and our leaders ask us to do even more, miracles are the only option. That is why the Savior asked us to forsake the rational limits of our adult minds and employ the faith of little children instead.

5 *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). “Out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).*

Despite the Savior’s assurances that the small things are the big things, many in the Church feel inferior for never having served in presidencies or bishoprics. Others who have served in leadership positions feel “put out to pasture” when given a less-prominent calling.

I once felt passed over when another man was called to a leadership position I had felt I might receive. In the crisis of self-confidence that ensued, I realized that because our minds are finite, we create hierarchies and statistically aggregate people. We perceive stake presidents to be higher than bishops and Primary presidents higher than Primary teachers because they preside over more people.



NAAMAN CURED OF LEPROSY, BY PAUL MANN

Just as Naaman had to overcome initial skepticism when Elisha prescribed a simple cure for his leprosy, we need faith to follow God’s simple instructions—to believe.

But God has an infinite mind. He needs no statistics above the level of the individual in order to have a perfect understanding of what is happening. This means, I realized, that the way God will measure my life is not by the numbers of people over whom I have presided but by the individual people whose lives I have touched with His love and with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With this sense of my most important calling, I began to fast and pray that God would give me opportunities daily to bless and help people. As I acted upon the promptings I received, it was as if God spoke to me more frequently because He knew I was listening. This period in my life proved to be one of extraordinary spiritual growth. There is a calling far higher than that of stake president, bishop, or Relief Society president. It is to be a doer of good, a disciple of Christ, an intermediary through whom God answers others’ prayers.

We Need Faith

Just as Naaman had to overcome initial skepticism when Elisha prescribed a simple cure for his leprosy (see 2 Kings 5:1–14), we need faith to follow God’s simple instructions—to believe, for example, that if we call upon our youth to lose their lives in the service of the Savior, it will cement them in the Church and not drive them from it. It takes faith to expect that if we call the humblest and weakest to positions of responsibility, God will magnify them to succeed. Can leaders with no free time find people for the missionaries to teach? Will great things result if we release some of the most talented members and call them to bring the love and blessings of God to those of His children who need truth and comfort? It takes faith to take God at His word. But when the forces of evil seem to be standing in our way as we serve in the kingdom of God, may we prayerfully consider solutions that are God’s ways and not man’s. ■

Never Alone

BY ANNE GRENZEBACH

Imagine that you have decided to join a church different from the one you were raised in. Now imagine telling your family. How would they react? Would they be supportive or disappointed in you? If you were to lose their friendship, would converting to another faith be worth it?

These are some of the concerns I faced a few years ago when I was investigating the Church. A friend advised me to follow my heart and believe that the Lord would help me overcome my fears of rejection by family and friends. With that simple faith, I moved forward and was baptized in April 2002.

Being the only Church member in your family is not an easy path. There is no family support to help you keep your covenants, read your scriptures daily, and do the little things to continue building your testimony. Staying motivated falls squarely on your shoulders. As the only Church member in my family, I've found my pillars of strength to be immersing myself in the Church, sharing the gospel with others, focusing on temple work, and never losing hope that my family will someday join the Church.

Support amid Opposition

Until I joined the Church, I had never seriously disappointed my family. When I joined, I knew they felt betrayed, and I felt horrible for hurting them so much. I continued in the Church because I knew in my heart that it was what the Lord wanted for me—and for them.

I was not living close to home at the time. Whenever I visited, I was met with accusations and insults. The situation worsened when I decided to serve a mission.

My grandmother had tears in her eyes when she said, "Annie girl, if you serve this mission, you will break my heart." I told her that a mission was something I had been prompted to do, and if I didn't serve, I would be disobeying Heavenly Father.

*As the only
Church
member
in my family,
I've found several
pillars of strength
in the gospel.*

While I prepared for my mission I found comfort and strength within my ward family. They did an amazing job of helping me adjust to the lifestyle changes that come with being a Church member, and they gave me support in coping with the opposition of my family. I found it easier to persevere despite the frustrations by immersing myself in the Church through callings, activities, and going on exchanges with the missionaries. Also, I lived close to Palmyra, New York, so I often found myself sitting in the Sacred Grove, pondering my situation and seeking peace.

Serving Families

Although I had support from my ward, I still felt frustrated and misunderstood by my family. Everything they knew about the Church they had learned from outside sources, and they would not accept anything I told them. I tried to discuss the gospel with them and correct their misconceptions, but I never seemed to succeed in reaching common ground. The gap separating me from my loved ones was widening, and I did not know how to narrow it. By the time I left on my mission to Virginia, I had almost lost hope that my family would ever show interest in the Church.

Through my letters home, I continued my efforts to



My ward family supported me in coping with the opposition from my family, and I found additional peace by pondering my situation while in the Sacred Grove.

share the gospel. I remember inviting my father to meet with the missionaries. He said frankly that he was not interested. Reading his response was one of the hardest experiences of my mission, but it gave me a greater drive to work hard and share the gospel with anyone willing to listen. I came to realize that everyone is someone's family member and that by helping one person I might be answering someone else's prayers. I strive to continue in my efforts in sharing the gospel, even though I am no longer a full-time missionary.

Blessings through the Temple

When Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles got up to speak at the April 2005 general conference, I felt a strong impression that I needed to pay close attention to what he was about to say. He started his talk with these words: "My message is to those who are converts to the Church. . . . You are not the exception in the Church. To you I wish to say how much the Lord loves you and trusts you. And even more, I wish to tell you how much He depends on you."¹



Even though I am no longer a full-time missionary, I strive to continue sharing the gospel. Family history work and service in the temple also bring peace and happiness.

He spoke of how converts should never stop trying to share the gospel with their families. He then explained that another important aspect of missionary work within the family is temple work.

Elder Eyring's words inspired me to make goals about temple attendance and family history work. I have found much fulfillment in taking family names to the temple and have received some amazing, unexpected blessings in the process. It has greatly increased my connection with those on the other side of the veil. I have seen miracles as I've tried to find their names, and I have felt their presence while performing their ordinances.

Another blessing came when I saw my grandmother for the first time after my mission. She gave me a list of names to take to the temple. She also talked about how she wanted to read the "Mormon book" because she remembered her father reading it. She now calls me every week to talk about what she has learned from the Book of Mormon.

Prior to leaving on my mission, I had felt an impression that my grandmother's husband—who died in 1996, before I joined the Church—was striving to help soften her heart. While I was in the Missionary Training Center, the elders in my district did his temple work. Sitting in the celestial room, I was overwhelmed with the idea of my entire family being there together. I like to think that my grandfather is doing all he can to help our family accept the gospel.

Continuing in Hope

My mom came to pick me up from my mission, and it happened to be October general conference weekend. She watched three of the conference sessions with me and enjoyed them so much that she asked for them on DVD for Christmas. To me, this was a miracle to let me know that I need not lose hope.

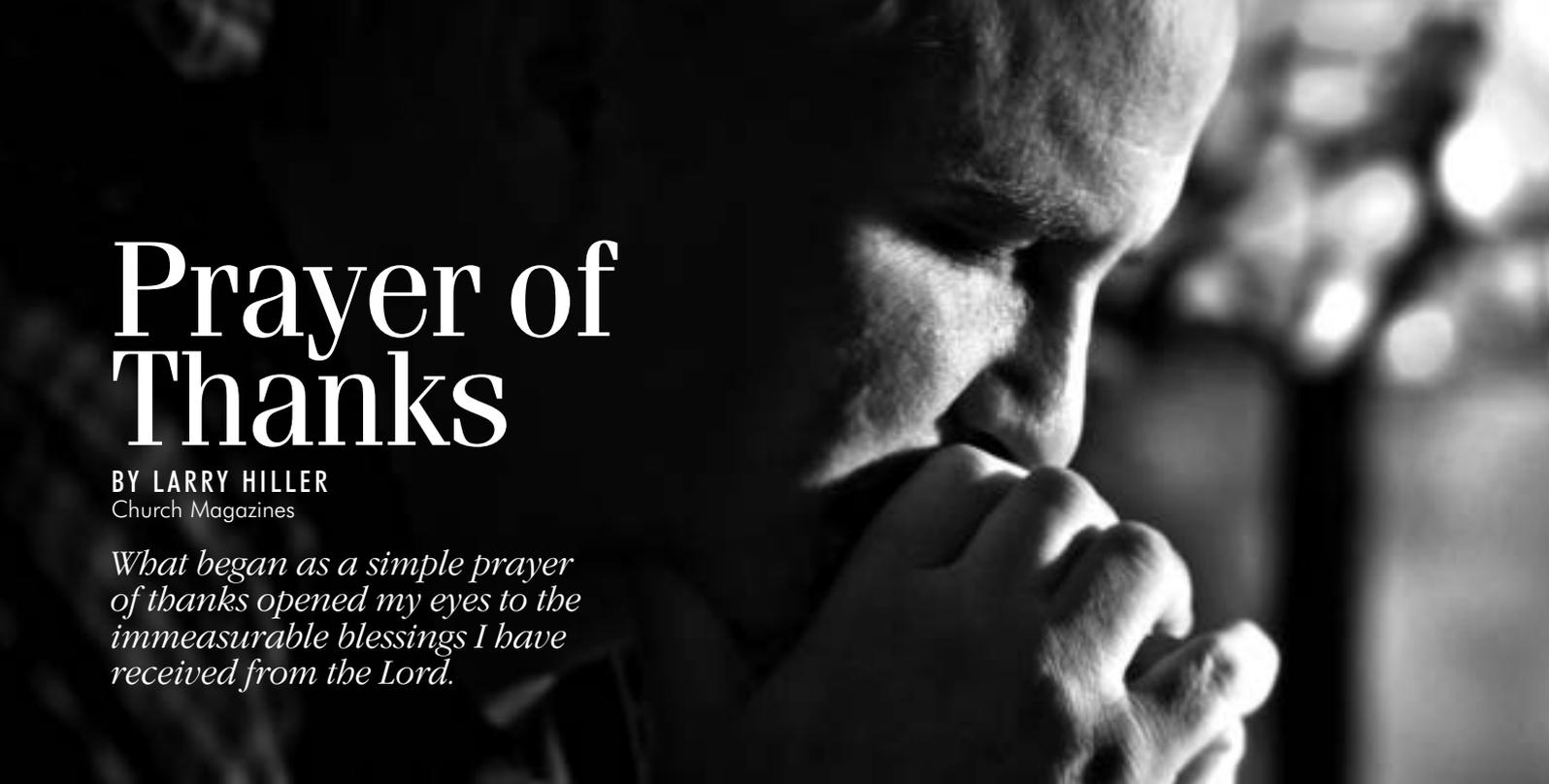
At the present time, no one in my family has shown much interest in joining the Church, but I feel it will happen one day—whether in this life or the next. Our relationship has improved so greatly that I know it was not through my own efforts but through the workings of the Spirit. Heavenly Father blesses us with miracles and the righteous desires of our hearts when we are striving to do His will. I have felt His strength and support to move forward, and I know that I will never be alone in His true Church. ■

NOTE

1. "Hearts Bound Together," *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2005, 77.

WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE

- Find comfort and strength in your ward or branch family.
- Seek peace and direction through prayer.
- Share the gospel with others. Remember that everyone has a family, and you may be the answer to someone else's prayer.
- Participate in family history and temple work.
- Never give up hope that your family may some day accept the gospel.



Prayer of Thanks

BY LARRY HILLER
Church Magazines

What began as a simple prayer of thanks opened my eyes to the immeasurable blessings I have received from the Lord.

There I was on my knees beside the bed, ready to say my personal prayers—prayers that were so often full of petitions and pleas. Now, however, the thought came into my heart that I needed to offer a prayer of thanks only. How long would such a prayer take? I didn't know, but I did know that if I offered the usual short list of thanks, there would be little risk of falling asleep on my knees.

I paused for a while before starting and realized that I did need to make one request of the Lord—that He open my eyes to my blessings.

Beginning to pray, I found myself expressing thanks for the same things I always acknowledge in my prayers—my wife and children, my testimony and Church membership, and my health. But this time I found myself contemplating each of those blessings, pausing, allowing the Spirit to deepen my understanding. A pattern of prayer mingled with meditation began.

Giving thanks for my wife, I was led to a deeper realization of how much I owed to her deceased parents for the nurture that had produced this woman who is, in turn, such a blessing to me.

Expressing gratitude for my own parents brought thoughts of my more distant ancestors. Understanding flowed into my mind that they had endured lives much harder than mine. They had lived according to the light available to them in their time. Family traditions of goodness and honor produced the grandparents in Germany

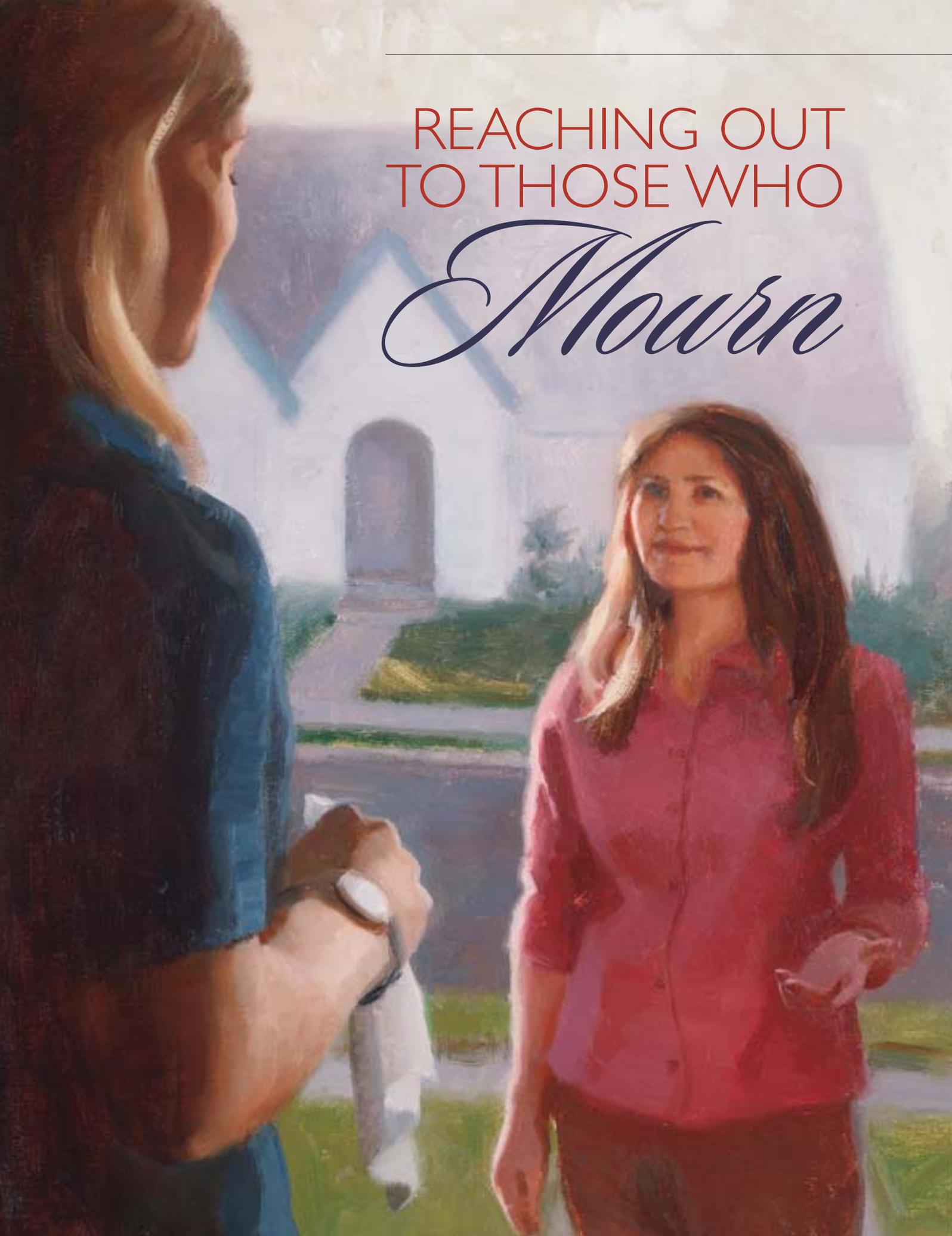
and the great-great-grandmother in England who accepted the message of the restored gospel.

Grateful for my testimony and Church membership, I then found myself thinking of how much I owed Joseph Smith and the great prophets before and since. And then came thoughts of my own humble teachers in Primary and Sunday School, in Aaronic Priesthood and seminary, who patiently taught the gospel to this smart-mouthed kid.

I'm no Enos (see Enos 1:4), but for me this turned into a fairly long prayer because the Spirit continued prompting me. I am also no Enoch, who beheld all the inhabitants of the earth (see Moses 7:21). But in my own limited way, I saw more clearly than ever how my life has been blessed by the goodness of countless others.

I was also left with the distinct impression that the flow of blessings into my life was deeper and broader than I could comprehend. As I gave thanks for my health, I understood that I had been protected and preserved innumerable times, that I had been blissfully unaware of the harmful infections I never contracted and the accidents that never happened because the hand of the Lord was over me. In how many other ways had I been blessed without even knowing?

Perhaps the answer won't come until I stand to be judged and I see my life with penetrating clarity. Then, despite my present attempts to be gratefully aware, I expect to be astonished and overwhelmed. All of these lessons I learned from a prayer of thanks. ■

An oil painting depicting two women in conversation. On the left, a woman with blonde hair, seen in profile, wears a blue top and a watch. On the right, a woman with long brown hair wears a pink button-down shirt. They stand on a grassy area with a white church building in the background. The text 'REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO' is written in red, and 'Mourn' is in a large, dark blue cursive font.

REACHING OUT
TO THOSE WHO

Mourn

BY LARENE HALLING PETERSEN

After the loss of my husband, I learned what it means to comfort those who stand in need.

On April 15, 1981, Russ, my husband of 11 years, was killed in a car accident on his way home from work. I was left with four small children, ages 10, 7, 3, and 2. Looking back on the days and weeks following the accident, I can almost feel the cold numbness inside me that I felt then. I don't remember much about those days, but I do remember the love and compassion I received from others. It made those dark days bearable.

We often include in our prayers a plea for the Lord to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (see Mosiah 18:9). But how often do we take the opportunity to be the one who gives the comfort? So many times we feel uncomfortable around someone who is suffering a loss because we don't know what to say or do. I too have arrived at a viewing or funeral wondering what I would say. However, through my own experience I learned about what someone in mourning needs, as well as what others can do to help.

Visitors When I Needed Them

During the days before and after my husband's funeral, I had so many people visit, and I truly felt the love of Christ from those who came. But, inevitably, the day came when visitors had to leave, friends had to return home to their own families, and I was alone. When some of the numbness wore off and reality began to sink in, I realized how alone I was. As I knelt by my bed on one occasion, the tears flowing freely, I cried over and over to my Heavenly Father: "Please send someone to me. I can't be alone tonight."

Five minutes later a sister in my ward, whom I didn't know well, knocked on the door. She said she had been thinking about me and decided to drop by. She stayed for about 30 minutes, and as she was leaving a neighbor came over just to see if I was all right. Before this neighbor left,

more neighbors, a young couple, stopped by and invited my children and me to go with them for ice cream. By the time we got home, I felt I could face the next day.

These charitable people didn't feel the need to bring food or a gift when they visited me. They didn't feel the need to know me well in order to come. Some of my choicest experiences have been these spur-of-the-moment visits, when people knocked on my door unannounced and simply said, "I've been thinking about you and just felt I should come." I don't suppose these people know how much their visits helped, but I do know the Lord sent them in answer to my prayers.

A Helpful Hand Extended

I found that the little things people did for me meant so much: neighborhood fathers who played soccer and baseball with my sons; the neighbor who took all three of my sons on a fathers and sons' outing; the many invitations I received to lunch or to go shopping; offers to stay with my children so I could get away for a while; neighbors who tilled and planted my garden; the handshakes and cheery hellos from ward members at church; and the very special friend who said, "Call me anytime, day or night, and I'll be there." And she was.

Compassionate Communication

Through my experience I also gained insight into the communication between one who mourns and one who gives comfort. As friend after friend came through the line at Russ's viewing, too overcome to speak, all we could do was hug each other—no words were necessary. Others I didn't know as well would simply squeeze my hand or pat my shoulder. If they spoke at all, the simple words "I'm so sorry" were all I needed to know they cared.

Then during the following weeks and even months, I often needed to talk. I found that those who helped the most were those who let me talk instead of talking to me. They didn't tell me to feel a certain way, or to be grateful for the blessings I had. I was grateful for the many blessings I

had received, but I still struggled with many emotions. I felt so much better when someone would say, "I understand that you feel that way, and that's OK." This allowed me to open up and experience my emotions in order to effectively deal with them.

I noticed many people were afraid to mention Russ's name for fear it would remind me of painful things. But because I was already thinking about him most of the time, what a relief it was when people opened the subject and I was free to express my thoughts. The hardest times of all were those when people would avoid talking about Russ, almost acting as though he

THEIR LIVES MANIFEST LOVE



"Those who journey to higher ground love the Lord with all their hearts. . . . They also love Heavenly Father's children, and their lives manifest that love. They care for their brothers and sisters. They nurture, serve, and sustain their spouses and children. In the spirit of love and kindness, they build up those around them. They give freely of their substance to others. They mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort."

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Journey to Higher Ground," Ensign, Nov. 2005, 19.

had never existed. It was so much easier when they would mention his name in a natural way and allow me to take it from there if I wished.

Two weeks after Russ died, I told the Lord I would accept Russ's death and asked Him to guide me in what He wanted me to do and be. Though I was by myself at times, I was never really alone. I made steps toward dealing with my husband's death, and Heavenly Father did His part to make sure I had the help I needed when I needed it. I am grateful to those who acted on those words so often used in prayer: "Comfort those who stand in need of comfort." ■

I found that the little things people did for me meant so much, like the neighborhood fathers who played baseball with my sons.



Become an Instrument in the Hands of God by Strengthening Your Personal Testimony of Jesus Christ



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.

How Can I Strengthen My Testimony?

Alma 32:27: “Experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Honestly evaluate your personal life. How strong is your own testimony? Is it truly a sustaining power in your life, or is it more a hope that what you have learned is true? . . . Your testimony will be fortified as you exercise faith in Jesus Christ, in His teachings, and in His limitless power. . . .

A powerful testimony distills from quiet moments of prayer and pondering. . . . A strong testimony comes line upon line, precept upon precept. It requires faith, time, consistent obedience, and a willingness to sacrifice” (“The Power of a Strong Testimony,” *Liabona*,

Jan. 2002, 101–3; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 87–88).

Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric:

“Acquiring . . . a testimony does not . . . come without personal effort. One must desire to know, study to learn, live to merit, and pray to receive. When so pursued in humility and faith, the knowledge comes, and with this knowledge comes both the sweet assurance that all will be well and the inner strength to make it so” (“Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 33).

How Can My Testimony Lead Me to Do God’s Will?

Moroni 10:32: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “It is

not . . . enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something. . . .

This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. . . . Charity, ‘the pure love of Christ’ (Moro. 7:47), is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something

one becomes” (“The Challenge to Become,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2001, 40–42; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34).

Anne C.

Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency:

“We can rejoice together in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, gratefully acknowledging the blessing of having a testimony of the Savior and His Atonement for each of us. This I know—our individual efforts to become instruments in the hands of God have not been easy and have stretched us spiritually, enriching our mortal journeys in the most personal, glorious ways” (“Knowing the Lord’s Will for You,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 114). ■



A Last-Minute Change

By Jackie Auman

In November 2001 my younger sister was diagnosed with a serious form of cancer. She was 45 years old and the mother of four sons, one serving a mission in Portugal. Immediately, her ward and stake in Arizona, as well as her family, began to fast and pray in her behalf. But before the end of May, the cancer had won the battle, and she fell into a coma. After we received priesthood blessings and prayed fervently, we decided to remove her from life support. The doctors assured us that her passing would be quick. But eight days later her status had remained the same, making each day long and grievous.

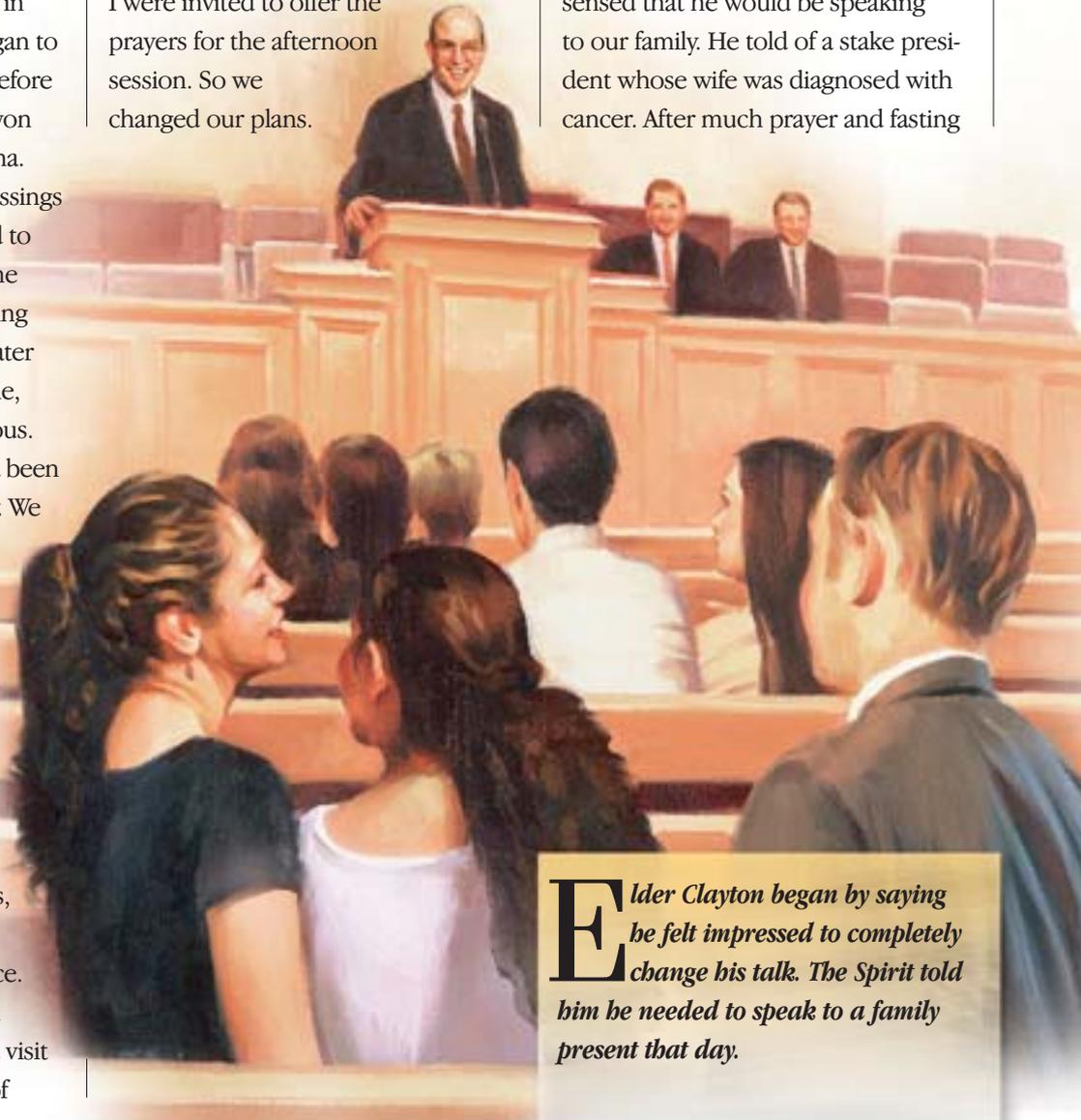
The previous few months had been a time of reflection for our family. We loved my sister, and although we understood the plan of salvation, it was difficult at times to have faith in the Lord that all would be well. Somehow we felt that if we had enough faith, my sister would be cured. So we questioned the power of that faith. We knew that Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers, but we were devastated by His answer and unable to feel at peace.

Our stake conference in Utah was scheduled for June 2, with a visit from an Area Seventy. Because of

the number of members in the stake, stake conference was divided into two sessions. Our three sons who were attending a singles ward in the stake were assigned to the morning session. The rest of the family was to attend the afternoon session. My husband and I decided that attending the morning session as a family would be best. Shortly after we made that decision, however, my husband and I were invited to offer the prayers for the afternoon session. So we changed our plans.

During the Saturday evening session of conference, we noted a change. Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy had been assigned to our conference at the last minute, replacing the Area Seventy.

On Sunday afternoon Elder Clayton began by saying he felt impressed to completely change his talk. The Spirit told him he needed to speak to a family present that day. I immediately sensed that he would be speaking to our family. He told of a stake president whose wife was diagnosed with cancer. After much prayer and fasting



Elder Clayton began by saying he felt impressed to completely change his talk. The Spirit told him he needed to speak to a family present that day.



by family members, friends, and members of her stake, she had fully recovered.

Elder Clayton then talked about another stake president, one whose wife had died of cancer during his service as stake president. She left several small children in his care. Many people had also fasted and prayed for her recovery. This story was particularly touching to Elder Clayton because this woman was his wife's only sister.

Elder Clayton went on to explain that no matter how much faith is exercised at times like these, sometimes the answer is no. Then he read what has become one of our family's favorite scriptures, Daniel 3:17–18:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

“*But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (emphasis added).

Elder Clayton did not speak of any doctrine that was new to us that afternoon. But a miracle happened that left us in awe. The Lord made sure we would be in attendance during the afternoon session by inspiring someone to ask us to pray. He also arranged for one of His servants, one who had had an experience similar to ours, to speak to us. And finally, He gave us someone wise and obedient who had lived his life

in such a way that he could hear the Spirit and respond accordingly. Our spirits were touched in indescribable ways by that experience.

The next day we received the call telling us my sister had passed away. Although we were saddened, a sweet spirit of comfort was in our home as we prayed for her family—this time with full confidence that the Lord's will had been done—and thanked Him for His precious answer to our prayers. ■

Jesus Christ and hoped to find a church to strengthen my faith in Him.

One day there came into our house a large picture book called *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Annual*. I do not know where it came from. At the time I thought that perhaps one of my friends had brought it over and forgotten to take it home. It had picture stories of Buffalo Bill and Billy the Kid, just the kind of information that was important to a boy who wanted to be a cowboy. It also told the story in pictures of a persecuted people who were expelled from a beautiful city by a lawless mob and forced to trek hundreds of miles and endure endless torment before they established a new

home in a western wilderness. Each little picture told

I Remembered the Crickets

By Dennis Birks

I was born in England in 1942 into a loving family of a mother, father, and sister. When I was seven, we were blessed with another addition to our family—a baby boy. My mother loved the Savior but was not a member of any particular church. She would attend the nearest church and encourage my sister and me to attend with her. Consequently, I learned a great deal about





a dramatic story of suffering and faith, and the story included a few pictures of a miracle involving crickets eating crops and seagulls eating crickets.

I read the story several times before I realized that the poor, persecuted people were members of a church. Then it slowly dawned on me that this church was the one that I was looking for. I wanted to join that church. Unfortunately, I was presented with a problem. The last picture in the story described Salt Lake City, Utah. From another source I was able to learn that Utah was in the United States of America. Since I had no hope of traveling from England to Utah, I would have to give up my plan of joining the Church. It never occurred to me that the Church might be located anywhere other than the United States.

And so matters rested until 11 years later. By that time my family had immigrated to Australia and settled in Sydney. There my brother began investigating a new religion. He brought home a few pamphlets that interested me and said he would ask the elders to call. I agreed, thinking I would be visited by a couple of distinguished old men. I was quite surprised when two young men about my own age called and taught me the basics of the plan of salvation. I was intrigued and agreed to

undertake a series of discussions.

I listened to the missionaries but had no intention of joining the Church, especially when I learned about tithing. One day, however, one of the missionaries started talking about some pioneers who had been forced to make a long march to a place called Salt Lake City. I pricked up my ears and started to ask questions. Was this the church with the crickets and seagulls? When he mentioned Brigham Young, I immediately recognized the name and realized I had arrived at a major crossroads in my life. If I was to join any church, this was the one.

The problem of tithing was solved when I learned about the Word of Wisdom. I calculated that I spent 10 percent of my income on cigarettes and alcohol. So by paying tithing I would not be any worse off financially, and the money would be put to a far better use than clogging my lungs with black tar and poisoning my liver.

In the meantime, my brother had also given the pamphlets to my mother. She agreed to read them on the train to work that day. When she came home in the evening, she was totally converted to the Church. She was disappointed to hear that she had to have a series of missionary

lessons before she could be baptized!

So we all joined the Church—first my brother, then I joined a week later, and my mother was baptized and confirmed a week after that. My father held out for 21 years but finally joined in 1985. We were all sealed in the Sydney temple a year later.

I have been to Salt Lake City several times and have visited Church historic sites in Palmyra, Kirtland, and Nauvoo. In all the places I go, I am reminded of the story in the Buffalo Bill picture book and never cease to thank the Lord for bringing it into my life when I was a boy of 10. ■

One Person, One Bucket

By James W. Ritchie

On July 12, 2004, I awoke at about 5:20 a.m. and took my regular peek out the window. The guard at our compound gate was very much awake. A lady was shaking her fingers in his face, and another 25 women were standing against the fence, each carrying one or more empty buckets or basins. I quickly got dressed and went out.

The water had been shut off the day before in Tema—a city of 100,000—and for miles around. No one had had water for about 24 hours, and panic was beginning to brew. We hadn't noticed the problem

because the Ghana Missionary Training Center, where I was serving as MTC president, has a large storage tank, and we pumped from that storage whenever we needed water. Even though no fresh water was being added, we were living off our storage.

Also, for some reason, there was still some water in our meetinghouse's outdoor tap (in the same guarded compound), and someone had alerted the masses that the Mormons had water. They were coming from all over with their pails to fetch it. The custodian had beaten me to the meetinghouse and was opposed to letting anyone in. He was sure it was only a matter of a very short time before we would also be without water.

Someone had alerted the masses that the Mormons had water. They were coming from all over with their pails to fetch it.

I summoned the guard and the

custodian. I asked the custodian what the Savior would do. I asked him to ponder the good or the bad will that our decision would generate. I told him that the water might very well run out in our tap, but it would be better if it ran out with a neighbor's bucket catching the last drop. He agreed, and we opened the gate and tried to create order among the ever-increasing crowd of people who were running to get in. We begged them to limit their take to "one person, one bucket." It was now about 6:15. The line was long and the water pressure low, but the tap kept producing.

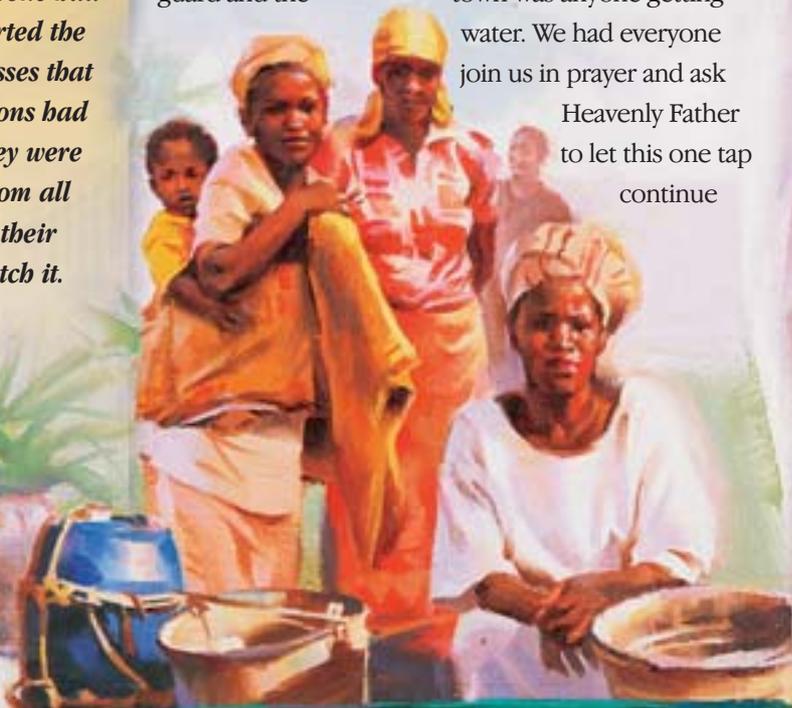
We believed the water would stop. Nowhere else in town was anyone getting water. We had everyone join us in prayer and ask Heavenly Father to let this one tap continue

producing water for these very thirsty people. The tap never stopped. And the people were so grateful.

Another wonderful thing happened during this crisis. We checked the MTC storage tank, and it was only half full. We didn't want to advertise that we

had this water because we thought we could save it for real emergencies if the crisis went on for days. But then a pickup truck with several large barrels in the back pulled into the compound. It was from the Tema General Hospital. They also had a large storage tank for emergencies, but it was already empty, and they had thirsty patients. So we let them back their truck up to the MTC tank and fill their barrels from our emergency supply. We told them to come back for more if needed. We would share until our cache was gone. They were grateful.

At about 3:00 p.m. that afternoon, the water in the city was restored, and those in line took their empty buckets and ran home. But the good feelings still linger. ■



“We Love You” Days

We Love You” days began when our family decided to help our then three-year-old who was struggling with temper tantrums. One particular day we filled our home with thoughtful expressions of our love for him. His response was so positive that we decided to

encourage “We Love You” days throughout the year to honor each family member. Some of our favorite activities for making our loved ones feel special include writing loving messages and hiding them in plastic eggs or holding treasure hunts with similar “treasure” notes. We have also made posters, service coupons, treats, and favorite meals. And to “officially” grant them royalty status, we’ve even made paper crowns and pillowcase capes. More important

than the special activities and decorations, however, is our time spent together as a family, telling our loved ones how much they mean to us.

Erica Farr, Nevada

Our Family Storybook

Coloring pictures and reading stories are two things children love. So why not combine them with a bit of family history for a creative, meaningful gift? My daughter-in-law, Katie, did just that while preserving some memories my son, John, had of his grandfather. She printed one or two simple sentences per page to form a booklet highlighting events of my father’s life. After telling the story, John asked his children to illustrate each page.

Since my grandchildren didn’t know their great-grandfather well, this was a special way for them to learn about him. With the finished copy in hand, they then paid him a visit. My dad was visibly touched to receive this uniquely personalized tribute.

You could help your children or grandchildren to create a similar book, featuring your own life experiences or singling out a specific incident. Remember to keep your storytelling simple. Then laminate the finished pages and bind them at a local copy center, or simply slip them into archival sheet protectors





Family Night Surprise

We have a blended family with biological, adopted, and foster children. Having family home evenings that hold everyone's varied interests was a real chore for us—until I discovered the element of surprise. In a moment of desperation when no one would pay attention, I suddenly announced that we would all enjoy a “surprise activity” if they would listen to the lesson first. That got their immediate attention, and they were eager to cooperate. Though the first surprise

activity was admittedly impromptu, I have enjoyed planning several other successful activities, the majority of which focus on serving others.

We have made bread, assisted a neighbor in cleaning the yard, helped a family move, and made a quilt for a foster family. One time we played a spelling game together, an activity which benefited everyone but was

planned to help a particular child with homework.

Though I do most of the planning, you could easily let your children take turns helping (if they promise not to tell). It's not so much the activity that matters as how you “serve it up.” Our children simply enjoy doing new things together while they help others.

Samantha Licurse, Arizona



and place them in a binder. They make great bedtime stories and are a wonderful way to say “I love you.”

Judy Grabam, Utah

Sunday Dinner Quiz

Who spoke in sacrament meeting today?” “What topics did they address?”

These and other questions form a simple game our family likes to play at the Sunday dinner table. Over the years our friendly quizzes have not only helped our children to pay closer attention to what's said in sacrament meeting, but they have also sparked meaningful gospel discussions at home.

When our children were younger, we began by asking simple questions like “Who said the opening prayer?” or “What is the name of the deacon who passed the sacrament to our family?” Later we advanced to questions that required more understanding: “What scriptures did Sister Smith quote in her talk?” “How did they apply to the topic?” “Can you think of other scriptures that would also apply?”

Not every Sunday dinner is a doctrinal buffet. But playing this game has increased our family's reverence at church. As a result, we are better prepared to learn from the talks and feel the influence of the Holy Ghost during sacrament meeting.

Brad Snell, California

Resource Guide to the Rescue

As a Young Women leader in my ward, I often felt the need to search out extra resources to update my lessons. One particular week in the summer of 2005, I was assisting my daughter, Katie, with a Fourth of July fund-raiser for her drill squad. Because I knew I would have extra time, I had brought my lesson manual with me and several copies of the *Ensign* and the *New Era*. As I browsed through the Resource Guide, one article caught my eye and

I thought, “This would be perfect for my lesson this week!” Sure enough, using the article suggested in the guide, I was able to prepare one of the most effective lessons I had ever given to these young women. The girls responded very well. I have found this to be true not only in my Young Women calling but in other callings as well. Rather than searching for outside materials, using the Resource Guide and other approved resources has led to my best efforts as a teacher in any Church organization. I would recommend the suggestions in the Resource Guide to anyone.

Kerry Reed, Utah

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND



The First Presidency, bottom right, listens as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra on Temple Square perform during the 2006 First Presidency Christmas Devotional.

First Presidency Focuses on the Savior at Devotional

Of all the seasons of the year, there is none so beautiful as Christmas,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley during the annual First Presidency Christmas Devotional held in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City and broadcast around the world.

“Our hearts reach out to those in need. Love overcomes hate. . . . Love grows a little stronger, hearts are a little more generous. We are more inclined to strengthen feeble knees and lift up the hands that hang down. Children’s hearts are made glad. There comes an added magic in the air. There is a deep underlying current of happiness.”

After recounting the loss of his mother shortly before Christmas in 1930 and the difficult loss of his wife in 2004, President Hinckley said: “Shining through all of the darkness is the sublime figure of the Son of God, who gave His life that we might live. This is the true meaning of Christmas, the reality of the Atonement wrought by the Redeemer of the world.”

President Hinckley testified that Christ offers the hope of salvation to all men, even in these times of war, conflict, and difficult problems.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said Christmas is “a time for families, it is a

time for remembering, it is a time for gratitude.

“The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of love and of generosity and of goodness. . . . The spirit of Christmas is something I hope all of us would have within our hearts and within our lives, not only at this particular season but throughout the year.”

President Monson said that when we keep the spirit of Christmas, we keep the Spirit of Christ.

“The salutation ‘no room’ was not only heard by Joseph and Mary before the birth of Jesus, but was also endured by Him on frequent occasions in His ministry,” President Monson said.

“In our homes today we have rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, rooms for recreation. Do we have room for Christ? We have time for . . . activities that are part of our daily lives. Do we have time for Christ?”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught that “at this time of year when we commemorate His birth, we should also take time to contemplate with deep reverence His death and transcending sanctification of the Resurrection.”

In his remarks, President Faust focused on one of the Savior’s “great and profound teachings . . . to do for others

that which they cannot do for themselves.”

Anonymous giving reflects the Savior’s love, said President Faust. “I wish to express appreciation and thanks to all who open their hearts and give to others.

“Those of us who

contribute anonymously have sweet inner feelings of the Spirit that swell inside when we do something for others that cannot be traced back to ourselves. Anonymous giving gives the gift a higher form of sanctification.” ■

Tabernacle Choir Honored with Mother Teresa Award

The late Mother Teresa once said, “The world is hungry not only for food but also for beauty.” In November 2006, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was presented with an award named in her honor, recognizing “the achievements of those who beautify the world, especially in the fields of religion, social justice, and the arts.”

“This is the only choir that has touched the entire world with its beauty,” said Dan Paulos, director of the

St. Bernadette Institute of Sacred Art, which bestows the Mother Teresa Award. “There are a lot of choirs out there, but none so remarkable. It’s a gift of God, and it should be shared with the world.”

Choir members were honored in a simple ceremony following the weekly broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* on Sunday, November 19, 2006. The Very Reverend Joseph Mayor, Rector of the Cathedral of the Madeline, presented the award to Mac

Christensen, choir president, and Craig Jessop, music director, who accepted it on behalf of the choir.

“We are honored to accept this award on behalf of all the volunteers who make up our choir. We are also honored to be remembered by an award named after this saintly woman, Mother Teresa,” noted Scott L. Barrick, choir general manager.

The St. Bernadette Institute developed the award program to “rightfully acknowledge spiritual accomplishments in this secular world.” Previous recipients of the honor include Pope John Paul II, Maya Angelou, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, Braille without Borders, and many others.

Choir Announces 2007 Tour

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir will tour Canada and the midwest United States from June 21 through July 3, 2007.

It will perform concerts in Toronto, Canada; Chautauqua, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Nashville and Memphis, Tennessee. Sixty-five members of the Orchestra at Temple Square will accompany the 360-voice choir on tour.

Craig Jessop, music director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, said: “We look forward to bringing the choir and orchestra to these great music festivals and venues. Our repertoire will include works from the masters of classical composition to famed Broadway tunes, and there should be something to please everyone who attends.” The concert program will also feature selections from the choir’s spring 2007 CD release entitled *Showtime! Music from Broadway and Hollywood*.

The choir and orchestra will perform at the Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto on June 22, followed by the Chautauqua Amphitheater on June 23. The choir will perform at three prestigious outdoor summer venues beginning with the Blossom Festival in Cleveland on June 25, followed by the Ravinia Music Festival in Chicago on June 27 and an appearance at the Riverbend Music Center in Cincinnati with the Cincinnati Pops on June 29. The tour will conclude with shows at two large Tennessee venues: the Gaylord Entertainment Center in Nashville on June 30 and the FedEx Forum in Memphis on July 2.

The tour will mark a return to Chicago—the site of



The Very Reverend Joseph Mayo, right, presents the Mother Teresa Award to Craig Jessop, left, and Mac Christensen after the Choir’s *Music and the Spoken Word* performance.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFERY D. ALKRED/COURTESY DESERET MORNING NEWS

the choir's first tour outside of Utah, to the Chicago Exposition in 1893—as well as first-ever visits to Cincinnati and Memphis. Since that first Chicago appearance, the choir has toured extensively across the United States and abroad. It has performed throughout Europe and in music capitals from Israel and Russia to Japan and Australia. Its travels have also included performances at the inaugurations of six U.S. presidents. The Choir's weekly 30-minute broadcast, *Music and the*

Spoken Word, which celebrated its 4,000th weekly broadcast in April 2006, is the world's longest continuously running network broadcast. It currently airs on over 2,000 radio, TV, cable, and satellite stations worldwide.

Tickets for the 2007 concerts, except for the performances in Chautauqua, went on sale on December 15, 2006, at all concert venues, through various online ticket agencies, over the phone, and also online at www.mormontabernaclechoir.org. ■

*I am a child of God.
Rich blessings are in store;
If I but learn to do his will,
I'll live with him once more.*

Naomi W. Randall, who served as a member of the Primary general board and as a counselor in the Primary general presidency, wrote the words at the request of the Primary general board. Mildred T. Pettit, who also had served as a Primary general board member, composed the music.

Sister Randall described the process of writing the words to the song:

"I got down on my knees and prayed aloud, pleading that our Heavenly Father would let me know the right words.

"Around 2:00 a.m., I awakened and began to think again about the song. Words came to my mind. . . . I immediately got up and began to write the words down as they had come to me. Three verses and a chorus were soon formed.

"I gratefully surveyed the

work, drank of the message of the words, and returned to my bedroom where I knelt before my Father in Heaven to say 'Thank you!' " (in Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns* [1988], 303–4).

Sister Randall sent the words to Sister Pettit, who spent many hours working on the music.

The words in one line of the chorus originally read, "Teach me all that I must know." After the song was written, President Spencer W. Kimball attended a conference where a Primary children's chorus sang the song. He later asked if Sister Randall would agree to change "Teach me all that I must know" to "Teach me all that I must do," and so the line reads today.

"To know isn't enough," President Kimball said. "The devils know and tremble; the devils know everything. We have to do something" ("New Verse Is Written for Popular Song," *Church News*, Apr. 1, 1978, 16).

Beloved Song Turns 50

By Abbey Olsen, Church Magazines

The hymn "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) has rung across the earth, its music played and its words sung by adults and Primary children around the world since 1957.

As it reaches its 50th anniversary in 2007, the song, published in more than 90 languages, continues to touch the hearts of many.

The message of the three-verse hymn teaches the gospel truths that each person is a son or daughter of God and has been sent to this earth with eternal potential. Parents and teachers are asked to help each child make righteous choices in a mortal experience that can lead to eternal life and happiness.

The hymn reads:

*I am a child of God,
And he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly
home
With parents kind and dear.*

[Chorus]
*Lead me, guide me, walk
beside me,
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do
To live with him someday.*

*I am a child of God,
And so my needs are great;
Help me to understand his
words
Before it grows too late.*



Now 50 years old, the beloved hymn, "I Am a Child of God," is sung around the world in more than 90 languages.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

A fourth verse of the song was written for a Primary chorus to sing at general conference in April 1957. When the current hymnbook was prepared, the General Music Committee and the Correlation Department decided the extra verse was not officially part of the song and did not include it.

Later, when the *Children's Songbook* was created, the Primary general board decided to include it. The four-verse version has been translated into the 20 languages of the international *Children's Songbook*. The verse reads:

*I am a child of God.
His promises are sure;
Celestial glory shall be mine
If I can but endure.*

The hymn was first included in *Sing with Me*, a children's songbook published in 1969, and then in the *Children's Songbook* in 1989 with the music arranged by Darwin Welford.

"I Am a Child of God" is one of the 45 hymns and children's songs found in the *Gospel Fundamentals* and *Gospel Principles* manuals. This means that when Church material is first introduced in a new language, "I

Am a Child of God" is one of the first hymns received.

Scriptures; manuals; instrumental, choir, or other adaptations; CDs; General Authority talks; "I Am a Child of God" stickers; and other materials all herald the message contained in the words and music of the beloved hymn, which has reached out across cultures, backgrounds, and traditions to instill in people the gospel truth that each person is a child of God.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, then a member of the Seventy, elaborated on the theme of the song in

1978: "Our Father in heaven loves us more deeply than we can understand. He has said that He 'numbereth his people' (Alma 26:37) and that each one of us is important to Him. He wants us to return to live with Him and Jesus again. He wants us to communicate with Him in prayer, to tell Him of our love, and to show our love by obeying His commandments. Through obedience we can become more like Him, developing those qualities of character that He wants His children to have" ("I Am a Child of God," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1978, 21; *Friend*, Mar. 1978, 8). ■

Four New Translations Completed for Book of Mormon, Triple Combination

The Church continues to make editions of the scriptures available to members in many languages. In 2006 speakers of Armenian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Malagasy received word that the triple combination of the scriptures, along with new editions of the Book of Mormon, was available in their language.

The release of the new triple combinations continues a push by Church leaders to give every member the opportunity to own his or her own copies of the scriptures, hopefully resulting in an increase in testimony and faith.

"We encourage members to obtain their own copies of the scriptures and to use them in regular, personal, and family study, and in Church meetings and assignments," the First Presidency

stated in letters announcing the release of the new editions. "As they prayerfully learn and teach from the scriptures, their testimonies will grow, their knowledge will increase, their love of family and others will expand, their ability to serve others will enlarge, and they will receive greater strength to resist temptation and defend truth and righteousness."

Member Response

Whenever the scriptures are provided in a new language, Church members respond enthusiastically. Such was the case with the new triple combinations released last year.

"To see how people receive the books when they come out—it's just fantastic," said Jim Berlin, a scripture

translation supervisor.

In Armenia Brother Berlin gathered with a group of about 20 people, and each person shared a scripture from the new publication and told why it had touched his or her heart.

"It is so powerful as 15 to 20 people hold in their hands their own copy of the Book of Mormon—marked up, loved, cherished," he said. "They shared their love for scripture passages and for the Lord."

Although some preparatory work was done beforehand, the translation of the scriptures in Armenian, Latvian, and Lithuanian began in 1998.

Translation Process

After a new scripture translation is requested by an Area Presidency and

approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Church's Translation Division begins the translation process, communicating with local priesthood leaders to find and recommend candidates from the area as scripture translators.

"The Lord prepares souls in all these lands, and one thing that we as supervisors see very clearly is that this is the Lord's work and He has His hand on it," said Brother Berlin, who supervised the translation process for Armenian and initiated and later finished the process for Latvian and Lithuanian.

Brother Berlin told the story of a brother who had joined the Church in St. Petersburg, Russia, many years ago and felt prompted to return home to Armenia to build up the kingdom. He did so, and a year later Brother Berlin arrived to begin the scripture translation work.

The man had helped in the translation of the Book of Mormon, published in 2000, and after his English skills increased, he became the translator of the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price in the full triple combination.

Brother Berlin said scripture translators in Latvia and Lithuania have similar experiences of how the Lord had prepared them.

“The Lord has prepared people in all these countries and is currently preparing people to accomplish His work,” he said.

The Languages

The first full edition of the Book of Mormon in Malagasy was published in 2000; selections from the book were published in 1986. Malagasy is a language spoken by the people in Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Africa. Just months after



New translations of the Book of Mormon in Armenian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Malagasy have been released, along with new triple combinations in those languages.

the first full edition of the Book of Mormon was published, the first stake was organized in Madagascar—the Antananarivo Madagascar Stake. Madagascar is home to more than 3,300 members

of the Church. Church membership there grew 86.3 percent from 2000 to 2005.

The first edition of the Book of Mormon in Armenian was published

in 1937. Because the majority of Armenians speak a different dialect today, a new Armenian edition of the Book of Mormon was published in 2001.

Located in southwestern Asia, Armenia is home to more than 2,000 members of the Church. Membership has almost tripled in Armenia since 2000.

Latvia and Lithuania, Baltic States in Eastern Europe, are home to more than 800 and 750 members of the Church respectively. From 2000 to 2005, Church membership grew by 62 percent in Latvia and by 42.8 percent in Lithuania.

Copies of the triple combination editions of the scriptures are available through local Church distribution centers and may be ordered through local Church leaders. ■

ASL Version of *Church History* DVD Now Available through Distribution

Recently released is the American Sign Language (ASL) version of the DVD titled *Church History*, which was made available by the Church earlier this year. This DVD set, a compilation of Church history videos, including footage many members have never seen before, is part of the Home and Family Collection intended to enrich instruction and learning in the home.

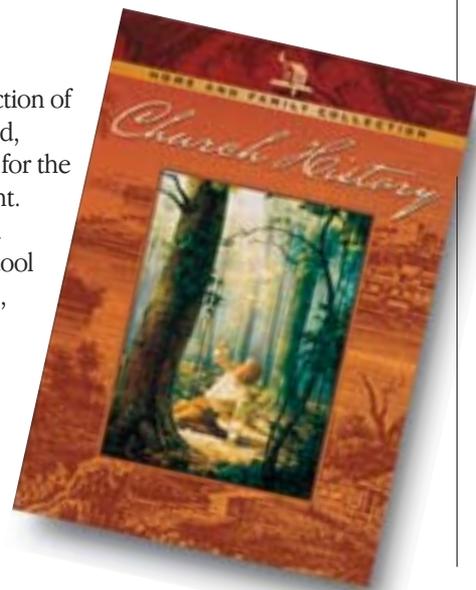
The set includes three

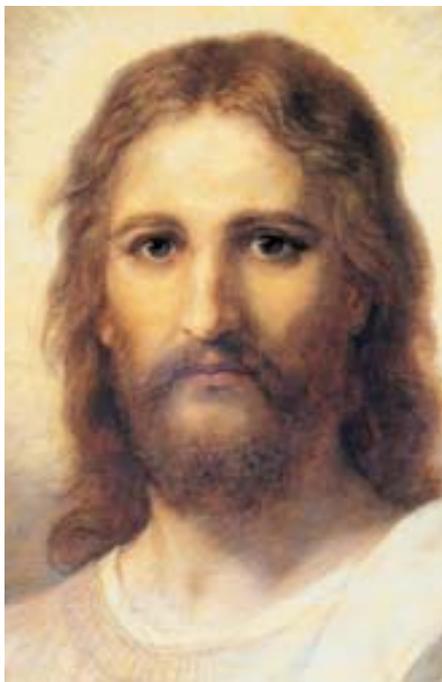
DVDs containing footage from 29 videos and takes viewers on a visual journey through a century and a half of Church history. Many of the segments are quite rare. One segment, *LDS Leaders of the Past*, includes black-and-white footage from the first half of the twentieth century.

The set contains almost eight hours of footage and is packaged with a booklet that includes ideas and questions for discussion.

“It’s not just a collection of videos,” said Doug Hind, development designer for the Curriculum Department. “We designed it to be a teaching and learning tool for individuals, families, and teachers.”

Sold individually for U.S. \$6 (item no. 54116010), the *Church History* DVD ASL version is available at distribution centers. ■





Hundreds of thousands of young women ages 12 to 18 and their parents and leaders gather in meetinghouses around the world to participate in the broadcast each year.

This year the Young Women general presidency has invited the young women to prepare themselves to be taught by the Spirit by doing the following:

- Memorize Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

- Memorize

“Dearest Children, God Is Near You” (*Hymns*, no. 96).

- Review the 13th article of faith.

In addition, the presidency has challenged the young women to read *For the Strength of Youth* and do one of the following:

- Circle each reference to the Spirit.

- Highlight the promises found in the pamphlet.

- Choose one standard, study it, and make goals for living it.

The theme for this year’s meeting is the 2007 Mutual theme taken from Doctrine and Covenants 121:45, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”

For broadcast information, including satellite or Internet schedules, contact local leaders or visit www.lds.org/broadcast. ■

Presidency Invites YW to Prepare for Meeting

The Young Women general presidency has invited the young women of the Church, their parents, and their leaders to prepare themselves for the upcoming annual general Young Women meeting to be held on March 24, 2007.

“The general Young Women meeting is the First Presidency’s meeting for you, the young women of the Church,” the Young Women leaders stated in announcing the meeting. “It is a great opportunity for you to receive encouragement and hear testimony from a member of the First Presidency and the Young Women general presidency.”

New for Families: Two Conference Issues

Church leaders have encouraged members to obtain their own copies of the scriptures for personal study and for use at church. Now members can receive two copies of the conference issues, allowing husband and wife to have a personal copy to study and take to Relief Society and priesthood meeting for fourth-Sunday lessons.

A new 14-issue *Ensign* subscription is now available in the U.S. and Canada through Distribution Services. For an additional \$2 per year (\$12 total), subscribers can receive two copies of each conference issue.

Subscribers who wish to convert their current subscriptions, purchase new subscriptions, or give gift subscriptions can call the Salt Lake

Distribution Center at 1-800-537-5971, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. mountain time, or Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Subscriptions can also be purchased or renewed online at www.ldscatalog.com.

When current subscriptions are converted, an adjustment is made in the expiration date. For each conference issue remaining on a current subscription, one regular issue is converted to provide an additional conference copy, and the length of the subscription is shortened accordingly. For example, if a subscription were due to end with the July issue, that July issue would be converted to provide an additional May conference issue and the subscription would end with the June issue. ■



Members in the United States and Canada may now order two copies of each conference issue with their annual subscription to the Ensign.

Upcoming Broadcasts

Worldwide Leadership Training Broadcast Set

A worldwide leadership training meeting will be broadcast over the Church's satellite system on Saturday, February 10, 2007. Those attending will receive training focused on gospel teaching and learning.

Those invited to attend include General Authorities; Area Seventies; stake, mission, temple, and district presidencies; high councilors; stake, district, and ward or branch auxiliary presidencies; bishoprics; branch presidencies; high priests group leaders and assistants; elders quorum presidencies; all Church Educational System administrators, seminary teachers, and institute instructors. Teachers in local quorums and auxiliaries may attend where distances and circumstances permit.

DVDs will be sent to local units following the broadcast.

CES Broadcast to Feature Elder David A. Bednar

Young adults worldwide will gather to listen to the counsel of an Apostle this month at a CES fireside to be broadcast on the Church's satellite system on February 4. Elder David A. Bednar will address both single and married young adults ages 18 through 30 from the Marriott Center on the Brigham Young University campus in Provo, Utah.

The address will be

broadcast or rebroadcast in up to 32 languages. For information on broadcast times and locations, contact local priesthood leaders or visit www.lds.org/broadcast.

The address will be archived on the Church's Internet site at www.lds.org/broadcast by February 10. Audio versions will be available in 32 languages. ■

Church Country Web Sites Spread around the World

With the launch of the new Ukraine country Web site, the Church now hosts 61 sites unique to countries around the world. These sites are places where members can go to find information, news, and resources in their own language.

Work first began on country-specific Web sites in 2001 as an effort to provide more localized content that could be easily found by search engines around the world. The Church launched

its first country Web site, for Chile, in August 2003, followed closely by Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland of the Europe Central Area, where work on country sites first began.

The sites, which are managed locally under the direction of Area Presidencies, provide local news, history, events, and other information about the Church in the host country as well as links to content on the Church's Web sites, such as LDS.org

and Mormon.org.

The sites receive just under one million page views each month, providing a positive Church presence in the language of many countries.

Links to the country Web sites can be found at www.lds.org/countries. ■

Comment

I Have Joy

I received the October issue, and what a huge difference it has made. I'm still reading parts over again. The magazine has helped reaffirm what my heart felt but my tongue could not articulate. Heavenly Father blesses me daily, and even though I'm in prison for a while longer, I have joy. I appreciate all you do for so many. Thank you for your efforts, and I look forward to future issues.

Name Withheld



The new Ukraine country Web site is the Church's 61st in a six-year-old project aimed at providing information and resources around the world.



MAY NOT BE COPIED

Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, 1934-1935, by John Mason

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley teaches a crowd gathered at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park. During his mission to Great Britain, Elder Hinckley served with distinction and was called to be an assistant to Elder Joseph F. Merrill of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who presided over the European missions.



SAN DIEGO CALIFORNIA TEMPLE BY CHARLES W. BAIRD

“Every temple that this Church has built has in effect stood as a monument to our belief in the immortality of the human soul, that this phase of mortal life through which we pass is part of a continuous upward climb, so to speak, and that as certain as there is life here, there will be life there. That is our firm belief. It comes about through the Atonement of the Savior, and the temple becomes, as I have indicated, the bridge from this life to the next. The temple is concerned with things of immortality.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” Ensign, Apr. 2002, 4.