

Ensign



COVER STORY

**Self-reliance:
Spiritual
and Physical,
pp. 48-65**

**Young Adults Find Guidance
in the Scriptures, p. 28**

**How Families Can Prepare for
General Conference, p. 23**



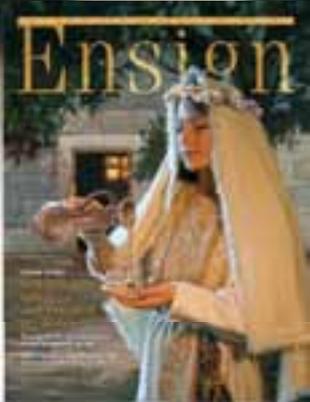
The First Relief Society, by Walter Rane

COURTESY OF THE CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

On Thursday afternoon, March 17, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith, in company with John Taylor and Willard Richards, formally organized the women into a society. Emma Smith was called to be president with Sarah M. Cleveland and Elizabeth Ann Whitney as counselors and Eliza R. Snow as secretary.



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ON THE COVER
Front: Painting by Dan Burr.
Back: Photographs by John Luke
and Welden C. Andersen.



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DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Is there a scripture passage that has been instrumental in your personal conversion? Please share the specific scripture reference and its impact on your life. Label your submission “Scripture and Conversion” and send it by April 17.

We also welcome other submissions that show the gospel of Jesus Christ at work in your life. You can find this and other calls for articles online at <http://ensign.lds.org>. *Ensign* Magazine Writers’ Guidelines are posted on the same page under “Resources.”

Send submissions 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, ward (or branch), and stake (or district). Because of the volume of submissions we receive, we cannot acknowledge receipt. Authors whose work is selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript, photos, art, or other material returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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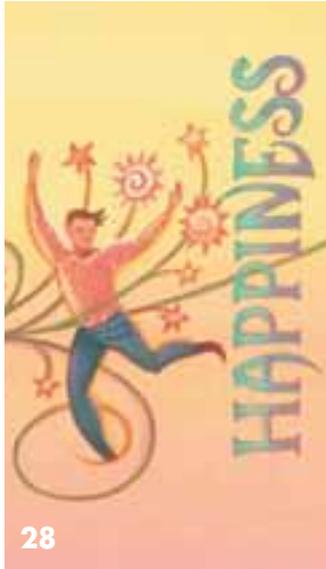
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USING THIS ISSUE

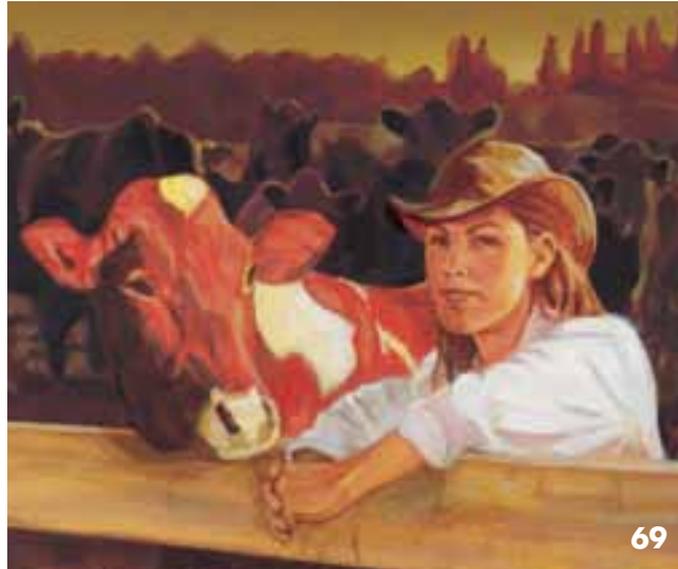
Help those with disabilities.

Help your family and those you teach understand that our loving Heavenly Father has a plan for all of His children, and talk about ways to assist and be sensitive to ward members who have disabilities. See pp. 10, 40, 46, and 66.

Gain inspiration through study.

Do you ever wonder how you can feel inspiration from the Lord more clearly? Young adults and others share stories on how reading the scriptures has helped them overcome challenges and see their purpose in God's plan. See pp. 28 and 32.

Prepare now. For years, members of the Church have been counseled to prepare for times of adversity. After reading pp. 50–65, go to providentliving.org for ideas on how to put your family finances in order, how to store food and supplies, and what to do in an emergency. You can also order food storage items online at ldscatalog.org under “Welfare Services.”



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COMING IN APRIL

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- *The importance—and blessings—of education.*
- *The last week of the Savior's mortal ministry.*
- *Fasting with power.*



Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith

BY PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.¹ So spoke the wise Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel.

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, “Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith.”²

In this dispensation, in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”³

This divinely inspired counsel comes to us today as crystal clear water to a parched earth.

We live in troubled times. Doctors’ offices are filled with individuals who are beset with emotional problems as well as physical distress. Divorce courts are overflowing because people have unsolved problems. Human resource administrators in government and industry work long hours in an effort to assist people with their problems.

One human resource officer assigned to handle petty grievances concluded an unusually hectic day by placing facetiously a little sign on his desk for those with unsolved problems. It read, “Have you tried prayer?”

What he may not have realized was that this simple counsel would solve more problems, alleviate more suffering, prevent more transgression, and bring about greater peace and contentment in the human soul than could be obtained in any other way.

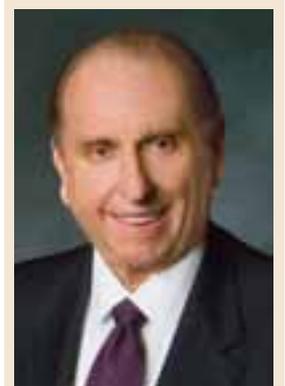
A prominent American judge was asked what we as citizens of the countries of the world could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and into our nations. He carefully replied, “I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer.”

Strength in Prayer

As a people, aren’t we grateful that family prayer is not an out-of-date practice with us? There is no more beautiful sight in all this world than to see a family praying together. There is real meaning behind the oft-quoted “The family that prays together stays together.”

The Lord directed that we have family prayer when He said, “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.”⁴

Will you join me as we look in on a typical Latter-day Saint family offering prayers unto the Lord? Father, mother, and each of the



There is no more beautiful sight in all this world than to see a family praying together. There is real meaning behind the oft-quoted “The family that prays together stays together.”



Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical or intellectual weakness should remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

children kneel, bow their heads, and close their eyes. A sweet spirit of love, unity, and peace fills the home. As father hears his tiny son pray unto God that his dad will do the right things and be obedient to the Lord's bidding, do you think that such a father would find it difficult to honor the prayer of his precious son? As a teenage daughter hears her sweet mother plead unto the Lord that her daughter will be inspired in the selection of her companions, that she will prepare herself for a temple marriage, don't you believe that such a daughter will seek to honor this humble, pleading petition of her mother, whom she so dearly loves? When father, mother, and each of the children earnestly pray that the fine sons in the family will live worthily that they may, in due time, receive a call to serve as ambassadors of the Lord in the mission fields of the Church, don't we begin to see how such sons grow to young manhood with an overwhelming desire to serve as missionaries?

I am sure that family prayer motivated a letter written some years ago by a young Latter-day Saint girl attending a Colorado high school. The students had been asked to prepare a letter to be written to a great man of their choice. Many addressed their letters to well-known athletes, to a noted astronaut, to the president of the United States, and to

other celebrities. This young lady, however, addressed her letter to her father, and in the letter she stated: "I have decided to write this letter to you, Dad, because you are the greatest man that I have ever known. The overwhelming desire of my heart is that I might so live that I might have the privilege of being beside you and Mother and other members of the family in the celestial kingdom." That father never received a more cherished letter.

As we offer unto the Lord our family prayers and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him. Let us remember the injunction of Paul to the Hebrews: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."⁵ If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, "Satan trembles, when he sees the weakest Saint upon his knees."⁶ Those who feel that prayer might denote a physical or intellectual weakness should remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.

We cannot know what faith is if we have never had it, and we cannot obtain it as long as we deny it. Faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other.

Accepting His Invitation

If our desire is to discard all doubt and to substitute therefor an abiding faith, we have but to accept the invitation extended to you and to me in the Epistle of James:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”⁷

This promise motivated the young man Joseph Smith to seek God in prayer. He declared to us in his own words:

“At length I came to the conclusion that I . . . must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ‘ask of God,’ concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

“So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. . . . It was

I *t was by faith, nothing wavering, that the brother of Jared saw the finger of God touch the stones in response to his plea.*



the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.”⁸

Now, if we have hesitated in supplicating God our Eternal Father simply because we have not as yet made the attempt to pray, we certainly can take courage from the example of the Prophet Joseph. But let us remember, as did the Prophet, our prayer must be offered in faith, nothing wavering.

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that the brother of Jared saw the finger of God touch the stones in response to his plea.⁹

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Noah erected an ark in obedience to the command from God.¹⁰

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Abraham was willing to offer up his beloved Isaac as a sacrifice.¹¹

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.¹²

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joshua and his followers brought the walls of Jericho tumbling down.¹³

It was by faith, nothing wavering, that Joseph saw God our Eternal Father and Jesus Christ, His Son.¹⁴

Now, the skeptic may say that these mighty accounts of faith occurred long ago, that times have changed.

Have times really changed? Don't we today, as always, love our children and want them to live righteously? Don't we today, as always, need God's divine, protecting care? Don't we today, as always, continue to be at His mercy and in His debt for the very life He has given us?

Times have not really changed. Prayer continues to provide power—spiritual power. Prayer continues to provide peace—spiritual peace.

Faith in Action

Wherever we may be, our Heavenly Father can hear and answer the prayer offered in faith. This is especially true in the mission fields throughout the world. While presiding over the Canadian Mission, under the direction of President David O. McKay (1873–1970), Sister Monson and I had the opportunity of serving with some of the finest

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young men and women in all this world. The very lives of these young missionaries exemplified faith and prayer.

There sat in my office one day a newly arrived missionary. He was bright, strong, happy, and grateful to be a missionary. He was filled with enthusiasm and a desire to serve. As I spoke with him, I said, “Elder, I imagine that your father and mother wholeheartedly support you in your mission call.” He lowered his head and replied, “Well, not quite. You see, President, my father is not a member of the Church. He doesn’t believe as we believe, so he cannot fully appreciate the importance of my assignment.”

Without hesitating and prompted by a Source not my own, I said to him, “Elder, if you will honestly and diligently serve God in proclaiming His message, your father will join the Church before your mission is concluded.” He clasped my hand in a vise-like grip, the tears welled up in his eyes and began to roll forth down his cheeks, and he declared, “To see my father accept the truth would be the greatest blessing that could come into my life.”

This young man did not sit idly by hoping and wishing that the promise would be fulfilled, but rather he followed the sage advice that has been given of old: “Pray as though everything depended upon God. Work as though everything depended upon you.” Such was the missionary service of this young man.

At every missionary conference I would seek him out before the meetings and ask, “Elder, how’s Dad progressing?”

His reply would invariably be, “No progress, President, but I know the Lord will fulfill the promise given to me through you as my mission president.” The days turned to weeks and the weeks to months, and finally, just two weeks before we ourselves left the mission field to return home, I received a letter from the father of this missionary.

That father wrote:

“Dear Brother Monson:

“I wish to thank you so much for taking such good care of my son who recently completed a mission in Canada. He has been an inspiration to us.

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. Read the account of the missionary from the section “Faith in Action.” Discuss how faith, prayer, and hard work helped fulfill the promise made to the missionary. Ask the family to think of things they are seeking the Lord’s help in. Invite them to list what they can do to gain the answer or help they need. Also invite

them to exercise faith in the Lord as they pray for help and seek to do their part to find a solution.

2. Read excerpts from the section “Accepting His Invitation.” Take turns having family members finish the following sentence using their own experiences: “It was by faith, nothing wavering, that . . .” Discuss what it means to pray with greater faith. Leave a card with the family that reads, “Have you tried prayer?”

“My son was promised when he left on his mission that I would become a member of the Church before his return. This promise was, I believe, made to him by you, unknown to me.

“I am happy to report that I was baptized into the Church one week before he completed his mission and am at present time athletic director of the MIA and have a teaching assignment.

“My son is now attending BYU, and his younger brother was also recently baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

“May I again thank you for all the kindness and love bestowed upon my son by his brothers in the mission field during the past two years.

“Yours very truly, a grateful father.”

The humble prayer of faith had once again been answered.

There is a golden thread that runs through every account of faith from the beginning of the world to the present time. Abraham, Noah, the brother of Jared, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and countless others wanted to be obedient to the will of God. They had ears that could hear, eyes that could see, and hearts that could know and feel.

They never doubted. They trusted.

Through personal prayer, through family prayer, by trusting in God with faith, nothing wavering, we can call down to our rescue His mighty power. His call to us is as it has ever been: “Come unto me.”¹⁵ ■

NOTES

1. Proverbs 3:5–6.
2. Jacob 3:1.
3. D&C 6:36.
4. 3 Nephi 18:21.
5. Hebrews 11:6.
6. William Cowper, *Olney Hymns*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd ed. rev. (1966), 161.
7. James 1:5–6.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:13–14.
9. See Ether 3:1–16.
10. See Genesis 6:13–22.
11. See Genesis 22:1–14.
12. See Exodus 14:15–22.
13. See Joshua 6:2–20.
14. See Joseph Smith—History 1:14–19.
15. Matthew 11:28.



Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

Daggi Ramirez de Vargas has been blind for 15 years, but in many ways she sees quite clearly. “Physical vision is very entertaining,” says the 70-year-old. “But it can get in the way of our spiritual vision.”

Sister Daggi, as she is known, lost her eyesight when her retinas detached following cataract surgeries on both eyes.

“At first I wondered how I was going to do everything,” she says. “But I can get around just fine. I iron, I sew, I cook. No one comes in while I’m cooking,” she laughs. “I use some big knives.”

As worried as Sister Daggi was about maintaining her physical independence, she was just as determined to remain spiritually self-reliant, living by the light of her own personal testimony of Christ rather than depending on another for a knowledge of the truth.



Sister Daggi of Viña del Mar, Chile, is an example of maintaining not only physical self-reliance but spiritual self-reliance as well.

The Light of the Gospel

Before she joined the Church in 1962, Sister Daggi, now a member of the Miraflores Ward, Viña del Mar Chile Archupallas Stake, found herself newly married and wondering which church was right.

One night she dreamed about people from around the world, and she saw unusual white clothing. The next day, at the home where she was employed to help with cleaning, she recognized the same clothing drying on the clothesline.

Her employer told her the clothing was associated with the temples of the Mormon Church. Sister Daggi was soon meeting with missionaries who had come from around the world to open her spiritual eyes to the light of the gospel.

A Path Lit by the Word

Sister Daggi loves the gospel of Jesus Christ, and she used to read her scriptures faithfully until she went blind.



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH © COMSTOCK.COM; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY ADAM C. OLSON

“When I lost my sight, I prayed to be able to retain His word,” she recalls. Retaining His word was important to her as a symbol of spiritual vision.

And though she must now study the gospel in other ways, Sister Daggi believes “the word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). She is a living example of the Savior’s promise: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

According to her husband, Juan, the Lord honored her sincere request. “Her mind captures things well. She could discourse for hours,” he smiles wryly.

“If you ask, you will receive,” she replies. “My spirit still has very good vision.”

The Works of God Made Manifest

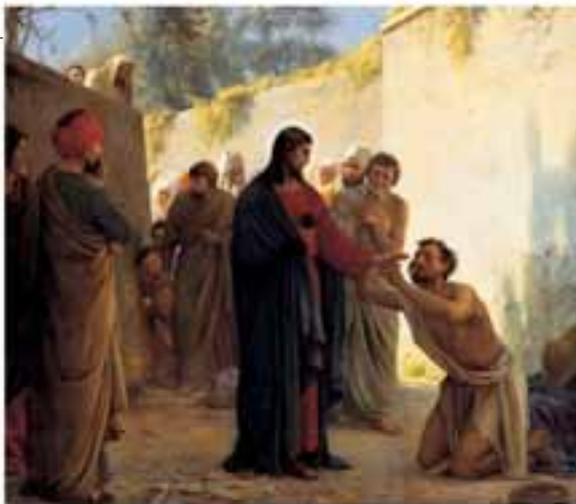
The experiences Sister Daggi has had seeking to maintain both her physical and spiritual self-reliance since losing her eyesight bring to mind the blind man in the Gospel of John about whom the disciples asked, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”

The Savior replied, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:2–3).

The works of God have been made manifest in Sister Daggi’s life. Despite being without sight, she has seen many miracles and can testify that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

One Sunday evening the family’s home teachers visited. The family was struggling through unemployment at the time, and that night she had only a half cup of rice, a little bit of oil to cook it in, and two small tomatoes. But appreciative of these faithful home teachers, she asked them if they would like to stay for dinner.

“My daughter asked how I could do that,” Sister Daggi



“Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

recalls. She told her daughter to set the table. Then she went into the kitchen and prayed, “Lord, Thou fed 5,000. I’m asking only for seven.”

“That rice fed seven people,” she testifies.

Giving Thanks for His Marvelous Light

Sister Daggi knows that though her physical eyesight has gone dark, there is a greater light by which to see.

Isaiah taught that “the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall

the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light” (Isaiah 60:19).

“Jesus talked about people who could see but were blind. It is the same today,” Sister Daggi laments. “There are miracles all around us, but so many don’t see them.”

Sister Daggi is grateful for the many blessings she enjoys and strives to live Peter’s admonition to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“I’m content. Heavenly Father gave me a wonderful companion. We went to the temple and were sealed,” she says. “My life is full of miracles. Spiritually, I can see just fine.” ■



INDIVIDUAL REVELATION

“If we lose our emotional and spiritual independence, our self-reliance, we can be weakened quite as much, perhaps even more, than when we become dependent materially.”

“If we are not careful, we can lose the power of individual revelation.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord’s Own Way,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 92.



Hand in Hand

BY PAUL SKOUSEN

*No more computer work for me.
The second job is put away,
and that tired look from her tells it all.*

*A turned head says, "Let's go."
I take my wife by the hand, step quietly
to the door,
and disappear down the front steps
into the cool of the night.*

*Out past the driveway we amble,
into the quiet, the peace:
our very own place
where silence is disturbed only by
our thoughts
and hushed words.*

*Walking too slowly to call it exercise,
we gaze into the sky, the waning moon,
the stars and clouds,
and quietly stroll by as the neighbors' lights
blink off to bed.*

*Now it's just us.
Around the cul-de-sac we walk
hand in hand, whispering the day away—
what worked, what didn't;
who called, who didn't;
what it cost, what it didn't.*

*Around we go—
three, four, five orbits.
Maybe six, maybe ten.*

*All of the things that wound us up
slowly unwind with each turn of the cul-de-sac.
The day finally talked out, the fresh air
crisp and cool,
our feet now tired, our hands still clasped:
our minds take ease.*

*Once more we go around.
All seems well.
It was a good day—not too bad. Productive.
Somehow the night turns the day upright.*

*We end the circle beneath old branches,
past crickets and cats, into the moonlight and out.
The day finally loosens its grip
and we pause
in front of our peaceful home
to decide.
Yes,
It's time to go in.*

*I escort my bride of 32 years back to the front porch.
A quiet kiss, a big hug,
a look into each other's eyes,
and we turn in.*



FROM YOUNG WOMEN TO RELIEF SOCIETY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JERRY GARNIS

Relief Society can be a blessing for young adult sisters. Within a loving sisterhood they can enlarge their understanding of gospel principles, build firm testimonies, and give Christlike service. Six women in the Church share experiences they have had—as mothers, leaders, or as young women themselves—to help make the transition from Young Women to Relief Society.

A Warm Welcome

I was nervous and full of doubt about leaving my friends in the Young Women program when I became old enough to join Relief Society. I wondered how I could relate to women who were at such different stages in life. Luckily these

sisters were confident that they could help me find my place in the Lord's organization for women.

My mother presented to me my first Relief Society manual with a tender message inscribed inside the front cover. I also appreciated that both the president and the secretary called and invited me to attend Relief Society on that first Sunday. Sisters asked to sit beside me and genuinely

befriended me week after week. My visiting teacher became a wonderful support for me as

I adjusted, and I was soon assigned to visit teach other sisters, which helped me feel trusted and capable.

The women showed an interest in me and in my thoughts and opinions. They taught me when I joined Relief Society that age, marital status, and the number of children we have are not as important as the fact that we all share the same Heavenly Father. How grateful I am for my mother and these sisters who gladly received me. By giving me a warm

welcome and kindly continuing to include me, they helped me feel at ease.

*JoLynne Dougherty,
Pennsylvania*



Transition Festivities

Each year our stake invites the Laurels who will soon graduate from high school

to celebrate, along with their mothers, their upcoming transition to Relief Society. We hold a special banquet for the occasion.

The festivities begin with a delicious dinner or dessert and a few brief talks explaining the purposes of Relief Society and what the young women can expect. The testimony sharing and singing that follow are a great way to help these young women feel the Spirit, creating a sense of sisterhood and spiritual unity. Dividing into small groups gives the young women opportunities to ask questions and to get to know their sisters in the Relief Society.

Amanda Terry, California

Reaching Out to Others in Relief Society

Going from Young Women to Relief Society was an enriching experience for me. Because I had been a babysitter, I already knew some of the young mothers in Relief Society, and I felt comfortable being with them. Soon I began volunteering to help at Relief Society activities. By doing this I committed myself to attending and prevented myself from backing out because of fear. I also decided to introduce myself to sisters I didn't know. These sisters had much to offer, and I wanted their friendship and guidance. Now I feel as if I have always belonged in Relief Society with these sisters.

LeAnn H. Daniels, Arizona



READY TO PARTICIPATE

"The work of Relief Society is relevant for the young women who are entering their adult

years. They are ready to serve and ready to participate in a cause that is bigger than themselves. They want to be part of something that changes lives and makes the world a better place."

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, from an interview with the Ensign, May 27, 2008.

Teaching with Sensitivity

Instructors have an important role in welcoming young women to Relief Society. Teachers can help by making sure their lessons apply to sisters in a variety of circumstances. A skilled teacher can invite young sisters to share their personal experiences, gospel knowledge, and testimonies. Teachers can also use Church Educational System firesides to prepare questions relevant to young women. Young sisters often feel particularly welcomed when teachers use their names in class, fostering a spirit of closeness with the whole Relief Society.

The young women of the Church have strong testimonies and amazing experiences. Welcoming them to Relief Society and including them in class discussions enables everyone to learn from our young sisters.

Michelle Lehnardt, Utah



**Above and below:
Serving one another
builds bonds of love
among sisters and
brings joy and
comfort.**





Above and below: Through signing up for activities, young sisters can develop friendships with other women in Relief Society.

Accepting Early Callings

In our ward, the Young Women and Relief Society presidencies counseled together before each Laurel entered Relief Society, so that the Relief Society presidency could consider callings and visiting teaching assignments well suited to these young sisters. The presidency kept in mind each girl's time constraints, abilities, and personality while praying about callings for them. Some were called upon to play the piano, direct the music, serve on committees, or teach Relief Society lessons. Through serving others, the young sisters bonded quickly with the other women in Relief Society. Their attendance grew more consistent, and they felt more needed, loved, and involved.

Joan Amley Cluff, Oregon

Getting Excited for the Move

I had anticipated going to Relief Society since I was young. Even though this program is intended for the adult women of the Church, my mother would occasionally take me to some of the Relief Society's weekday activities when

I was a child. If they were working on a summertime activity or a service project that Mom thought I might enjoy, she would invite me to come sit beside her and help.

Being with my mother and the other women was exciting, and it felt good to be contributing. They made such fun things and learned to cook such tasty treats in Relief Society!



I remember thinking the quilts the women made and gave to those in need were simply gorgeous. Even as a child, I saw that these sisters didn't know who would receive their quilts, yet they put loving care into each one. In fact, I spent so much time with my mother and the other sisters that I became familiar with the purpose and mission of Relief Society when I was very young, and

I eagerly looked forward to the time when I could join.

I also watched Mom make personal sacrifices for sisters in Relief Society. Though it was sometimes difficult, she took meals to sisters when they needed help, and she did her visiting teaching faithfully. I saw that Relief Society could bless the lives of the sisters through diligent, loving service. Relief Society sisters became role models for me. Seeing their examples made my transition into Relief Society not only easy but also fun. ■

April Moss, California

Focusing on the Lord's Work of Salvation



In an interview with Church magazines, Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, shared her testimony of Relief Society.

What is the role of Relief Society in furthering the work of the Savior?

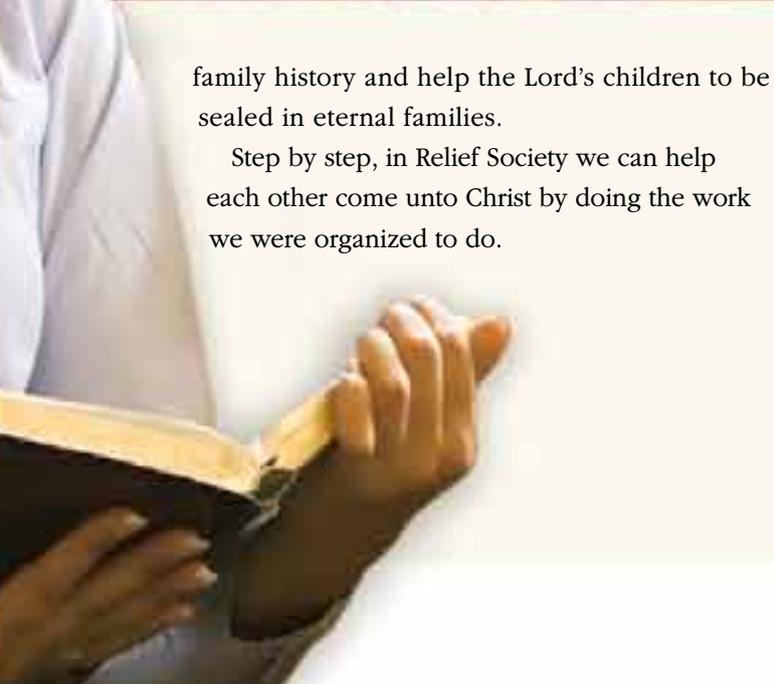
Sister Beck: As Relief Society sisters, we are united first and foremost because of our faith in Jesus Christ. He is our leader and exemplar. I bear testimony of the reality of His Atonement. I testify that He lives and that His power is real.

As Latter-day Saints, we want to come unto Christ. When the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society, he said that the women were not only to look after the poor but also to save souls.¹ This is still our purpose. We are to assist in the Lord's work of salvation, which is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

We can start by strengthening ourselves spiritually through prayer and becoming self-reliant in scripture knowledge. We embrace the ordinances, covenants, and commandments the Lord has provided us.

We can then help gather scattered Israel. We have a duty to help prepare missionaries, to share the gospel, and to help retain those who are baptized. We have a responsibility to get ourselves and family members prepared for the temple. We can collect our





family history and help the Lord's children to be sealed in eternal families.

Step by step, in Relief Society we can help each other come unto Christ by doing the work we were organized to do.

How can busy Relief Society sisters do all this?

Sister Beck: The wonderful women of this Church are capable of doing this and more—we just can't do it all at once. That is why it is so important to prioritize and use our resources and time where they will do the most good—assisting in the Lord's work.

Each sister should seek to have the Holy Ghost guide her. If she is helping the Lord with His work, she is entitled to His help.

What helped you learn the importance of Relief Society?

Sister Beck: When I was a young girl, my father served as president of the only mission in Brazil. There were fewer than 4,000 members—most of whom were full of potential yet not prepared to lead. Only a handful of branches had a Relief Society.

My mother was called to organize Relief Societies in the mission. She spoke no Portuguese and had no manuals. What she did have was a testimony of the gospel and of Relief Society. She and her counselors began by helping sisters learn how to be visiting teachers.

They started their training in a small branch in São Paulo. Seven humble women attended the meeting. My mother's counselor, a Brazilian, greeted the sisters. After the prayer, she stood with trembling hands and read a message explaining visiting teaching. Then my mother stood. She knew four sentences in Portuguese: "I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that we have a living prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." The meeting ended. She hugged the women and bade them good-bye.

What a humble beginning to such a great work! Eventually, a Relief Society was established in every branch in Brazil. The sisters worked to prepare for a stake and the first temple in South America. They learned about ordinances and covenants and how to save souls.

In part, because the Relief Society sisters helped further the Lord's work, the Church in Brazil now numbers over one million members. Like these sisters in Brazil, we must do our part. No one can do it for us. We cannot delegate

our responsibility for building the kingdom to anyone else. It is our work. Let us embrace it and excel in building faith, strengthening families, and giving relief.

What are the blessings of focusing Relief Society activities on the Lord's work of salvation?

Sister Beck: As we carry out the Lord's work of saving and blessing lives, we become unified and can call down the blessings of heaven. I have a vision of the women of this Church uniting in powerful ways. I believe that when we focus on the important and forgo the frivolous, we gain confidence and our spirits are lifted. We cope better and feel less burdened. We will, of course, still be busy, but we will be busy doing the work of salvation.

How can Relief Society help us keep the proper perspective in this troubled world?

Sister Beck: Relief Society helps provide defense in these perilous times. Sunday lessons, Relief Society activities and meetings, and visiting teaching are how we do the Lord's work and strengthen individuals and families.

Though we are confronted with issues such as divorce, disobedience, debt, depression, apathy, and addiction, we cannot forget that we also live in a day when the Lord's Spirit is poured out upon us. This is a day when the gospel is being preached throughout the world, when the children of Israel are being gathered, when temples are upon the earth, and when we have the protection of priesthood covenants and ordinances.

We must ask for a broader vision to see what the Lord sees. This work is bigger than we realize. We *can* be successful against a deceitful and determined enemy. Our homes *can* and should become places of refuge.

What is the role of Sunday lessons in Relief Society?

Sister Beck: The purpose of our Sunday meeting is to study the doctrines of the gospel together. Women who are called to serve in Primary, Young Women, and other areas also learn doctrines of the gospel in their callings. Because our curriculum is so important, we must keep the opening portion of



Relief Society brief and dignified in order to establish the Spirit for the gospel study that follows.

In Relief Society we study *Teachings of Presidents of the Church*, which is a series of manuals that provide prophetic teachings and a personal library of those teachings to the men and women of the Church. The words of the prophets are clear and inspired. We cannot—we *must* not—be passive and nonchalant in our study of them.



We are studying the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith from the best compilation of his works ever produced. This manual is the result of years of research and careful review. While the scriptures and Church magazines can enrich a

discussion, we do not need to supplement the words of prophets with other sources, especially non-Church sources.

We call upon our teachers to ask insightful questions and encourage open sharing. The Spirit is the teacher, and we must prepare in such a way that He will be in attendance at every Sunday lesson.

What is the role of Relief Society weekday meetings?

Sister Beck: In Relief Society weekday meetings, we apply the doctrines of salvation. Our unity and sisterhood will come naturally as a result of working together. For example, we can learn skills for sharing the gospel and preparing missionaries. We can learn about each other through family history. As we improve our homemaking skills such as cleaning, organizing, cooking, sewing, and gardening, we learn to create a climate of nurturing and spiritual growth in our homes.

We must also learn to be self-reliant in temporal things such as education, career development, and keeping up with technology. We should be storing up a supply of food, and we should know how to budget our money. We should also be working to improve physical and mental health.

When planning these meetings and activities, we need to assess our precious resources of time, energy, and consecrated funds. Use them only to help us live the gospel in our homes and further the Lord's work.

How can we help young women make the transition into Relief Society?

Sister Beck: Our talented young women are crossing the bridge from youth to adulthood, and Relief Society sisters have the charge to see that not one of them is lost.

Young women have been taught to keep their baptismal covenants, and in Relief Society we help them prepare to make temple covenants. Eighteen-year-old Relief Society sisters can chair committees, teach skills, help with missionary work, serve as visiting teachers, participate in family history and temple projects, and be full participants in the work of saving souls.

What is the role of visiting teaching?

Sister Beck: Visiting teachers minister in behalf of the Savior. Our hands are His hands, our love is His love, and our service is His service.² Good

visiting teachers know the sisters they visit. They love them, serve them, and help them learn the gospel by the Spirit. They focus on fortifying homes and lives. There is no greater privilege than to watch over and strengthen another person—it is truly the business of salvation.

How does Relief Society make a difference in the world?

Sister Beck: I met with a group of women cabinet ministers and parliament members from West Africa who asked me how we help African women. I explained that in their countries we have many organized groups of women, called Relief Societies. We send the *Church Handbook of Instructions* to the president of each group. The women gather together often to study the gospel and to learn how to care for their families.

The president divides the Relief Society women into pairs that visit the women in their homes, where they assess needs. Is anyone sick? Do they have enough food and clothing? Do they have the education they need? After the visits the women report what they found. Someone needs shoes, someone is having a baby, and one of them needs work. They ask if within their group they have the needed

resources. Most of the time they do. That is what we do for our women in Africa.

As I talked, these women nodded their heads and smiled. One said to me, “That model would work for our women.”

I believe that Relief Society is a model that works throughout the world and that our sisters are the finest, most capable, greatest force for good on the earth today. I have confidence in our ability to further the Lord’s work of salvation together. ■

This interview was conducted by LaRene Porter Gaunt of the Church magazines staff.

NOTES

1. See *History of the Church*, 5:25.
2. See Henry B. Eyring, “Rise to Your Call,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 76.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER

Preparing Our Children

for General Conference



*You can help
your children—
whatever their
age—learn from
conference.*

Gislene Woodbury of Idaho took a few notes during a sacrament meeting to make sure she remembered an impression she had received. She didn't know that her eight-year-old daughter, Jessica, was watching her until Jessica asked why she wrote something down.

Sister Woodbury realized this was a great opportunity to teach her daughter about recognizing the Spirit and about responding to things she learned and felt. Jessica then asked her mother to teach her how to recognize the Spirit.

Remove the spread with photos of the General Authorities from the most recent general conference edition of the Ensign. Use it to help children learn to identify the names of the speakers.



“I was surprised. I hadn’t expected my note taking to teach anybody but myself,” Sister Woodbury says. “But I reminded Jessica that general conference was coming up and that if she wanted to write down a few impressions she had during the sessions, we could talk afterwards about what we learned.”

Sister Woodbury said she really didn’t expect her daughter to understand or remember much from conference, particularly because Jessica played with her three-year-old sister during part of it. She also thought that maybe Jessica had forgotten about their conversation several weeks earlier. But Jessica surprised her mother again. When Sister Woodbury stood up at the end of general conference to walk into another room, Jessica said, “Mom, wait! Can we talk about conference?”

“I thought we would have a quick conversation for a couple of minutes and then be done,” Sister Woodbury said. “Instead, she pulled out a notebook and started to talk about several of the speakers. She told me about parts of their talks that stood out to her and asked me about things she heard but didn’t understand.

“The whole conference was special to me, but seeing my daughter have her own spiritual experiences made it even more special.

I have learned that I need to embrace every opportunity to teach my children, especially when they show interest in learning.”

Parents can do much

to enhance their children’s experience with the doctrine and principles taught at general conference. Several members share how they have helped their children prepare for, participate in, and learn from general conference.

Before Conference

For Kimberly Olsen of Utah and her family, conference preparation is both a spiritual and temporal matter. “The week before conference, I spend a little time every day talking to my five-year-old daughter about how exciting it will be to get to hear the prophet talk to us,” says Sister Olsen. She and her daughter also look for conference-related games and activities in issues of the *Friend* magazine.

The Olsens don’t stop there, however. They complete chores, homework, grocery shopping, and other standard weekend activities by Friday night. “We are able to devote the rest of the weekend to our family and conference,” says Sister Olsen. “It makes our experience fabulous.”

Clearing the family’s schedule is also important to Heather Ann Turner of Utah. Sister Turner remembers that as a missionary in Argentina, she had no choice but to completely clear her schedule in order to participate in general conference. “In two of the areas where I served, the entire ward got on a bus and traveled for two hours to get to a stake center where we could watch conference. These members’ dedication and devotion to the gospel was clear. They saved their money to be able to afford the trip. They took time off work. They packed up their families for two days. They did all of this to turn their hearts toward the prophet and participate in this great semiannual event. That was a powerful lesson to me.”

Create general conference traditions by participating between sessions in a family activity, such as playing games, watching old family videos, taking a walk or talking about the session that just ended.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE



Now Sister Turner and her husband, Jeremiah, show their family that general conference is a top priority by talking about conference weeks in advance, writing it on the calendar, and working with their children to prepare spiritually.

During Conference

The Turners also make conference memorable by developing family traditions that coincide with general conference. Their favorite is holding a family testimony meeting for family home evening on the Monday following conference. “This gives us an opportunity to reflect on the messages we heard over the weekend and to ponder their meanings for each of us personally,” Sister Turner says. “We learn from and strengthen one another with the added light we gain from general conference.”

The Turner family also suggests creating traditions by turning a favorite food the family enjoys into a special treat served at conference time, or participating between sessions in a family activity, such as playing games, watching old family videos, taking a walk, or talking about the session that just ended.

Kristin Keller of Texas also remembers special traditions her parents created for her and her siblings. These,

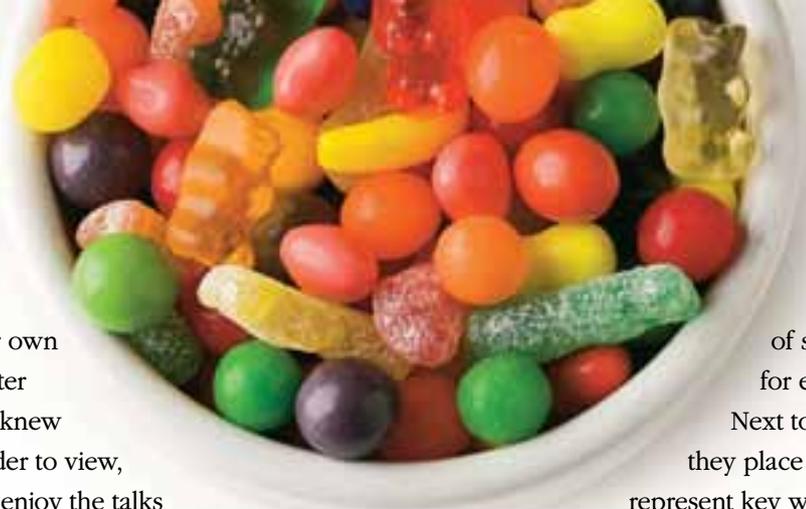
she says, helped establish in her mind that conference was something to look forward to.

“When I was 12 or 13, I realized that there was a wide array of activities I could choose to do on Saturday instead of watching conference. Although Mom and Dad always set an example of participating in all of the sessions of conference, they didn’t mandate that we do the same. They did, however, provide incentives. For instance, we would have a family picnic in the backyard between sessions, or on the Monday after conference we’d go out for ice cream and talk about the talks that stood out to us the most.”

Sister Keller says that when she was a teenager, the incentives were what drew her to participate with her family, but over time, gleaning from all four sessions of conference became a habit. “I came to understand that general conference was more than just fun family time, although it was also that. It was an opportunity to learn from prophets and receive guidance for my life. I am grateful to have been taught those patterns early in my life.”

Participating in conference can be challenging for families with small children. When Matt and Stephanie Sorensen of Minnesota had three children under the age of four, they decided to watch general conference via satellite

Each time children hear a key word spoken from the pulpit, let them help themselves to a small treat. You might be surprised by how much young children can and do listen. Praise them for their reverence and their attentiveness.



from their own home. Sister Sorensen knew that in order to view, hear, and enjoy the talks peacefully, she would need to make “substantial preparation.”

Like the Olsen and Turner families, the Sorensens talk about the importance of general conference ahead of time. “We pray individually and with our children that our hearts will be prepared for the messages of conference,” Sister Sorensen explains. “We try to convey that we are excited about general conference weekend and that we look forward to it.”

Sister Sorensen knows that it can be difficult for children to sit quietly through conference, but she and her husband have found age-appropriate activities that engage their children in conference.

- They remove the center spread with photos of General Authorities from the most recent conference edition of the *Ensign* and hang it near the television. Each time a new speaker appears on the screen, the children study the poster and try to find the speaker’s picture. They are rewarded with a sticker to place on the poster or in a notebook of their own. “They quickly learn to identify the First Presidency and others by name,” says Sister Sorensen.

- The Sorensens set out a bowl

of small treats for each session.

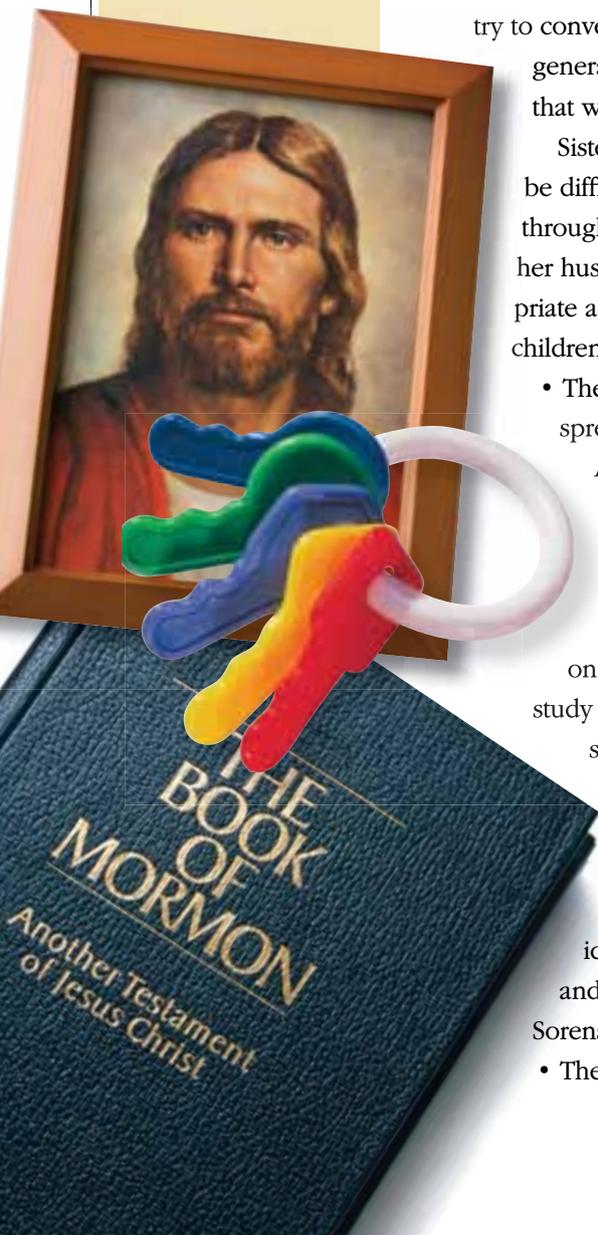
Next to the bowl, they place objects that represent key words for that

session. Each time the children hear one of those words spoken from the pulpit, they can help themselves to one treat. Sister Sorensen notes: “It’s surprising to see how much young children can and do listen. Their enthusiasm is priceless as you hear them say, ‘Mommy, he said *temples!*’ ”

- For the sessions that fall during typical mealtimes, the Sorensens prepare a picnic basket and lay out a blanket in front of the television. Brother and Sister Sorensen tell their children that they are like the families in the Book of Mormon who sat on the ground and listened to their prophet, King Benjamin, teach them about the gospel of Jesus Christ. “We thank our children for allowing us to listen and praise them for their reverence and attentiveness. We bear testimony throughout the day of the things we have heard and felt and reiterate our love for living prophets and apostles.”

- Brother and Sister Sorensen make sure they spend time with their children before and after sessions. They let them have active or outdoor play “to get out all their wiggles.”

Sister Sorensen says that these things not only help her children participate, but they also help her and her husband to be able to watch and learn from all the sessions of general conference. “There is a great sense of spiritual safety as we gather our family around the Lord’s messengers,” she says. “The Spirit is present in our home, and it is truly a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy that “all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;



and great shall be the peace of thy children' ” (3 Nephi 22:13).

After Conference

Linda Beverley of England recalls growing up in Scotland in a time when she and other members listened to a radio broadcast of general conference while slides of the various speakers were projected onto a wall. She and her husband, Malcolm, are grateful that by the time they were married and had their six children, they could watch general conference by satellite broadcast.

To set general conference apart as a special event, Brother and Sister Beverley designated the family home evening following conference as “Quiz Night,” when each member of the family would ask three questions about the talks, the reports, or things they observed. It quickly became tradition, and even years later, as the Beverleys’ sons and daughters left home to serve missions and attend college, the children insisted on continuing to share Quiz Night questions via letters and e-mail.

“When our children were young, we wondered whether questions like ‘What color was the prophet’s tie?’ would really make a difference in their lives,” Sister Beverley admits. “However, Quiz Night established a pattern that has matured with the children.”

Sister Beverley notes that it takes longer to complete Quiz Night now because the family discusses at length their thoughts and feelings about the talks given. These conversations “give rise to greater insights than any of us could have achieved alone,” she adds. “Even though our family is now scattered throughout the world, we feel united, sure in the knowledge that like the sons of Mosiah, we are ‘still . . . brethren in the Lord; yea, and [we have] waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth’ (Alma 17:2). This simple tradition has helped our children learn to



HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP GOOD HABITS

“It is when children are young that parents must be innovative in

helping them develop good habits regarding conference participation. As our children are given opportunities to observe and learn the role of these special witnesses, they will receive a spiritual confirmation of the sacred calling of their Church leaders, and they will feel a deeper love for and interest in these leaders and their message.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Teaching Our Children to Love the Prophets,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 47.

focus on the content and power of the talks and to realize the importance of general conference.”

Several years ago, Dave and Christine Heiner of Utah began using the most recent conference edition of the *Ensign* as their family home evening manual. As soon as the new issue became available, the Heiners purchased one copy for every member of their family and wrote each person’s name on the cover. Each Monday night they would read a talk together, paragraph by paragraph, pausing to ask and answer questions, to discuss thoughts, and to liken what they learned to their lives.

“We gave the children each a highlighter and taught them to highlight words, sentences, and paragraphs that felt important to them. To keep our younger children engaged, we let them use their highlighters in any way they wished. They colored the umbrellas, statues, General Authorities’ ties—whatever they felt needed a splash of color. We also discovered that photographs in the conference issues are wonderful vehicles for teaching children. One or two beautiful photographs usually accompany each conference sermon. Our family learned to find the ways the photographs enhanced the talks and taught the same principles.”

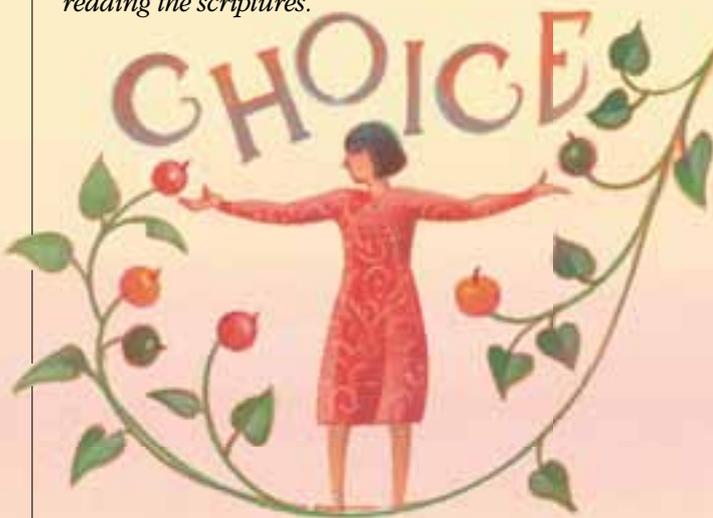
That tradition began many years ago. The Heiners’ children are married now and have families of their own. “They continue to treasure their conference copy of the *Ensign*, and their children have their own magazines with their names on the cover,” Sister Heiner says.

“My husband and I still use our conference *Ensign* on Monday nights. Prior to our family home evening, we choose a sermon and read, mark, and ponder it individually. Then we come together to discuss what we have learned. Our discussions inevitably cause the words of the prophets to sink deeper into our hearts and change us.” ■

HIS POWER IN

Young adults find guidance with scripture reading.

Personal scripture study has the power to change and enrich our lives. Here, members share lessons they learned in their young adult years from reading the scriptures.



My Lesson on the Power to Choose

During my senior year of college I became acquainted with a woman who was very difficult to get along with. She was critical and harsh, and I felt that no matter how hard I tried, she always found something to criticize. I felt belittled every time I was around her. My initial feelings of hurt soon turned to anger and then to resentment. She consumed my thoughts as I dwelled on all the perceived injustices that had been done to me.

I recognized that I was suffering spiritually because I was harboring such negative feelings, and I didn't like the continual state of defensiveness I was in. I desperately wanted to feel peace of mind again. I had been taught that the scriptures contain the answers to life's questions and

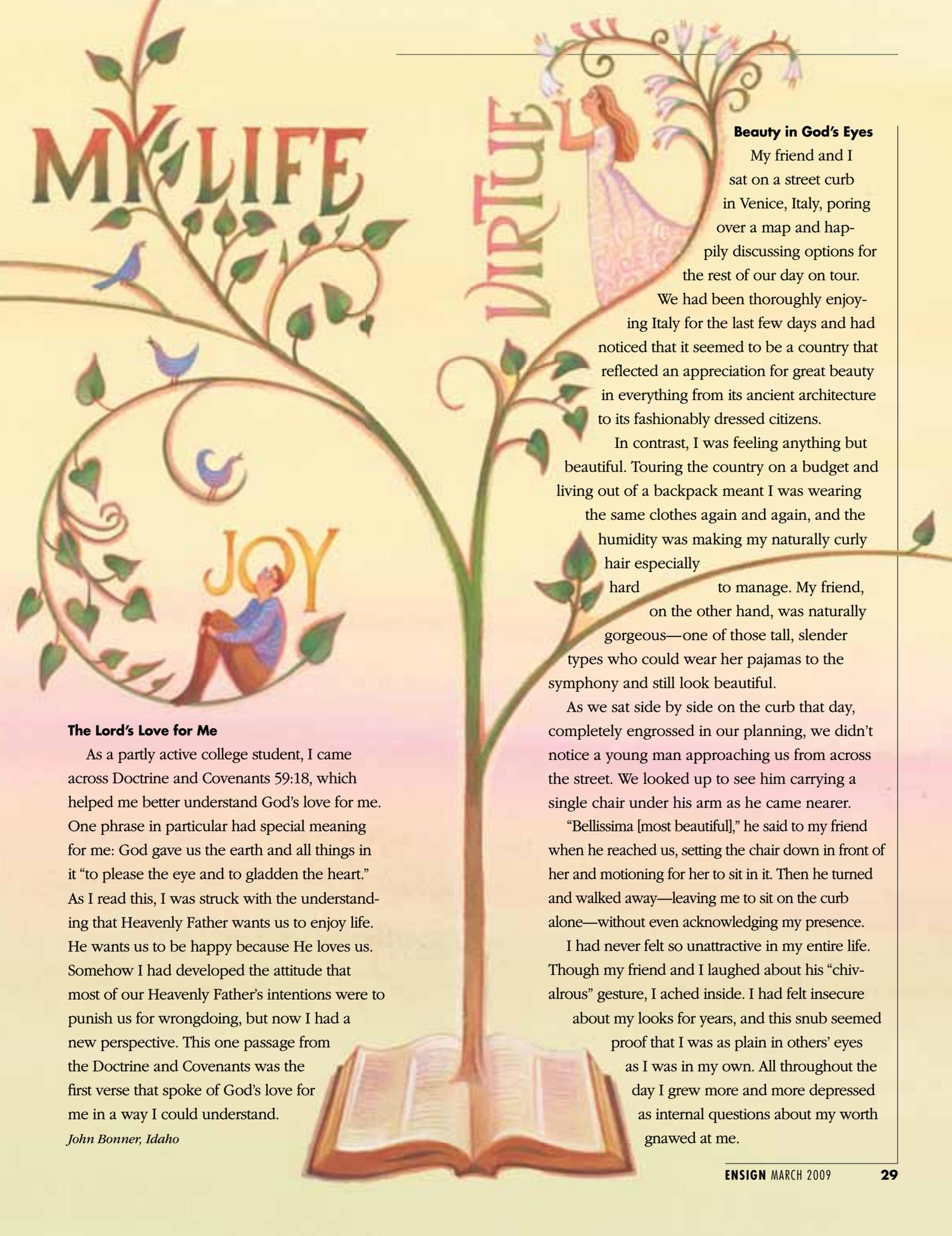
that if we approach the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He will lead us to those answers. I pleaded with the Lord that He would soften my heart and help me to be humble so that the Holy Ghost would be with me as I studied the scriptures. I prayed specifically that in my study that day, I would find a way to overcome my bad feelings toward this woman.

I turned in my scriptures to the place where I'd left off the day before, Mosiah 27. Verses 3 and 4 read, "And there was a strict command throughout all the churches . . . that there should be an equality among all men; *that they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace*; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself" (emphasis added).

I was struck with wonder and amazement as I realized that here was my answer: it was *my* pride that was preventing me from feeling peace! What a revelation! I could not change this woman's behavior, and I could not blame her for the unhappiness I had been feeling. I alone was responsible for my spiritual progression, and I could choose not to become offended.

How grateful I was to the Lord for answering my prayer and verifying that what I had been taught was true: the scriptures *do* contain the answers to life's questions. How much richer our scripture study is when we follow Nephi's counsel to "liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23).

Michelle Olson, Utah



MY LIFE

The Lord's Love for Me

As a partly active college student, I came across Doctrine and Covenants 59:18, which helped me better understand God's love for me. One phrase in particular had special meaning for me: God gave us the earth and all things in it "to please the eye and to gladden the heart." As I read this, I was struck with the understanding that Heavenly Father wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to be happy because He loves us. Somehow I had developed the attitude that most of our Heavenly Father's intentions were to punish us for wrongdoing, but now I had a new perspective. This one passage from the Doctrine and Covenants was the first verse that spoke of God's love for me in a way I could understand.

John Bonner, Idaho

VIRTUE

Beauty in God's Eyes

My friend and I sat on a street curb in Venice, Italy, poring over a map and happily discussing options for the rest of our day on tour.

We had been thoroughly enjoying Italy for the last few days and had noticed that it seemed to be a country that reflected an appreciation for great beauty in everything from its ancient architecture to its fashionably dressed citizens.

In contrast, I was feeling anything but beautiful. Touring the country on a budget and living out of a backpack meant I was wearing the same clothes again and again, and the humidity was making my naturally curly hair especially hard to manage. My friend, on the other hand, was naturally gorgeous—one of those tall, slender types who could wear her pajamas to the symphony and still look beautiful.

As we sat side by side on the curb that day, completely engrossed in our planning, we didn't notice a young man approaching us from across the street. We looked up to see him carrying a single chair under his arm as he came nearer.

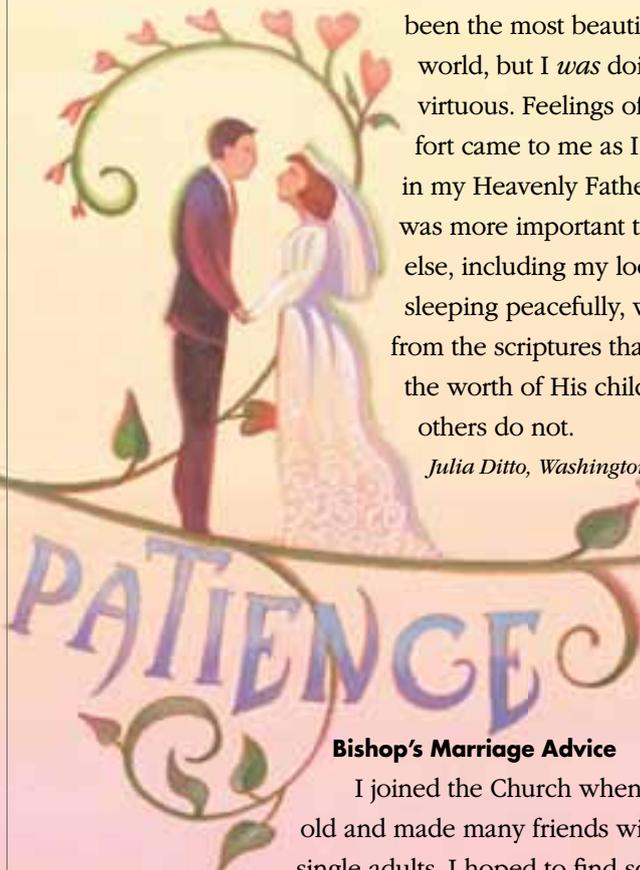
"Bellissima [most beautiful]," he said to my friend when he reached us, setting the chair down in front of her and motioning for her to sit in it. Then he turned and walked away—leaving me to sit on the curb alone—without even acknowledging my presence.

I had never felt so unattractive in my entire life. Though my friend and I laughed about his "chivalrous" gesture, I ached inside. I had felt insecure about my looks for years, and this snub seemed proof that I was as plain in others' eyes as I was in my own. All throughout the day I grew more and more depressed as internal questions about my worth gnawed at me.

Later that night I was still upset, so I began searching my scriptures, hoping to find some comfort. I opened them to Proverbs 31, where I read, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . . Beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (vv. 10, 30).

Relief washed over me. I might not have been the most beautiful girl in the world, but I *was* doing my best to be virtuous. Feelings of peace and comfort came to me as I considered that, in my Heavenly Father’s eyes, my virtue was more important than anything else, including my looks. Soon I was sleeping peacefully, with reassurance from the scriptures that the Lord knows the worth of His children—even when others do not.

Julia Ditto, Washington



PATIENCE

Bishop’s Marriage Advice

I joined the Church when I was 20 years old and made many friends with other young single adults. I hoped to find someone to marry; yet as time went by, I began to feel as though the odds of my obtaining a celestial marriage in this life were waning.

During a period when I was feeling particularly discouraged, I counseled with my bishop. He surprised me by pulling out a list of scriptures, each of which he said could teach a lesson about preparing for marriage. Working to prepare myself for marriage and focusing less on the fact that I was single would help me feel happier and more patient while I looked for a spouse.

He recommended that I study the scriptures on the list and then add others to it. I could watch for possible applications to marriage in my personal

scripture study. The list could then be a reference for me to turn to when I needed encouragement.

Preparing for marriage wasn’t a topic I remembered ever having seen in the scriptures before. But as soon as I began studying the verses on the bishop’s list, I found that they—and many others—did, in fact, give me marriage preparation counsel and that studying them brought me comfort.

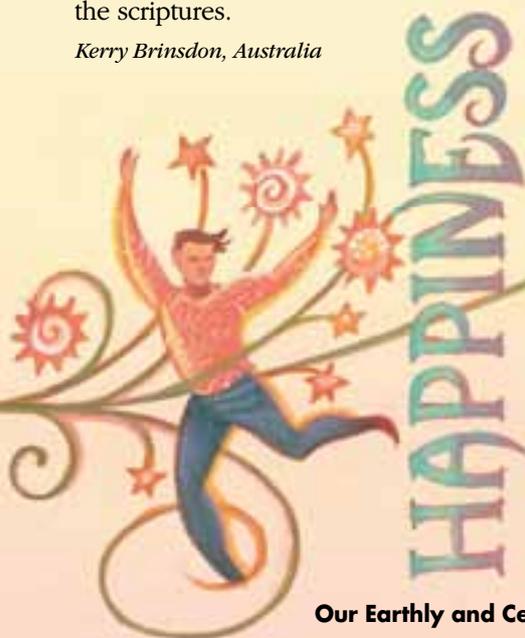
One of the scriptures that gave me new insight on preparing for marriage was Alma 32:40–43. Just as we are to nourish the gospel in our lives with patience, faith, and long-suffering and watch for the fruit of our obedience, I would need to be patient and faithful while I waited for the blessing

of marriage to come to me. Even before reading this scripture, I had known that the blessings of a temple marriage were worth waiting for. But now I came to realize that preparing for marriage wasn’t just waiting; it required faith and hard work to prepare myself—as well as some long-suffering. Studying the scriptures, particularly Alma 32, helped me focus on patiently waiting for Heavenly Father’s will to be fulfilled and on working toward my goal.

At age 31 I married in the temple. Shortly afterward, my husband and I were invited to teach an institute course on preparing for eternal marriage. Our preparation for teaching the course helped us both reflect on how our experiences working toward marriage while we were single were now helping us in our marriage. I shared with the students my experiences finding marriage-related scriptures, and we began searching for marriage advice in them together. Each week the students found other marriage-related scriptures to add to the list.

My bishop had taught me a pattern I could use for the rest of my life and even teach to others. I am grateful for his loving guidance in helping me see how to find answers to my questions in the scriptures.

Kerry Brinsdon, Australia



Our Earthly and Celestial Purpose

One of the questions I was asked most often as a missionary is “Why am I here, and what is my purpose?” Lehi, speaking to his son Jacob in the wilderness, answers this very question. He tells Jacob, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). Upon contemplating Lehi’s words, I have developed a testimony that our life’s purpose is to gain happiness—both here on earth and in heaven—and that we can find this happiness by being obedient to the Lord’s commandments.

Knowing from this scripture that the Lord’s greatest desire is for us to be happy helps me see others and myself in a different way. We are divine children loved by our Heavenly Father. This scripture has given my life greater meaning and has brought me joy and a goal to work toward. Because I know that happiness is the greatest goal, I can wake up in the morning looking forward to a bright new day, and I can be ready for the experiences that day will bring. The words of a prophet from long ago, which I read in the scriptures, taught me how to find this joy.

Vince Mōlējōn, Philippines



A TESTIMONY’S CORE

“Personal, sincere involvement in the scriptures produces faith, hope, and solutions to our daily challenges. Frequently reading, pondering, and applying the lessons of the scriptures, combined with prayer, become an irreplaceable part of gaining and sustaining a strong, vibrant testimony.”

Elder Donald L. Staheli, formerly of the Seventy, “Securing Our Testimonies,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 39.



Divine Potential

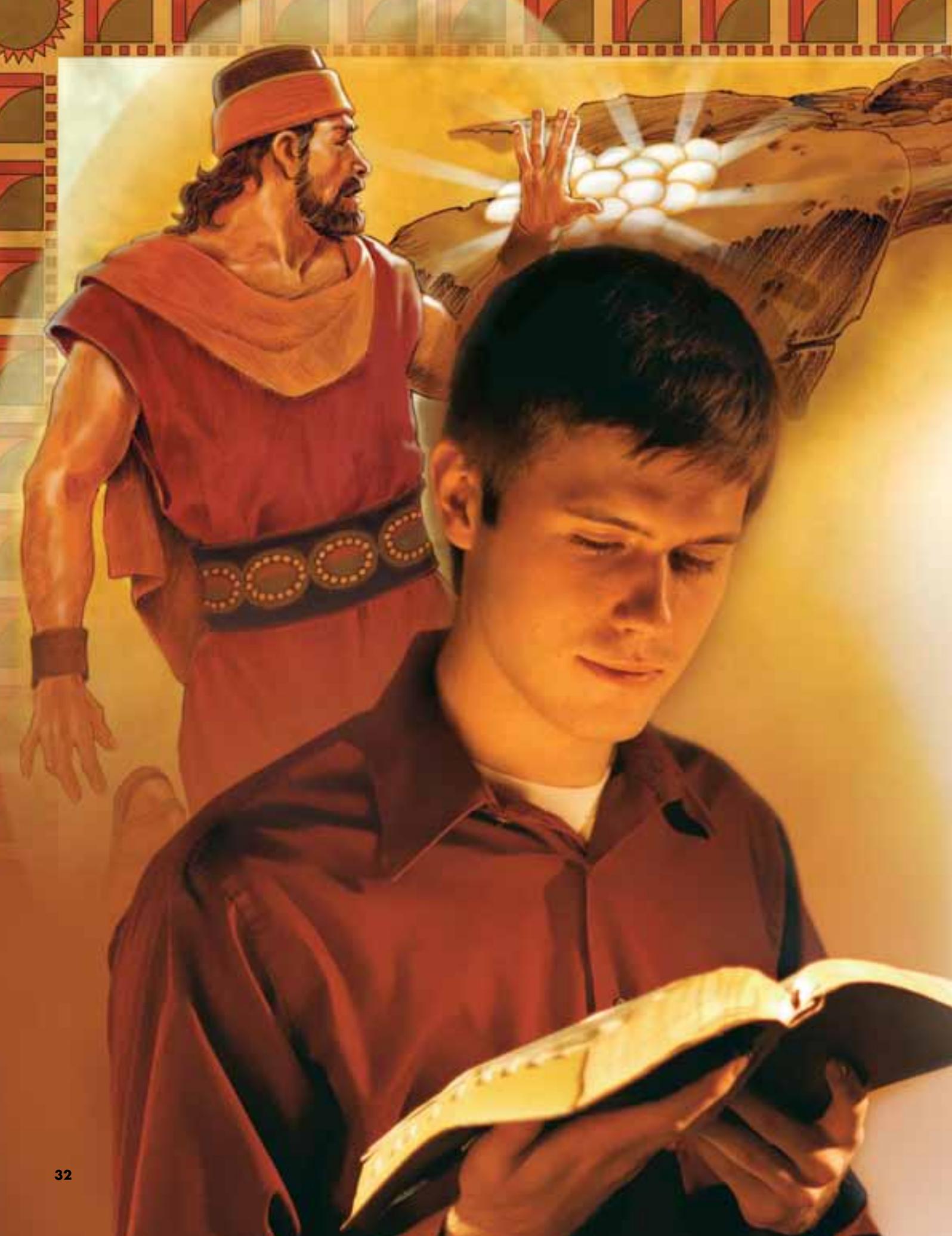
When I was a teenager, my activity in the Church wavered. My family was not active, and my mother’s boyfriend was against the Church and was abusive. I was unhappy at home. When I did manage to attend church, I noticed a wonderful difference between the atmosphere in the chapel and that of anywhere else I had been.

One day a teacher challenged our class to read a chapter each day from the Book of Mormon. I began getting up a little earlier so I could quietly read before anyone else at home awoke or could object.

By the time I got to Alma, I was feeling more and more desperate about my family’s situation. I also worried about my own standing with the Lord because I was struggling to obey His commandments. When I read of the king’s experience in Alma 22:18, an incredible peace came over me. I quickly developed a desire, just like this Lamanite did, to truly “give away all my sins” so that I could know my Heavenly Father.

My family situation didn’t change—but I did. This scripture helped me resolve to keep the Lord’s standards. I studied the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet and committed to live by its teachings. By acting on my newly strengthened desire to come to know Heavenly Father, I obtained the hope and testimony I needed to endure my struggles and become a better person. Even now, when I find myself struggling to reach my full potential as a child of God, I reread that scripture. Pondering it again strengthens my commitment to living His standards and renews my hope for eternal life.

Name Withheld ■





LIKENING THE SCRIPTURES TO OUR PERSONAL LIVES

The scriptures are alive. Though they were written long ago, they have application today. That makes them powerful.

Likening the scriptures to our personal lives helps us discover gospel principles and receive revelation. Nephi testified, “I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). Even though the scriptures were written long ago, they provide inspiration for our modern-day dilemmas when we learn to liken them to ourselves.

Moroni, the righteous military commander in the Book of Mormon, likened to his personal life words spoken some 1,700 years earlier by the Old Testament patriarch Jacob (see Alma 46:24–25). Moroni’s application of Jacob’s words inspired him to make the “title of liberty” and rallied the Nephites to enter into a covenant to stand firm against wickedness. By likening Jacob’s words to their own situation, Moroni and the Nephites re-established peace in their war-torn community (see Alma 46:30–38).

An institute teacher who helped his class liken the scriptures to themselves related the following: “I wanted my students to see that even though the scriptures were written long ago, they can provide inspiration for our modern-day dilemmas. I asked them to think about a current challenge

they were facing. I then assigned them to read silently a chapter in Moroni, looking for something that could help them with their challenge. After they had studied quietly for 10 minutes, I asked them to raise their hand if they found a verse that helped them. I was pleased, and I think they were amazed, to see that almost everyone had. Likening the scriptures to our personal lives leads to inspiration about the questions or concerns we encounter today.”

Compare Scriptural Events to Our Own Lives

One way to liken the scriptures to ourselves is to compare events in the scriptures to events in our lives. One member who learned how to liken the scriptures to himself told of his experience with Ether chapter 6. “The first few times I read the chapter, I saw only an account of the Jaredites’ journey across the ocean. However, as I read it again one day, it occurred to me to liken their journey across the ocean to my journey in mortality. As I did so, I discovered insights that strengthened my faith in Jesus Christ. The stones that gave light so the Jaredites would not have to cross the ocean in darkness reminded me of prophets, scriptures, and the Holy Ghost that give me light so I won’t have to go through mortality in darkness or confusion (see Ether 6:3). I likened the wind from the Lord that moved the Jaredite vessels “towards the promised land” to the experiences the



Lord provides that help me progress toward heaven (see Ether 6:5). It seemed to me that their being under the water was like my trials or times of stress (see Ether 6:6). But just as prayer persuaded the Lord to bring them ‘upon the top of the waters’ (Ether 6:7) for fresh air and sunshine, so I could pray for relief from my trials and stress.

Find the Principle Being Taught

Another way to liken the scriptures to our personal lives is to look past the story and find the principle being taught. For example, Nephi was commanded to build a boat. Though he had never done such a thing, he went about his task with great personal effort and received divine help. We may not be asked to build a boat, but we may be asked to do things that seem beyond our abilities. Like Nephi, we can exert our personal effort to “go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded” and exercise faith that the Lord will “prepare a way for [us] that [we] may accomplish the thing which he commandeth” (1 Nephi 3:7). One principle

HELPS TO LIKEN THE SCRIPTURES TO OUR PERSONAL LIVES

Ask one or more of the following questions to help you liken the scriptures to your life. Check the cross-references and the Topical Guide for further insight on a topic of interest.

- What situations in my life are like the situations in these verses?
- What are the principles in this chapter that will help me in my own circumstances?
- What events or circumstances in my day are like the events or circumstances in these verses?
- Is there something in this chapter that helps me with a current personal problem, question, challenge, or concern?
- Is there something taught that is similar to what the living prophet and apostles are teaching today?
- Is there something taught that could help with an issue the world is struggling with today?

taught in this story is to be diligent in obeying the Lord’s commands. We can liken Nephi’s example to ourselves by diligently obeying the things the Lord asks us to do.

Insert Your Name

Another way to liken scriptures to our personal lives is to substitute our names for names in the scriptures. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants 42:22 a husband wrote his wife’s name above the words “thy wife.” Now, every time he reads that verse it is personalized: “Thou shalt love Debra with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.”

The scriptures are described as “quick and powerful” (Helaman 3:29; see also Hebrews 4:12). The word *quick* in these verses means “living.” In other words, the scrip-

tures are alive. Though they were written long ago, they have application today. That makes them powerful. We can profit and learn from them. Likening scriptures to our personal lives will invite inspired thoughts to help us with our modern-day personal experiences. ■



LEARNING

to Share the Gospel

The Lord is preparing people all around us—where we work, where we live, where we travel, on the buses we take, and in the restaurants we patronize.

BY ELDER DON R. CLARKE
Of the Seventy

When my wife and I were in graduate school in Washington state, a speaker challenged us to follow President Spencer W. Kimball's admonition to be active member missionaries. During that talk I felt a strong impression to invite my good friend Garry Borders to hear the missionary discussions. As soon as the meeting ended, I rushed home to tell Mary Anne about my impressions, and together we prayed that Garry would accept our



Sharing the gospel is the best way to love our neighbors. It is also a way of showing our appreciation and love to the Son of God.



he had come to love a Bolivian family he had met. He stayed and became a wonderful missionary.

I have observed hundreds of other missionaries discover, as this young missionary did, that their happiness grows when they learn to love the people they serve more than they love themselves. I believe this is true

invitation. He did, and he eventually joined the Church.

Garry's conversion marked the beginning of a great friendship and a lifetime of missionary experiences for our family. Our experiences with Garry and with many others with whom we have shared the gospel have given me a firm testimony of something the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel."¹

As our family has accepted the opportunity to share the gospel, we have learned a few principles about missionary work that have been helpful in our efforts as member missionaries.

Why Do Missionary Work?

President David O. McKay, quoted in *Preach My Gospel*, said: "True Christianity is love in action. There is no better way to manifest love for God than to show an unselfish love for your fellow men. This is the spirit of missionary work."² Sharing the gospel is the best way to love our neighbors. It is also a way of showing our appreciation and love to the Son of God.

While Sister Clarke and I were serving in Bolivia, a homesick missionary arrived who did not like anything about the country. He did not like the food, the weather, or his living conditions.

"I'm going home," he soon declared.

"Give it four weeks," I responded.

After some discussion we finally agreed on two weeks. In those two weeks, a miracle happened. He still did not like the food, the weather, or his living conditions, but

for all of us. As we learn to love our neighbors, we find it easier to share gospel blessings with them. As we do so, we find greater happiness in our lives. Missionary work is about love; if we love others, we will share the gospel with them.

The Lord Is Preparing His Children

"There are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12). The Lord is preparing people all around us—where we work, where we live, where we travel, on the buses we take, and in the restaurants we patronize.

A few years ago Sister Clarke and I returned to Argentina, where I had served as a young missionary. Before we traveled, I reviewed in my diary the names and circumstances of the people my companions and I had taught and baptized. In reviewing my list, I discovered that we had found about half of those individuals while contacting people on the street. We talked to everyone. Because the Lord knew that we would talk to everyone on the street, He placed His prepared sons and daughters in our path.

The Lord blessed us greatly. Many of those converts became missionaries, bishops, or district presidents, and one even became a patriarch. I have seen this miracle again and again. The Lord has prepared people to receive us. Can He trust us to open our mouths? If so, He will place prepared people in our path. "Yea, I will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I will establish a church by your hand" (D&C 31:7).

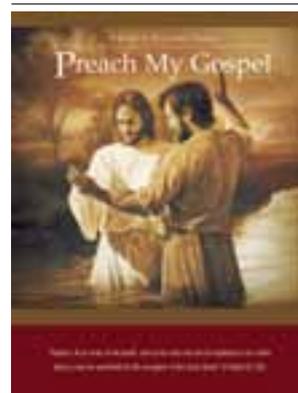
Reaching Out

The scriptures are full of invitations to repent, be baptized, and follow Christ. Alma, for example, said, “I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62). Our invitations may be a little different from Alma’s, but they can be important small steps

Our example is critical, but it is not the end. We must have the courage to reach out because people will not usually invite themselves.

in bringing people to partake of the gospel.

We may begin by inviting people to our home, a sporting event, a Church activity, or a service project. Small steps to fellowship others will eventually lead to spiritual conversations, invitations to attend Church, and interest in listening to the missionaries. Remember that sharing the gospel is a process, not an event. Our example is critical, but it is not the end. We must have the courage to reach out because people will not usually invite themselves.



Member missionaries can find strength in studying Preach My Gospel and by reading the experiences of early missionaries of the restored Church.





We have also received blessings as a result of missionaries' teaching and visiting in our home. The examples of these missionaries and our participation in missionary work made our sons better missionaries and our children better member missionaries.

Obtaining the Word

The Lord declared, "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word" (D&C 11:21). Member missionaries can find strength in studying *Preach My Gospel* and by reading the experiences of early missionaries of the restored Church, such as Samuel Smith and Wilford Woodruff. We can also study and emulate the great missionaries from the Book of Mormon: Alma, Ammon, and the sons of Mosiah, to name just a few. These great missionaries studied the scriptures, prayed for success, and then went to work.

If we want to be successful member missionaries, we must do the same. Let us pray not only for our full-time missionaries but also that we will be missionaries. As we study, pray, and put into practice what we learn and feel, we will have success.

"I am convinced that missionary work is not easy because *salvation is not a cheap experience*," said Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.

"Salvation *never* was easy. . . . How could we believe it would be easy for us when it was never, ever easy for Him?"³

Over the years I have heard many Latter-day Saints say, "But missionary work is easy for others." I have found that this generally is not true. It may become easier over time, but it doesn't start out that way. We gain faith and confidence as we participate in missionary work, but it is never easy.

It wasn't necessarily comfortable for me to invite my friend Garry Borders to hear the discussions when we were students together in Washington state, but I am grateful that I mustered the courage to do so. Today more than 80 members of Garry's family are members of the Church. Garry has served as a bishop and stake president, blessing the lives of countless individuals.

When we lived in Connecticut, Garry and his wife, Sue, along with their daughter, stopped to visit us on their way to Israel.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read the section titled “Reaching Out.”

Identify activities to which family members could invite others so friendships can develop. Draw pictures of a few of these activities. Choose someone the family could invite to an activity and extend the invitation. Remember to continue your friendship even if some are not interested in the gospel.

2. Read D&C 18:16 together and discuss ways to find the joy promised in that verse.

are.” The examples of these missionaries and our participation in missionary work made our sons better missionaries and our children better member missionaries. Missionary work has blessed and changed our lives.

We spend our energy, prayers, and time preparing young people for missions because we know that as they serve, wonderful changes

happen in their lives (and, of course, in the lives of those they teach). Their testimony of the Savior grows, they become more Christlike, and they have spiritual experiences. I have learned that these same things will happen to us and to our families as we actively participate in missionary work. Let us put the same effort, energy, and faith into participating in missionary work as we do in preparing missionaries.

Our family has a book filled with letters we have received from those with whom we have shared the gospel. When we reread them, we are reminded of why we participate in missionary work.

The influence of missionary work in our family began many years ago with our great-grandparents in faraway lands. Our lives are different today because someone took the time to care enough to share the gospel with our ancestors.

“Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God” (D&C 11:3).

As we follow these principles and the counsel of the prophets, we will reap the great blessings that come to member missionaries. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, quoted in *History of the Church*, 2:478.
2. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (1954), 129; quoted in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 13.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Missionary Work and the Atonement,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2001, 15.

After returning from Israel, he sent me a statue of the Savior with a sheep. The statue bore this message: “Thank you for saving one lost sheep!” I keep the statue in my office as a reminder of that wonderful experience so many years ago.

Following dinner at our home one evening, Garry shared these precious parting words: “Thirty-five years ago, who would have thought that something like this could have happened to a country boy like me. I owe the two of you more than I can express, and I just want you to know how grateful I am that you took the time to share. Everything I hold dear flows from that time in 1971.”

Whenever I think that missionary work is too hard or that my efforts won’t matter, I look at my statue of Christ with the lost sheep, and I try one more time. It is not easy, but it is worth it.

The Blessings of Sharing the Gospel

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:16).

Over the years we have had the opportunity to share the gospel with many people. The joy of our labors has deepened friendships and allowed us to enjoy countless spiritual experiences. I recently had the privilege of sealing my brother in the temple to a dear friend with whom we had shared the gospel many years before. Another convert has become one of our best friends. With his spouse, these wonderful friends served as surrogate parents to our six children while we served in Bolivia.

We have also received blessings as a result of missionaries’ teaching and visiting in our home. Our sons and daughters often commented, “They are really good missionaries, aren’t they, Dad,” and I would say, “Yes, they

www.disabilities.lds.org

THE NEW DISABILITIES WEB SITE



Disability Resources

Welcome to Disability Resources

This Web Center on Disabilities has been created to offer support, comfort, and an increased level of progress toward those with disabilities.

These resources are for you in a disability, your caregivers, as well as leaders, teachers, and families who find within the site a better understanding of specific disabilities and some of the difficulties faced by those involved.



Disability List

Help, Resources, and Disability List

Each of the categories below includes links, resources and additional information about various disabilities.

- Adult
- Children & Youth
- Hearing Loss & Deafness
- Physical Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Speech & Language Disorders
- Learning Disability
- Vision Loss & Blindness

First Presidency Statement

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is working to provide better access to its buildings and facilities for people with disabilities. We also are working to make creative use of existing religious training for those with physical, mental and emotional impairments. But there is an even greater need to reduce the barriers imposed by a lack of understanding and acceptance of those who have disabilities.

We urge leaders, teachers, neighbors, friends and families to...

...show respect and understanding of disabilities.

MISSION
month

How a new Church Web site is helping members with disabilities—and their friends, leaders, and teachers—approach challenges with faith instead of fear.

BY KATHLEEN L. PETERSON

At 18, Brandon Sulser of Utah was injured in an accident and became a quadriplegic. “I’ve had many days filled with anger, grief, and sorrow,” he says. “But whatever situation life may bring, I try always to focus on the positive.” Now 29, Brother Sulser teaches Sunday School to 17- and 18-year-olds.

Meagan Borrows of British Columbia has autism and is developmentally delayed. She has a gift for paying attention to detail, so her bishop called her to serve in the Primary as an assistant secretary. Each week she takes attendance, sharpens crayon pencils, distributes handouts, and ensures that the children and teachers change classrooms on time. Now, because she has a responsibility, she never wants to miss church.

Like Brandon and Meagan, many members of the Church who have disabilities contribute to their wards and branches. Friends, leaders, and teachers are finding ways to help ease the burdens that many members with disabilities carry. Now both groups can find help in their service through the Church’s new Disabilities Resources Web site.

“Disabilities.lds.org provides help for families, caregivers, leaders, teachers, and friends,” says Doug Hind, who oversees special-needs materials in the Church’s Curriculum Department. “We’ve had pieces of information for them scattered in handbooks, in lesson manuals, and on other Web sites, but now it is in one place and much more accessible.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

“The Disability Resource section of the Church’s Web site has proven to be one of the most helpful to individuals, families, caregivers, teachers, and priesthood leaders,” says Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy, who serves as an assistant executive director of the Church Curriculum Department. “A wide range of practical and professional resources for those with special needs is now accessible to persons whose lives are touched by those needing loving care and assistance.”

Understanding and Including People with Disabilities

A disability is a functional limitation that may interfere with a person’s ability to walk, hear, talk, see, think, or learn. Disabilities do not affect every person in the same way. Leaders, teachers, and friends should work with people individually to understand specific abilities and limitations.

Debra Towsley of Idaho, who works as a speech and language pathologist and has taught a child with autism in Primary, is excited about the Web site.

“As an educational specialist in special education, I am so happy this is available,” she says. “I appreciate the common themes such as being respectful, maintaining dignity, looking at abilities rather than *disabilities*, and asking before helping or touching someone.”

The organization of disabilities.lds.org will stay the same, but articles and other information will be added and updated.

Help for Leaders and Teachers

Leaders, teachers, and other Church members can gain greater understanding and inspiration on how to temporally and spiritually support those with disabilities and their loved ones.

“You don’t have to be an individual who has a disability or even involved with a family member with a disability to gain important insight about people with special needs,” says Sister Ann M. Dibb, second counselor in the general Young



Women presidency. “You can learn to be a better teacher and to be more helpful, considerate, and caring. You can more closely emulate the Savior, who taught, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’” (Matthew 25:40).

The site includes ideas for focusing on the needs of members with disabilities, such as considering ramps or handrails, special parking, or audiovisual equipment. It identifies ideas for managing classroom behavior, adapting lessons, and tips about specific disabilities.

As we serve and work with those with disabilities we learn to love them and see them as servants of our Heavenly Father. Danilo M. Seraspe met Vernon and Jo Ellen Bonse, who are deaf, more than 15 years ago. He remembers that they were “pleasant and friendly,” yet Brother Seraspe felt uncomfortable interacting with them. “They seemed to recognize and accept the distance,” he remembers.

It was when Brother Seraspe was assigned to be the Bonsel’s home teacher that a strong friendship began. At the end of each day, Brother Seraspe and Brother Bonse would meet at the train station on their way home and conduct a home teaching visit. Since Brother Seraspe did not know American Sign Language, they communicated by writing back and forth to each other. “We used quite a bit of paper,” Brother Seraspe says.

Brother Seraspe, who was recently released as the bishop of the ward in New York that both families attended, is quick to recognize the contributions that Brother and Sister Bonse consistently make. He says, “The Bonsel’s offer prayers, give talks, and teach in Elder’s Quorum and Relief Society. They give their time, their hearts, and their intellect as they serve. Vernon and Jo Ellen are truly a blessing to our ward.”

Help for Families of Children with Disabilities

“It’s important for parents to treat their child with a disability as normal as possible,” says David M. Rushton of Texas, who has spina bifida. He remembers his own parents allowing him to be independent.

“When I was 15 years old, I asked my mom if I could be on the high school wrestling team,” Brother Rushton says. “She was afraid that with my spina bifida, I would be injured.

“With faith, my parents allowed me to wrestle. I never became a champion, but at one match I received a standing ovation—not because I won, but because I never quit and was never pinned to the mat by my opponent.

“Now I have my own family to take care of. It’s important for me to remember that the Lord gives no challenges we cannot overcome,” says Brother Rushton.



Because family plays such an integral part in the development of members with a disability, disabilities.lds.org includes five sections to help family members: a general overview, as well as pages directed specifically to fathers, mothers, siblings, and grandparents.

“A family member with a disability impacts the whole family,” says Sandra Tanner, a member of the Primary General Board. “This site was created because of their needs and because of the Church’s desire to help.”

Sister Tanner also points out the importance of having a place for every member to participate in church. “If there’s not a place for every member, some families might not attend,” she says. “Perhaps they might be embarrassed because they’re different, or they may not want to ‘impose’ on others. But they lose the blessings of church attendance, of strength gained by renewing covenants, of being taught by the Spirit, and of opportunities to grow through service. The gospel is for everyone. Blessing the one blesses us all.”

Scriptures and Quotes

Members with disabilities and those who love them may become disheartened at times, but the Lord will always bring succor and comfort to those who are troubled. For instance, Deuteronomy 31:6 offers this encouragement:

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid . . . for the Lord thy God . . . will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” This and other helpful verses found in the “Scriptures and Quotes” section of the Web site remind those who are discouraged that they are not alone.

“Disabilities.lds.org offers some wonderful, encouraging scriptural references that address individual needs from varying points of view,” says one sister in North Carolina, who has rheumatoid arthritis. “The scriptures can help calm fears and give hope.

“The example of Jesus having charity for the disabled and afflicted can strengthen one’s reliance on the Lord,” she continues. “The scriptures provided remind us all, whether one has a disability or not, of Heavenly Father’s involvement and support in our lives. I am thankful for the peace and comfort that come through the scriptures.”

Materials

In addition to having taught a child with autism in Primary, Sister Debra Towsley serves with her husband as a coordinator at a local assisted-living center. She has seen firsthand the blessings that Church materials can bring into members’ lives. “Many of the residents have Relief Society and Priesthood manuals in large print,” she says, which gives



them access to materials they might not otherwise enjoy.

The Church produces many such materials to give members with disabilities better access to Church lessons, music, and programs. These adapted resources include audiocassettes, CDs, MP3 files, videos with captions, sign-language dictionaries, and various publications. Materials are offered for particular ages or auxiliaries, as well as for specific disabilities.

The site links to ldscatalog.com, where many of these materials can be ordered, as well as to online media formats instantly available on LDS.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Frequently Asked Questions section offers a wealth of information not covered elsewhere.

Here, readers can find “how-to” instruction, resource ideas, statistics, and answers to questions about doctrine and policy.

For instance, some might wonder if a service animal is allowed in a Church building. The answer is yes; the only place service animals are not allowed is in the temple. There, temple ordinance workers are glad to offer assistance to anyone needing it. The site also advises members to be aware of local laws concerning service animals and places where those with disabilities might need additional assistance.



COME WHAT MAY, AND LOVE IT.

“My grandson Joseph has autism. It has been heartbreaking for his mother and father to come to grips with the implications of this affliction. They knew that Joseph would probably never be like other children. They understood what

that would mean not only for Joseph but for the family as well. But what a joy he has been to us. . . .

“Any reservations that his family may have had in raising Joseph, any sacrifices they have made have been compensated tenfold. Because of this choice spirit, his mother and father have learned much about children with disabilities. They have witnessed firsthand the generosity and compassion of family, neighbors, and friends. They have rejoiced together as Joseph has progressed. They have marveled at his goodness.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917-2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign*, November 2008, 28.



D*isabilities.lds.org highlights many materials that give members with disabilities better access to lessons, music, and programs. Here, a girl with cerebral palsy gives a prayer in Primary using a communication board.*

that the Lord must really believe in me and my abilities to overcome my special trials,” says Brother Rushton. “Because of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, one day I will be made whole. Few can appreciate this or be more grateful for it than someone who has had a disability.” ■

You need not be a special educator or have professional training to work with members who have disabilities. If you have an experience with blessing lives through the information on this site or through other resources available to you, please share it with us. You can also send us questions you would like answered. Please e-mail your queries and your success stories to specialcurriculum@ldschurch.org.



The site also allows members to submit their own questions, which will be considered for future inclusion on the site.

A Resource to Empower Individuals

“Every member of the Church should take advantage of the wealth of the disabilities Web site,” says Sister Dibb. “The information will bless and empower individuals to find the help that they need. This is truly an example of how the Church strives to provide assistance for individuals and families.”

“I remind myself

HELPS AND RESOURCES

In addition to the general helps found on the site, disabilities.Ids.org also offers disability-specific information in 10 categories. Each of these pages contains a list of online resources that are not maintained or controlled by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but are provided as additional resource material. These links are listed under each category.

Autism

- National Institute of Mental Health
- National Autistic Society
- Asperger Syndrome
- CDC Autism Information Center
- Autism Speaks

Chronic Illness

- U.S. National Library of Medicine: National Institute of Health
- National Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Healthline
- American Autoimmune and Related Disorders Association

Hearing Loss and Deafness

- National Association of the Deaf
- Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People
- Alexander Graham Bell Association for Deafness and Hard of Hearing

Learning Disability

- Learning Disabilities Association of America
- LD Online
- National Center for Learning Disabilities

Physical Disability

- Spina Bifida Association
- National MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Society
- Muscular Dystrophy Association

Speech and Language Disorders

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders
- Medlineplus: a service of the United States National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health

Intellectual Disability

- American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- NICHCY Fact Sheet on Mental Retardation
- Centers for Disease Control Fact Sheet on Mental Retardation

Mental Illness

- Mental Health Resources
- National Institute for Mental Health
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Medline Plus: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Memory Loss

- Alzheimer's Association
- NICHCY Traumatic Brain Injury
- Mayo Clinic Traumatic Brain Injury

Vision Loss and Blindness

- American Council of the Blind
- American Foundation for the Blind
- National Federation of the Blind
- National Association for the Visually Impaired





UNDERSTANDING *Ellie's Challenge*

Instead of praying for medical answers for my daughter, I started praying for help in dealing with the situation.

BY TIA HAYWARD

On November 7, 1994, our healthy, dark-haired little Ellie Jane was born. My husband, Steve, had just graduated from college and begun his career, and we had purchased our first home. I considered myself a very blessed person and thought I knew genuine happiness and joy. However, not having been through any serious trials, I had never truly felt the need to rely on the Lord and seek His help and guidance. That was about to change.

Five weeks later, on a cold December morning when

I had just finished feeding Ellie, her little body began to shake in a very odd way, and afterwards she cried. Hoping it was just a cold chill, I tried not to be overly concerned. During the day, however, her body shook again. I telephoned my husband and told him I was worried. That evening we found ourselves at Primary Children's Medical Center, where Ellie underwent numerous tests. We were told that our baby had had a seizure, but the doctors did not know why. All of her tests came back normal. We returned to our home unaware of our future.



THE WORKS OF GOD MADE MANIFEST

“The challenge of having handicapped people is not new. Many have questioned why some have such limitations.

It was so in the time of Jesus:

“ ‘And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

“ ‘And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

“ ‘Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.’ (John 9:1–3.)”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “The Works of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 54.

because I felt my daughter was being cheated. My husband suggested that I might be praying for the wrong thing. Instead of praying for medical answers for Ellie, maybe I needed to start praying for help in dealing with the situation. I tried to follow his advice. His words brought me comfort, but I still felt that I wasn't doing enough for Ellie.

Four years later, my husband and I attended ward temple night. Ellie was

The medications our daughter took the first year of her life did not control her seizures completely, but Ellie continued to develop normally. She had a beautiful smile, and her big brown eyes would light up when we would talk to her. Her older brother, Zac, loved to play peekaboo with her.

On Ellie's first birthday we had a wonderful party with balloons, ice cream, and cake. We took a great picture of Ellie with her hand in her ice cream and making a funny face. It was the last time we were able to take a picture of her smiling and looking at the camera. Within two weeks, our beautiful daughter began to lose her mental and physical abilities. Her seizures became more frequent and more severe.

An electroencephalogram (EEG) test on her brain revealed that she had developed hypsarrhythmia, an irregular brain wave pattern. She was diagnosed as having infantile spasms—a hard-to-control seizure disorder that leads to severe retardation. We were devastated. My husband and I were so heartbroken that at times it was too painful to even look at our daughter. She no longer smiled, called out to me, or even moved or made sounds. We grieved over the loss of our child. Zac wondered why his little sister wouldn't laugh at him anymore. The light in her eyes was gone.

Tearful days turned into months, and months turned into years. We searched every possible avenue for an answer. We traveled to four different states for tests. We sought help from many doctors in various fields of practice. We put her small body through daily shots and strong medication, but nothing helped her. We tried to accept the fact that her daily seizures would never go away, but we so desperately wanted Ellie to be “normal” again.

I quit praying for answers because I felt I wasn't getting any. I disliked reading stories about miraculous healings

again on my mind, and I was praying for comfort and medical answers. It was a very busy night, and we waited in the chapel a little longer than usual. As I was gazing around to see which neighbors or friends were joining us for a temple session, a gentleman caught my attention. At the time, I saw only the back of his head, but his dark, curly hair stood out. I noticed that he did not have a left arm. “How amazing that he is here with the limitations that he has,” I thought. A few minutes later, I realized that his other arm was mechanical.

A powerful feeling came over me at that moment. This man probably had a tremendous amount of faith, but no matter how many prayers he uttered, no matter how many priesthood blessings he received, no matter what doctor he went to, his arms would never grow back. Either this was the way he was born, or something had happened that caused him to lose his arms. But his arms were gone and not coming back. It was then that I received a very personal revelation.

My daughter, Ellie, was as she was for a reason. No matter how often I prayed or how much faith I exerted, she would still have her disability. Yet the Lord loved her. The Lord loved me. I reflected on the past four and a half years and realized the Lord *had* answered my prayers by bringing me comfort and peace.

I am so grateful to the wonderful stranger in the temple for the peace his example of faithfulness helped bring into my life. I don't know his name, but through him my prayers were answered. ■

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

In this parable, the Savior taught us how to prepare for His Second Coming.

In these last days, the Lord has said, “Be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom” (D&C 33:17). This counsel refers to the parable of the ten virgins, which illustrates how we are to prepare for Christ’s Second Coming (see Matthew 25:1–13). Here are some explanations that may help you as you study this parable and ponder its meaning.



The **spout** or nozzle was made from a mold.



Ten Virgins

It was a custom among the Jews for the bridegroom to come at night to the bride’s house, where her bridesmaids attended her. When the bridegroom’s approach was announced, these maidens went out with lamps to light his way into the house for the celebration.

In this parable the virgins represent members of the Church, and the bridegroom represents Christ. The Lord explained to Joseph Smith that the wise virgins are those who “have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived” (D&C 45:57).

A **wick** made of flax fibers or a rush stem was placed in the spout, and then the lamp was filled with olive oil. Once the wick absorbed the oil, the lamp was lit.



The lamps were lit at dusk.



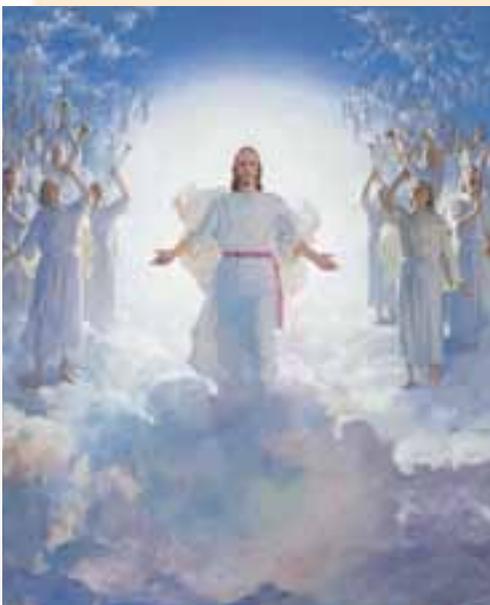
The bridegroom came at midnight.

Bridegroom

In the Bible, the image of a wedding is used to portray the coming of the Lord (see Isaiah 62:5; Matthew 22:1–14). Jewish weddings included the announcement of the bridegroom’s coming to the bride’s house. The weddings usually began in the evening, with the lamps lit at dusk. So midnight was later than the ten virgins would have expected

the bridegroom—and the announcement came suddenly.

We do not know the timing of Christ’s Second Coming, but we should prepare for it as though it could come at any time—whether soon or late.





Vessels

The vessels in the parable were containers for storing extra oil.

Being wise means being prepared for the unexpected with an extra measure of faith, testimony, and the Spirit in our lives. Sometimes we grow complacent, thinking we have enough to get by. But following the Savior means more than just getting by. It means always striving to draw closer to Him, preparing for those times when our patience, faith, and testimony will be tried.

DROP BY DROP



“Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 256.

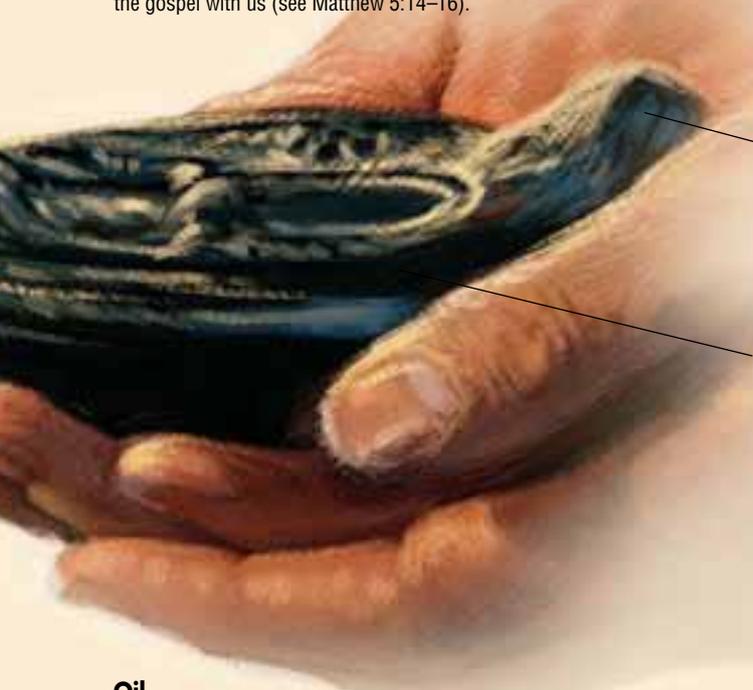


Lamps

The oil lamps used by the Jews in Jesus’s day are called Herodian lamps, after King Herod. These lamps enabled people to carry light wherever they went. In the same way, we are to carry the light of the gospel with us (see Matthew 5:14–16).



Herodian lamps could usually burn for about two hours.



The **handle** was shaped by hand and then attached to the lamp.

The **body** of the lamp was made of clay and shaped on a potter’s wheel.

Oil

Olives are first soaked in water to clean them and purge them of their bitterness, and then they are crushed to extract their oil. Olive oil, produced throughout the Mediterranean region, had multiple uses anciently: food, cooking oil, condiment, treatment for wounds, ingredient in cosmetics and soaps, and fuel for lamps.

The oil in the parable represents our faith and testimony, our purity and dedication, our good

works, and our keeping of covenants—all of the ways in which we have “taken the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (D&C 45:57).

The wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish virgins because “the oil of spiritual preparedness cannot be shared” (Marvin J. Ashton, “A Time of Urgency,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 36).



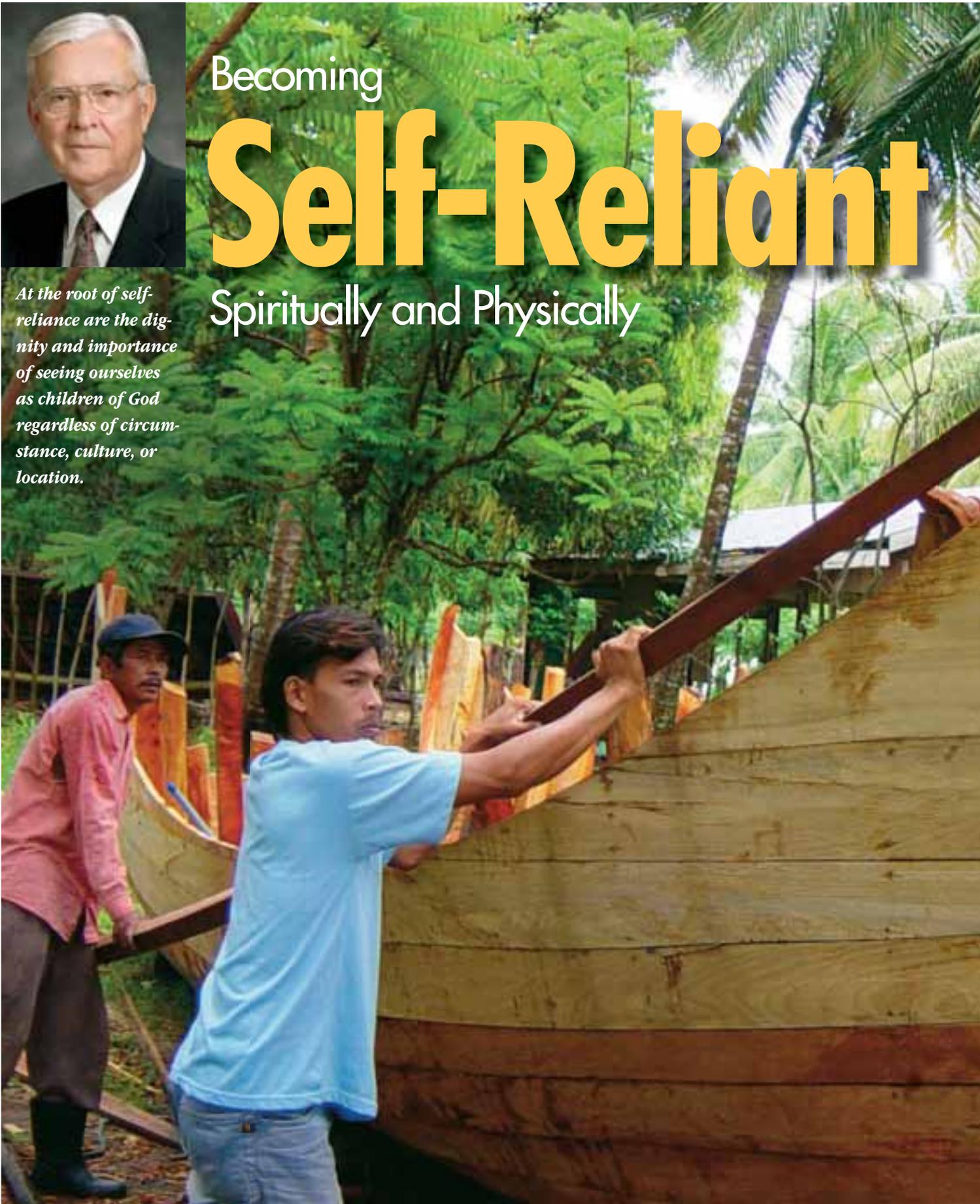


Becoming

Self-Reliant

Spiritually and Physically

At the root of self-reliance are the dignity and importance of seeing ourselves as children of God regardless of circumstance, culture, or location.





“As people become self-reliant, they are better prepared to endure adversities” and are “better able to care for others in need.”

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

My travels have taken me almost everywhere in the world—most of the continent of Africa, the islands of the sea, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the heart of the inner cities of America. Everywhere I go, the cries of the poor ring out—often with the plea, “Please help us.” In Africa alone those cries do not come from a few; they come from tens of thousands, even millions.

The Church has been especially concerned with teaching self-reliance since 1936, when Elder Melvin J. Ballard was named general chairman of the newly formed Welfare Committee. Elder Harold B. Lee was the first managing director, followed by Elder Marion G. Romney. Since that beginning, the Church has learned a great deal about the principles of self-reliance.

From the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, we learn: “The Savior has commanded the Church and its members to be self-reliant and independent. . . .

“To become self-reliant, a person must work. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. It is a basic source



PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY L. GARNIS

of happiness, self-worth, and prosperity. Through work, people accomplish many good things in their lives. . . .

“As people become self-reliant, they are better prepared to endure adversities” and are “better able to care for others in need.”¹

President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) taught: “Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves.



Muhammad Yunus (above) must have been prompted by the Spirit when he organized a very unusual bank in Bangladesh. “Whatever the bankers did, I simply did the opposite,” he said. “The bankers would only lend to the rich. I would only lend to the poor. The bankers would only make large loans. I would only make very small loans.”

Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.”² (See also p. 65 of this magazine.)

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) said: “The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature.”³

William George Jordan put it this way: “The world is busy with its own cares, sorrows and joys, and pays little heed to

you. There is but one great pass-word to success,—self-reliance.”⁴

From my experience, I believe that a few simple but very important principles can help prepare us to become more self-reliant.

Find Answers through the Spirit

First, every person must know that he or she is a child of God and is loved by Him. People need to realize that regardless of their circumstances, as desperate as those may be, they are entitled to the Light of Christ in their lives. From Moroni we learn, “The Spirit of Christ is given to every man” (Moroni 7:16). The promise is that every son and daughter of God can find, through the Spirit, answers to the challenges in their lives, including how to become more self-reliant. We must, therefore, ever keep in our minds how precious each child of God is and how important our service is to each one of them.

We become more self-reliant in some ways as we recognize our dependence on Him from whom all good things come. This is the spirit noted in Alma 34:27, in which we are counseled to cry unto the Lord over our homes, our families, and our work. “Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be . . . drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”

At the root of self-reliance are the dignity and importance of seeing ourselves as children of God regardless of circumstance, culture, or location.

Appraise Our Lives and the Needs of Others

Second, we need to appraise our own lives. How well are we listening to the Spirit? Are we living according to the eternal truths

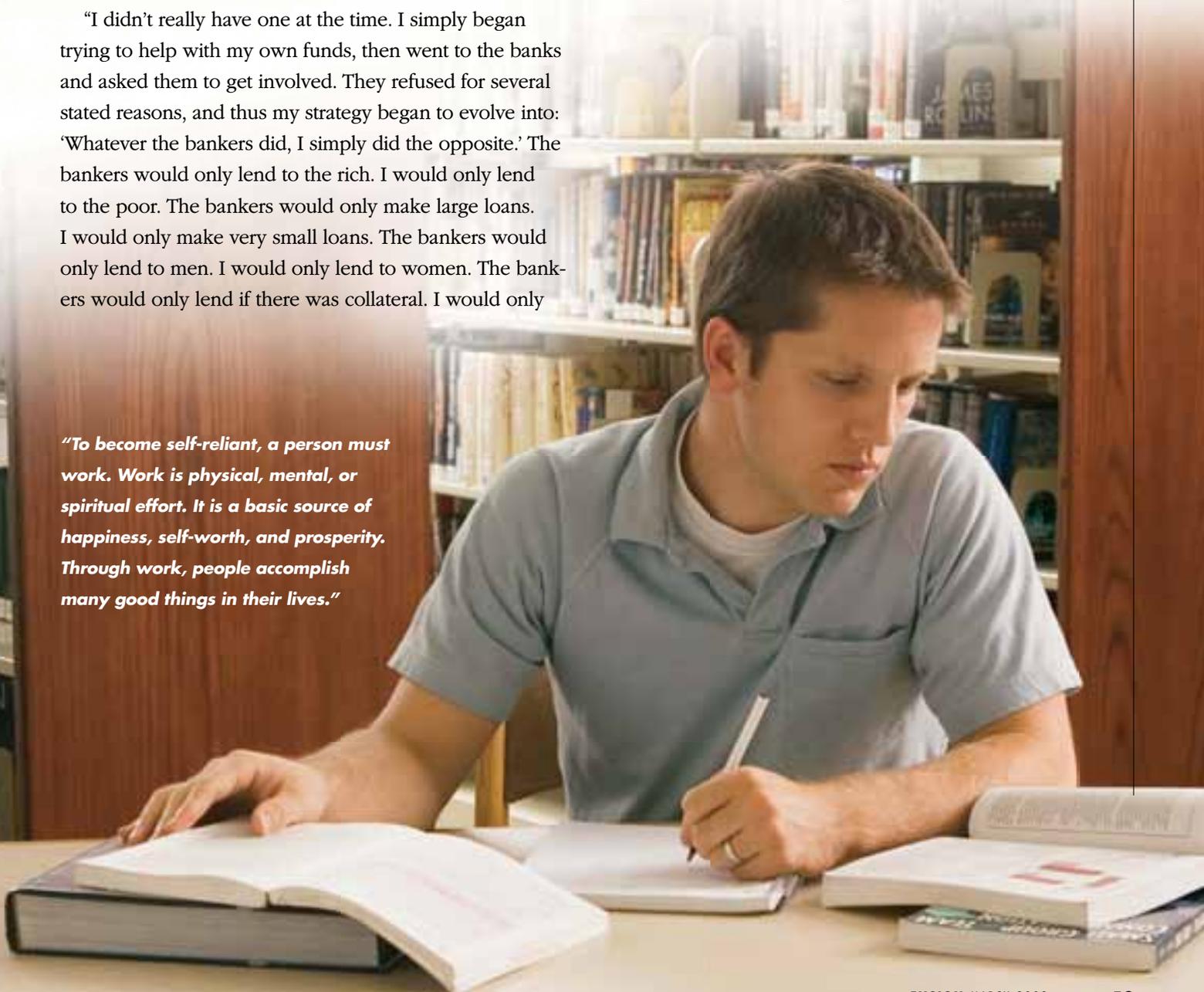
and doctrines of the restored Church of Jesus Christ? Can we effectively appraise the needs of others by the prompting of the Spirit? It impressed me that Muhammad Yunus must have been prompted by the Spirit when he organized a very unusual bank in Bangladesh, which some have said was the beginning of microfinance. When Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his efforts to help the poor, was asked what his initial strategy would be, he responded:

“I didn’t really have one at the time. I simply began trying to help with my own funds, then went to the banks and asked them to get involved. They refused for several stated reasons, and thus my strategy began to evolve into: ‘Whatever the bankers did, I simply did the opposite.’ The bankers would only lend to the rich. I would only lend to the poor. The bankers would only make large loans. I would only make very small loans. The bankers would only lend to men. I would only lend to women. The bankers would only lend if there was collateral. I would only

lend without collateral. The bankers required extensive paperwork. I only made loans that even an illiterate could understand. The bankers required their clients to come to the bank. I took my bank to the village.”⁵

It should be noted that the banks expected a high rate of loan defaults. Yunus expected and experienced almost none. I understand that Mr. Yunus’s bank has provided more than \$4 billion in loans and is entirely self-sustaining. Surely the Spirit of the Lord guided this noble effort.

“To become self-reliant, a person must work. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. It is a basic source of happiness, self-worth, and prosperity. Through work, people accomplish many good things in their lives.”





HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read the first paragraph of the section titled “Find Answers through the Spirit.” Discuss how seeing ourselves as children of God can help us become spiritually self-reliant. Have each family member identify someone in need and serve him or her during the next week.

2. Write the following on separate pieces of paper: food storage, education, and getting out of debt. Have three family members each select one and lead a discussion on how that principle will help your family become more physically self-reliant. Choose one principle to work on as a family.

Choose between Good and Evil

Third, we need to remember that every man and every woman has the God-given right to choose what he or she will believe and do. Lehi said it this way: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . They are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27). I realize there are some places in the world where freedom is greatly restricted; however, the individual freedom of every soul to choose good or evil is an eternal truth essential to God’s plan of happiness. No one can take that away from His children. Benjamin Franklin had this to say about choice:

“We stand at the crossroads, each minute, each hour, each day, making choices. We choose the thoughts we allow ourselves to think, the passions we allow ourselves to feel, and the actions we allow ourselves to perform. Each choice is made in the context of whatever value system we’ve selected to govern our lives. In selecting that value system, we are, in a very real way, making the most important choice we will ever make.

“Those who believe there is one God who made all things and who governs the world by his Providence will make many choices different from those who do not. Those who hold in reverence that being who gave them life and worship Him through adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving will make many choices different from those who do not. Those who believe that mankind are all of a family and that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man will make many choices different from those who do not. Those who believe in a future state in which all that is wrong here will be made right will make many choices different from those who do not.

Those who subscribe to the morals of Jesus will make many choices different from those who do not.”

Franklin concludes:

“Since the foundation of all happiness is thinking rightly, and since correct action is dependent on correct opinion, we cannot be too careful in choosing the value system we allow to govern our thoughts and actions.

“And to know that God governs in the affairs of men, that he hears

and answers prayers, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, is indeed, a powerful regulator of human conduct.”⁶

Think Straight

Fourth, master the ability to think straight. As Franklin said, “The foundation of all happiness is thinking rightly.” This may be more important in the future as the world continues to spiral downward and crumble into moral decay.

In my office hangs a printed statement that includes the last words spoken by my grandfather Elder Melvin J. Ballard before his passing. He was in the hospital phasing in and out of a coma. My father said that Grandfather suddenly opened his eyes and looked into the room and said, “Above all else, brethren, let us think straight.” A few minutes later he passed away.

That was more than 65 years ago. How much more does the world need people today who can think straight? Part of thinking straight is using common sense in solving life’s problems. Lord Chesterfield said, “Common sense (which, in truth, is very uncommon) is the best sense I know of: abide by it; it will counsel you best.”⁷

Often in my ministry have I heard the sad tale of those who are struggling to become self-reliant but in fact are becoming more dependent upon others because of their inability to think straight and apply common sense in the decisions they make. Much of life’s misery centers

in the lack of using common sense. As an example, consider the pharmacist who was compounding a prescription that called for as much strychnine as you could put on the face of a dime. He didn't have a dime, so he used two nickels.

Helping people to think straight and use common sense will, in my judgment, always be a very important step in helping them to reach economic self-reliance. It is part of teaching our children and others to walk in the ways of truth and soberness and to love and serve one another (see Mosiah 4:15). Part of thinking straight is listening—being able to listen to the promptings of the Spirit.

Seek the Lord's Guidance

Fifth, seek guidance from the Lord and trust in Him. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

"And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

"Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

"And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

"For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man" (D&C 76:5–10).

May we remember our responsibility to carry the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. And may we, through our provident living, teach others to emulate the examples of our pioneer forefathers in lifting themselves up by their own bootstraps, to trust in the light of hope, and to seek the light of knowledge that will ultimately lead them to spiritual and economic self-reliance. ■

From an address given on March 11, 2004, at Brigham Young University during the opening of the Marriott School's Center for Economic Self-Reliance.

NOTES

1. *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 257.
2. Marion G. Romney, "The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, "Born of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6.
4. William George Jordan, "Self-Control," *Improvement Era*, June 1909, 642.
5. Notes by Chris Eyre taken from the introduction of Mr. Yunus by Sam Daley-Harris, director of Microcredit Summit Campaign, at a conference in Palo Alto, California, on June 4, 2003.
6. *Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue*, ed. George L. Rogers (1996), 88–90.
7. In *A New Dictionary of Quotations on Historical Principles*, sel. and ed. H. L. Mencken (1976), 1084.

Franklin said, "The foundation of all happiness is thinking rightly." This may be more important in the future as the world continues to spiral downward and crumble into moral decay.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

Family Home Storage: A New Message

Check the expiration date on your ideas about home storage. You may need to throw some of them out.

As a single mother working for a law firm in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, Evelyn Jeffries struggled to find the time and the space necessary for home storage. Although she attended activities and meetings about food storage and tried to be obedient to prophetic counsel, like many Church members, she found it difficult to imagine what she could ever do with the hundreds of pounds of wheat she was told she needed to have for her and her daughter.

When a sister in her ward suggested a different approach, Sister Jeffries discovered the key to successful home storage: consistently and gradually increasing her food supply.

Setting aside a particular amount in her budget for home storage, she purchased a few extra items from the grocery store each week. She also purchased one basic food item like grains and beans from the Church home storage center each month.

Many years later, in October 2002, Sister Jeffries was impressed when President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) suggested that Church members adopt a simpler approach to home storage.

“We can begin ever so modestly,” President Hinckley



explained. “We can begin with a one week’s food supply and gradually build it to a month, and then to three months.”¹

Sister Jeffries notes that “the beauty of this system is its appropriateness for families just starting their storage programs, as well as for those living in small homes and apartments, where space is at a premium. President Hinckley clearly recognized that change and adaptation are needed so that all of us might benefit from the Lord’s inspired program.”

A New Approach

In the spirit of President Hinckley’s remarks, Church leaders decided to closely reexamine their approach to self-reliance, looking for ways to reinforce the concepts of home storage and financial preparedness. As a result, the Church published the pamphlet *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage*, outlining new guidelines for home preparedness that give Church members a simplified, four-step approach to building their home storage.

They are as follows:

1. Gradually build a small supply of food that is part of your normal, daily diet until it is sufficient for three months.
2. Store drinking water.



3. Establish a financial reserve by setting aside a little money each week, and gradually increase it to a reasonable amount.

4. Once families have achieved the first three objectives, they are counseled to expand their efforts, as circumstances allow, into a supply of long-term basic foods such as grains, legumes, and other staples.

Of the new guidelines, Presiding Bishop H. David Burton says, “Our objective was to establish a simple, inexpensive, and achievable program that would help people become self-reliant. We are confident that by introducing these few, simple steps we can, over time, have more success.”

Guideline 1: Build your three-month supply gradually.

Start small and do the best you can. Begin by purchasing a few extra items to add to your storage each week. Strive to build a one-week supply; then expand it to a one-month supply, then a three-month supply. By building your supply slowly, you can avoid financial strain and start down the path toward self-reliance.

The Lugo family of Valencia, Venezuela, learned that this new approach of starting small and being consistent can pay big dividends. After listening to general



conference, Brother Omar Lugo, a Church member in the Falcón Venezuela District, felt inspired to begin his own home storage. He discussed the matter with his family, and they agreed to follow the prophet’s counsel.

They began setting aside food, water, and money, a little at a time. At first the difference was hardly noticeable. But after a while the Lugos found that they had accumulated a substantial reserve. Several months after they began building their home storage, a worker’s strike in Venezuela put many local workers’ jobs in jeopardy. Brother Lugo was among those who eventually lost their jobs.

PROPHETIC COUNSEL ABOUT HOME STORAGE



“Many more people could ride out the storm-tossed waves in their economic lives if they had their . . . supply of food . . . and were debt-free. Today we find that many have followed this counsel in reverse: they have at least a year’s supply of debt and are food-free.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “That Noble Gift—Love at Home,” Church News, May 12, 2001, 7.



“Everyone who owns a home recognizes the need for fire insurance. We hope and pray that there will never be a fire. Nevertheless, we pay for insurance to cover such a catastrophe, should it occur. We ought to do the same with reference to family welfare.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “To Men of the Priesthood,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2002, 58.



For a time his family lived on savings. Seven months later the Lugo family was relying exclusively on the food they had stored. It took nearly two years for Brother Lugo to find work again, but his family was able to survive the difficult challenges of unemployment. They had built their reserve gradually, and when adversity struck, they were prepared and the Lord blessed them.

Like the Lugo family, Church members will be blessed for their obedience to the First Presidency’s counsel as they gradually build home storage. “We ask that you be wise as you store food and water and build your savings,” the First Presidency explains. “Do not go to extremes; it is not prudent, for example, to go into debt to establish your food storage all at once.” Rather, they suggest a modest, consistent approach. “With careful planning, you can, over time, establish a home storage supply and a financial reserve.”²



In 1936 the Church welfare program began under the direction of the First Presidency. From left: David O. McKay (Second Counselor), Heber J. Grant (President), and J. Reuben Clark Jr. (First Counselor).

“In the day of plenty, prepare for the day of scarcity.”
First Presidency, “Message of the First Presidency,” in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 89.



Guideline 2: Store drinking water.

In times of need, having water to drink can be the difference between life and death—or at least between peace and anxiety. Just ask the Kawai family, members of the São Paulo Brazil Stake. They have been storing food and water for 20 years. Although their small apartment doesn’t have much room to spare, the Kawais decided to make home storage a priority.

Sister Kawai tells of one experience when that decision paid off. “I was in the hospital having just given birth when I learned that there was a problem with the city’s water pipes,” Sister Kawai explains. “Hundreds of thousands of people were without water. But I wasn’t concerned about going home. I had peace of mind knowing that my family would have water to drink.”

Guideline 3: Set aside a little money.

From the First Presidency comes this counsel: “We encourage you wherever you may live in the world to prepare for adversity by looking to the condition of your finances. We urge you to be modest in your expenditures. . . . Save a little



“Learn to sustain yourselves; lay up grain and flour, and save it against a day of scarcity.”

President Brigham Young (1801–77), Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 293.

SHELF LIFE OF LONG-TERM STORAGE ITEMS

Research shows that these common longer-term food storage items, if they are properly packaged and stored at or below room temperature (75 degrees F; 24 degrees C), remain nutritious and edible much longer than previously thought. Even after long-term storage, these foods can help sustain life in an emergency.



FOOD	SHELF-LIFE ESTIMATE IN YEARS
WHEAT	30+
WHITE RICE	30+
CORN	30+
PINTO BEANS	30
DRIED APPLE SLICES	30
MACARONI	30
ROLLED OATS	30
POTATO FLAKES	30
POWDERED MILK	20

money regularly to gradually build a financial reserve.”³

In the April 2007 general conference Bishop Keith B. McMullin, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, reinforced this principle, exhorting Church members to “save some money, if only a few coins each week. This modest approach will soon enable them to have several months’ reserve.”⁴

By gradually building a financial reserve, we will be prepared for unforeseen trials and have an added measure of security and peace in our hearts.

Guideline 4: Where possible, gradually establish a longer-term supply.

“For longer-term needs,” explains the *All Is Safely Gathered In* pamphlet, “gradually build a supply of food that will last a long time and that you can use to stay alive, such as wheat, white rice, and beans.”⁵

Establishing long-term storage is easier than some might think. Dr. Oscar Pike and his colleagues in the Brigham Young University Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Science have done several in-depth studies on long-term food storage. They discovered something surprising: properly packaged and stored low-moisture food retains much of its sensory (taste) quality and nutritional value for 20 to 30 or more years after being placed in

storage—much longer than previously supposed.

This means Church members can store certain foods long-term without the worry of regularly rotating the food. They can be confident that their supply will be there to keep them alive if they have nothing else to eat.

The Time to Begin Is Now

“Perhaps in the past accumulating a year’s supply of food may have been a little intimidating and even illegal in some places,” says Dennis Lifferth, managing director of Church Welfare Services. “But this new approach asks us to do the best we can, even if all we can do is to set aside a can or two each week. If the prophet asks us to do something, we can find a way to fulfill the commandment and receive the blessings.”

“This new program is within everyone’s grasp,” explains Bishop Burton. “The first step is to begin. The second is to continue. It doesn’t matter how fast we get there so much as that we begin and continue according to our abilities.” ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “To Men of the Priesthood,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 58.
2. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* (2007), 1.
3. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* (2007), 1.
4. Keith B. McMullin, “Lay Up in Store,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2007, 53.
5. *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage*, 2.

THE CELESTIAL NATURE OF SELF-RELIANCE

BY PRESIDENT MARION G. ROMNEY (1897–1988)

Marion G. Romney was ordained an Apostle on October 11, 1951. He served as Second Counselor to Presidents Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball and later as First Counselor to President Kimball. After President Kimball's death, President Romney resumed his position in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and became President of the Quorum on November 10, 1985. He died on May 20, 1988, at the age of 90. President Romney was serving as Second Counselor in the First Presidency when he gave this talk during general conference in October 1982. This edited version of the talk was first published in 1984.

I love the simple gospel truths as taught by the holy prophets, and I never tire of speaking about them. Since the beginning of time man has been counseled to earn his own way, thereby becoming self-reliant. It is easy to understand the reason the Lord places so much emphasis on this principle when we come to understand that it is tied very closely to freedom itself.

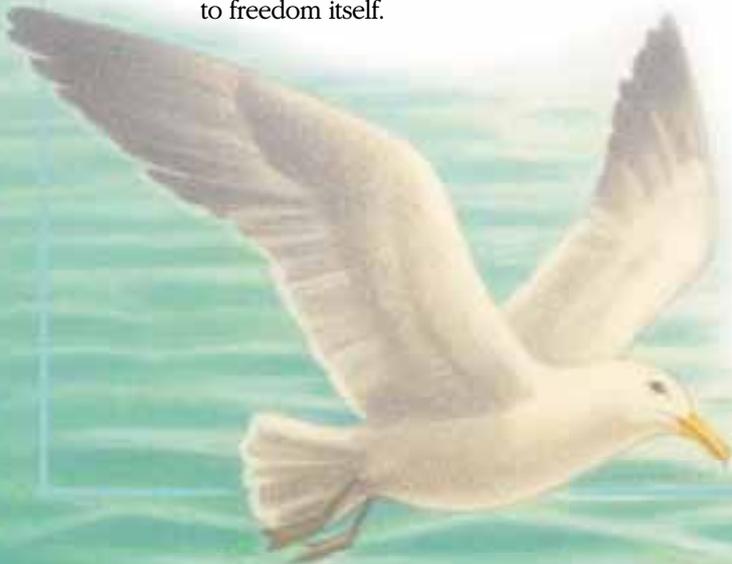
On this subject, Elder Albert E. Bowen said, “The . . . Church is not satisfied with any system which leaves able people permanently dependent, and insists, on the contrary, that the true function and office of giving, is to help people [get] into a position where they can help themselves and thus be free.”¹

Many programs have been set up by well-meaning individuals to aid those who are in need.

However, many of these programs are designed with the shortsighted objective of “helping people,” as opposed to “helping people help themselves.” Our efforts must always be directed toward making able-bodied people self-reliant.



Man cannot be an agent unto himself if he is not self-reliant. Herein we see that independence and self-reliance are critical keys to our spiritual growth.



Gullible Gulls

I clipped the following article from the *Reader's Digest* some time ago. It reads:

"In our friendly neighbor city of St. Augustine great flocks of sea gulls are starving amid plenty. Fishing is still good, but the gulls don't know how to fish. For generations they have depended on the shrimp fleet to toss them scraps from the nets. Now the fleet has moved. . . .

"The shrimpers had created a Welfare State for the . . . sea gulls. The big birds never bothered to learn how to fish for themselves and they never taught their children to fish. Instead they led their little ones to the shrimp nets.

"Now the sea gulls, the fine free birds that almost symbolize liberty itself, are starving to death because they gave in to the 'something for nothing' lure! They sacrificed their independence for a handout.

"A lot of people are like that, too. They see nothing wrong in picking delectable scraps from the tax nets of the U.S. Government's 'shrimp fleet.' But what will happen when the Government runs out of goods? What about our children of generations to come?

"Let's not be gullible gulls. We . . . must preserve our talents of self-sufficiency, our genius for creating things for ourselves, our sense of thrift and our true love of independence."²

The practice of coveting and receiving unearned benefits has now become so fixed in our society that even men of wealth, possessing the means to produce more wealth, are expecting the government to guarantee them a profit. Elections often turn on what the candidates promise to do for voters from government funds. This practice, if universally accepted and implemented in any society, will make slaves of its citizens.



We cannot afford to become wards of the government, even if we have a legal right to do so. It requires too great a sacrifice of self-respect and political, temporal, and spiritual independence.

In some countries it is extremely difficult to separate earned from unearned benefits. However, the principle is the same in all countries: We should strive to become self-reliant and not depend on others for our existence.

Governments are not the only guilty parties. We fear many parents are making "gullible gulls" out of their children with their permissiveness and their doling out of family resources. In fact, the actions of parents in this area can be more devastating than any government program.

Bishops and other priesthood leaders can be guilty of making "gullible gulls" out of their ward members. Some members become financially or emotionally dependent on their bishops. A dole is a dole whatever its source. All of our Church and family actions should be directed toward making our children and members self-reliant. We can't always control government programs, but we can control our own homes and congregations. If we will teach these principles and live them, we can do much to counter the negative effects which may exist in government programs in any country.

We know there are some who, for reasons beyond their

control, cannot become self-reliant. President Henry D. Moyle had these people in mind when he said:

“This great principle does not deny to the needy nor to the poor the assistance they should have. The wholly incapacitated, the aged, the sickly are cared for with all tenderness, but every able-bodied person is enjoined to do his utmost for himself to avoid dependence, if his own efforts can make such a course possible; to look upon adversity as temporary; to combine his faith in his own ability with honest toil. . . .

“We believe [that] seldom [do circumstances arise in which] men of rigorous faith, genuine courage, and unfaltering determination, with the love of independence burning in their hearts, and pride in their own accomplishments, cannot surmount the obstacles that lie in their paths.”³

Spiritual Self-Reliance

Now, I wish to speak of a very important truth: self-reliance is not the end, but a means

to an end. It is very possible for a person to be completely independent and lack every other desirable attribute. One may become wealthy and never have to ask anyone for anything, but unless there is some spiritual goal attached to this independence, it can canker his soul.

The Church’s welfare program is spiritual. In 1936, when the program was introduced, President David O. McKay made this astute observation:

“The development of our spiritual nature should concern us most. Spirituality is the highest acquisition of the soul, the divine in man; ‘the supreme, crowning gift that makes him king of all created things.’ It is the consciousness of victory over self and of communion with the infinite. It is spirituality alone which really gives one the best in life.

“It is something to supply clothing to the [poorly] clad, to furnish ample food to those whose table is thinly spread, to give activity to those who are fighting desperately the despair that comes

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We are
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Therefore, each of
us should strive to
help others in areas
where we have
strengths.

from enforced idleness, but after all is said and done, the greatest blessings that will accrue from the Church [welfare program] are spiritual. Outwardly, every act seems to be directed toward the physical: re-making of dresses and suits of clothes, canning fruits and vegetables, storing foodstuffs, choosing of fertile fields for settlement—all seem strictly temporal, but permeating all these acts, inspiring and sanctifying them, is the element of spirituality.”⁴

Doctrine and Covenants 29:34–35 tells us there is no such thing as a temporal commandment, that all commandments are spiritual. It also tells us that man is to be “an agent unto himself.” Man cannot be an agent unto himself if he is not self-reliant. Herein we see that independence and self-reliance are critical keys to our spiritual growth. Whenever we get into a situation which threatens our self-reliance, we will find our freedom threatened as well. If we increase our dependence, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act.

Thus far, we should have learned that self-reliance is a prerequisite to the complete freedom to act. We have also learned, however, that there is nothing spiritual in self-reliance

unless we make the right choices with that freedom. What, then, should we do once we have become self-reliant in order to grow spiritually?

The key to making self-reliance spiritual is in using the freedom to comply with God’s commandments. The scriptures are very clear in their command that it is the duty of those who *have*, to *give* to those who are in need.

Lifting Others

Jacob, speaking to the people of Nephi, said:

“Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

“But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

“And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted” (Jacob 2:17–19).

In our own dispensation, when the Church was only 10 months old, the Lord said:

“If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.

“And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support” (D&C 42:29–30).

The same month, the Lord referred to this subject again. Evidently the members had been a little remiss. They had not moved fast enough.

“Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit

the poor and the needy and administer to their relief” (D&C 44:6).

It has always seemed somewhat paradoxical to me that we must constantly have the Lord *command* us to do those things which are for our own good. The Lord has said, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39). We lose our life by serving and lifting others. By so doing we experience the only true and lasting happiness. Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom.

Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made.

Oh, for the glorious day when these things all come naturally because of the purity of our hearts. In that day there will be no need for a commandment, because we will have experienced for ourselves that we are truly happy only when we are engaged in unselfish service.

Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what godhood is all about? Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.

There is an interdependence between those who have and those who have not. The process of giving exalts the poor and humbles the rich. In the process, both are sanctified. The poor, released from the bondage and limitations of poverty, are enabled as free men to rise to their



full potential, both temporally and spiritually. The rich, by imparting of their surplus, participate in the eternal principle of giving. Once a person has been made whole, or self-reliant, he reaches out to aid others, and the cycle repeats itself.

We are all self-reliant in some areas and dependent in others. Therefore, each of us should strive to help others in areas where we have strengths. At the same time, pride should not prevent us from graciously accepting the helping hand of another when we have a real need. To do so denies another person the opportunity to participate in a sanctifying experience.

One of the three areas emphasized in the mission of the Church is to perfect the Saints, and this is the purpose of the welfare program. This is not a doomsday program, but a program for our lives here and now, because now is the time for us to perfect our lives. May we continue to hold fast to these truths. ■

Subheads added; style and source citations standardized.

NOTES

1. Albert E. Bowen, *The Church Welfare Plan* (Gospel Doctrine course of study, 1946), 77.
2. “Fable of the Gullible Gull,” *Reader’s Digest*, Oct. 1950, 32.
3. Henry D. Moyle, in Conference Report, Apr. 1948, 5.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 103.

TO

BY AMANDA DIERENFELDT

Growing up, I was always inclined to perfectionism. So when I received my patriarchal blessing, one admonition in particular seemed natural: to complete the tasks I was given “to the best of [my] ability, to perfection.” Only later would I start to realize how little I understood perfection—or the role of grace.

In 1998 I returned home early from a mission due to health problems. I felt a tremendous amount of guilt because I felt I had not completed my mission “to perfection.” Added to this sense of failure was uncertainty about my illness. So far, doctors had been unable to diagnose it.

In spite of my health challenges, I knew I needed to move forward, so I enrolled in a university to continue my education. After only two quarters, however, I returned home again, in pain, for urgent surgery. It was at this point that doctors discovered I had an autoimmune disease.

While I was recovering from surgery, I began working part-time at the chocolate store where I had been employed as a teenager. Even though I was doing what I could, I didn’t feel that I was pursuing anything worthwhile, much less completing it “to perfection.” I began to compare myself to others, especially to my friends who were completing their college degrees, serving missions, or starting families. I felt left behind.

Then I met Stephanie. She came into the candy store one day wearing a black scarf around her head. As I pointed out to her my favorite chocolate, I felt impressed to inquire about her situation. She smiled, removed her scarf, and, pointing to her bald head, told me she was going through chemotherapy. That exchange was the start of a special and candid friendship.

Stephanie came by the store regularly to enjoy a treat and talk about life. I learned that she was a member of the Church and that she had struggled spiritually as well as physically. She told me about some rebellious choices she had made and about her efforts to repent. She was working toward being sealed to her husband in the temple.

One day I shared some of my own challenges. I confided in her how discouraged I was by my circumstances. “I am scooping the same ice cream I scooped in high school,” I explained. “I didn’t complete my mission or college, and I don’t know what to do now.”

Stephanie responded, “Why do you have to finish the race of life in a set time? Why not just run the race?”

For the first time, I realized that the efforts I was making were my best, and my best was enough. The Savior loved me, and His grace, through His Atonement, was sufficient for me, for my deficiencies. Although I felt I had been looking to Him all along, until Stephanie shared her insight with me, I had somehow missed an important lesson about His role in my life.

Ether 12:27 says, “My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.” As I have been able to humble myself and have faith in the Lord, I have seen over and over again that He does indeed make weak things become strong. My increased testimony of this truth has helped me face my challenges with greater faith and hope.

A few months after that conversation, I left my hometown to start a new job and lost contact with my friend. One day my mom called to tell me that she had seen Stephanie’s obituary in the newspaper. I came home to attend her funeral and learned she had been sealed to her husband just three weeks before her death.

My heart sighed with gratitude for having had Stephanie in my life and for what she taught me about running a perfect race. I don’t always need to sprint. Occasionally, it will be all I can do to simply face the finish line. Doing our best to move forward—no matter what speed “our best” is—is OK. Our efforts can be made perfect because the Lord’s grace is sufficient for us all (see Moroni 10:32). ■

PERFECTION

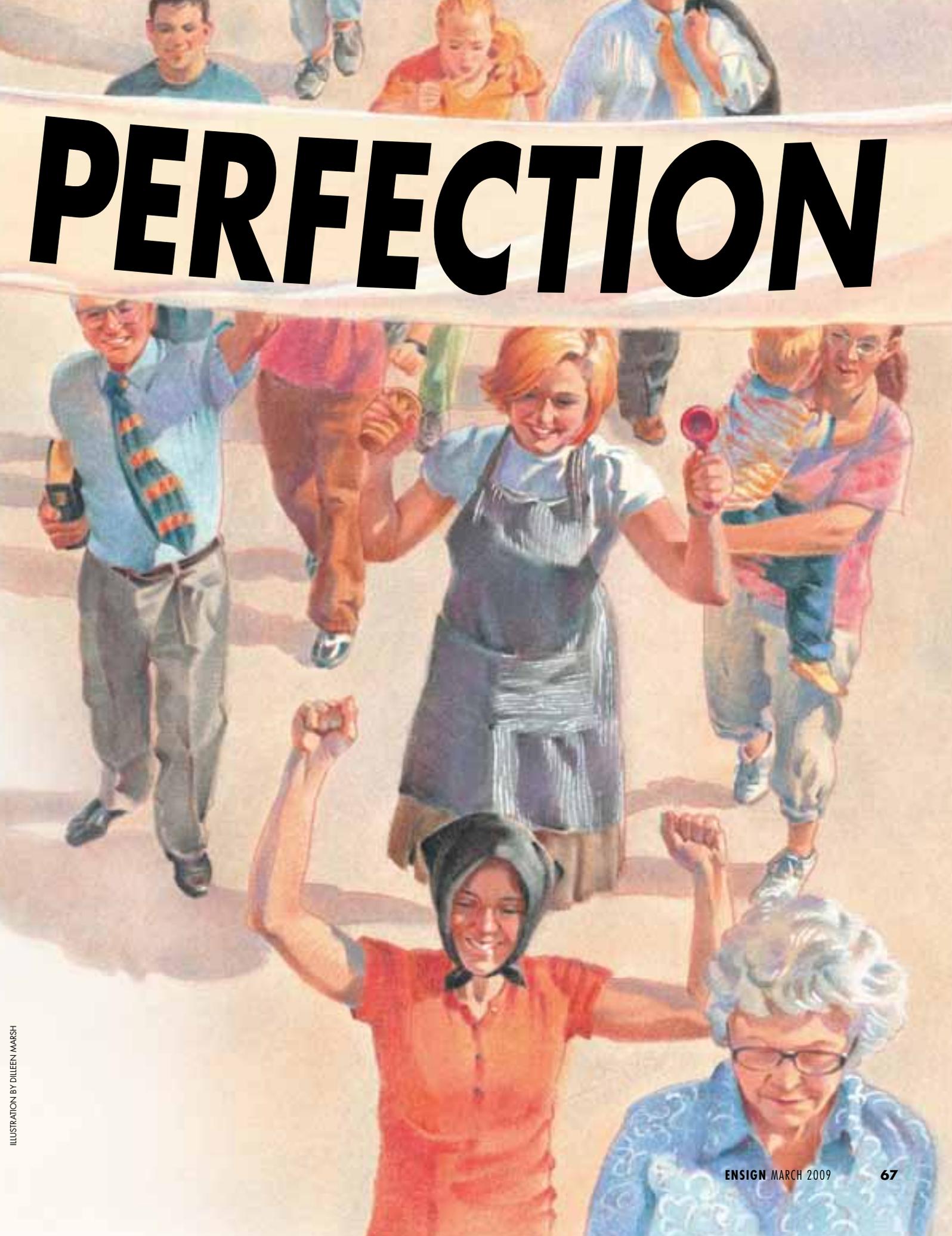


ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEEN MARSH

UPHOLD, NOURISH, AND PROTECT THE FAMILY



*Teach the scriptures
and quotations that will
bless the sisters you visit.
Bear testimony of the
doctrine. Invite those you visit to share
what they have felt and learned.*

Why Must I Defend the Doctrine of the Family?

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president: “As a disciple of Jesus Christ, every woman in this Church is given the responsibility for upholding, nurturing, and protecting families. Women have distinct assignments given to them from before the foundation of the world. And as a covenant-keeping Latter-day Saint woman, you know that raising your voice in defense of the doctrine of the family is critical to the strength of families the world over” (“What Latter-day Saint Women Do Best: Stand Strong and Immovable,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 110).

How Can I Defend the Family?

D&C 88:119: “Establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985): “Home is a haven against the storms and struggles of life. Spirituality is born and nurtured by daily prayer, scripture study, home gospel discussions and related activities, home evenings, family councils, working and playing together, serving each other, and sharing the gospel with those around us. Spirituality is also nurtured in our actions of patience, kindness, and forgiveness toward each other and in our applying gospel principles in the family circle” (“Therefore I Was Taught,” *Tambuli*, Aug. 1982, 2; *Ensign*, Jan. 1982, 3).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended family members everywhere to hold fast to [the family] proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni’s ‘title of liberty,’ and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. . . .

“In today’s world, where Satan’s aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can

to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us” (“What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 42–43).



Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy: “For too many, responsibility seems to end with hand-wringing and exclamations of dismay. Yet talk without action accomplishes little. We need to be vigorously engaged in the world. If our schools are inadequate or destructive of moral values, we must work with fellow members of the community to bring about change. If our neighborhoods are unsafe or unhealthy, we must join with the civic-minded to devise solutions. If our cities and towns are polluted, not only with noxious gases but soul-destroying addictions and smut, we must labor to find legitimate ways to eliminate such filth. . . . We have the responsibility to be a blessing to others, to our nation, to the world” (“On the Responsible Self,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 30–31). ■

I FOUND PEACE AND HOPE IN THE GOSPEL

By Bryan Chatima

I was born the youngest of six children in a small town called Bindura, Zimbabwe, Africa. My parents divorced a few years after my birth, and my good, loving mother had to raise us—four girls and two boys—by herself.

Life was tough for us. I had to walk four or five kilometers (3 miles) to school, and I would go without shoes or anything to eat. Each year I could never complete the term because we could not pay the school fees. There was no place in the world to get money to pay the fees on time. Whenever we did get money, I tried to trace how we got it, but it was untraceable. It's miraculous to consider how well we were raised. It's all because of the love and will of our Father in Heaven.

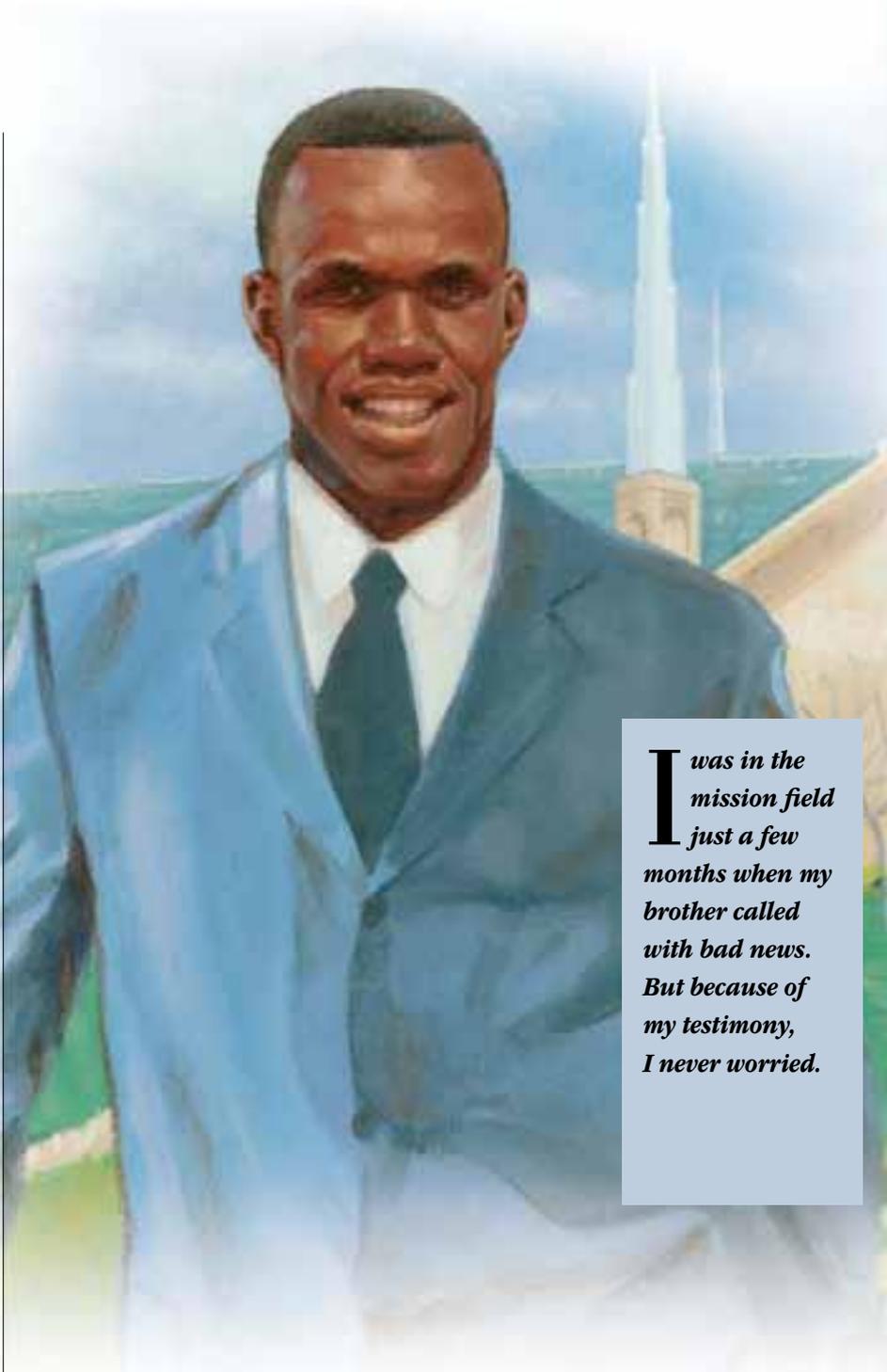
My mother liked going to church, and because I was the youngest, I would go with her. In 1998, when I was 13 years old, two Latter-day Saint missionaries came to my neighborhood to visit less-active members. I was playing soccer with my friend when the missionaries passed through. We spoke with them, and the missionaries asked if they could visit us the following week. They taught us, and

we accepted the invitation to be baptized.

Four years later, in 2002, my father and one of my sisters died just a week apart. I carried on, serving as a district

missionary until I received my full-time mission call in July 2004 to serve in the South Africa Durban Mission. I was in the mission field just a few months when my brother called my

I was in the mission field just a few months when my brother called with bad news. But because of my testimony, I never worried.



mission president, informing him that my mother had died and had already been buried. Can you picture how it feels to lose such a mother? Four months later another sister died.

As a missionary, I had been teaching people about the restored gospel. Because of my testimony, I never worried about my losses. I had peace of mind and hope that in due time I would see my parents and sisters again. On the way home from my mission in July 2006, I went to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple and was baptized on behalf of my male family members who had passed on, and I had baptisms performed for my sisters who had died.

Conditions in Zimbabwe remain difficult, but I have a tremendous testimony of the good that can come through following Church leaders and programs. Despite all our challenges, we can find peace and hope in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. God be thanked that He watches and guides His Church and His children. I thank Him for the temple, which gives us peace and hope that we will meet with our families again.

The Lord said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Despite life’s challenges, may we keep hoping for good, never doubting and never questioning the Lord’s will. ■

EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED

By Sarah Cutler

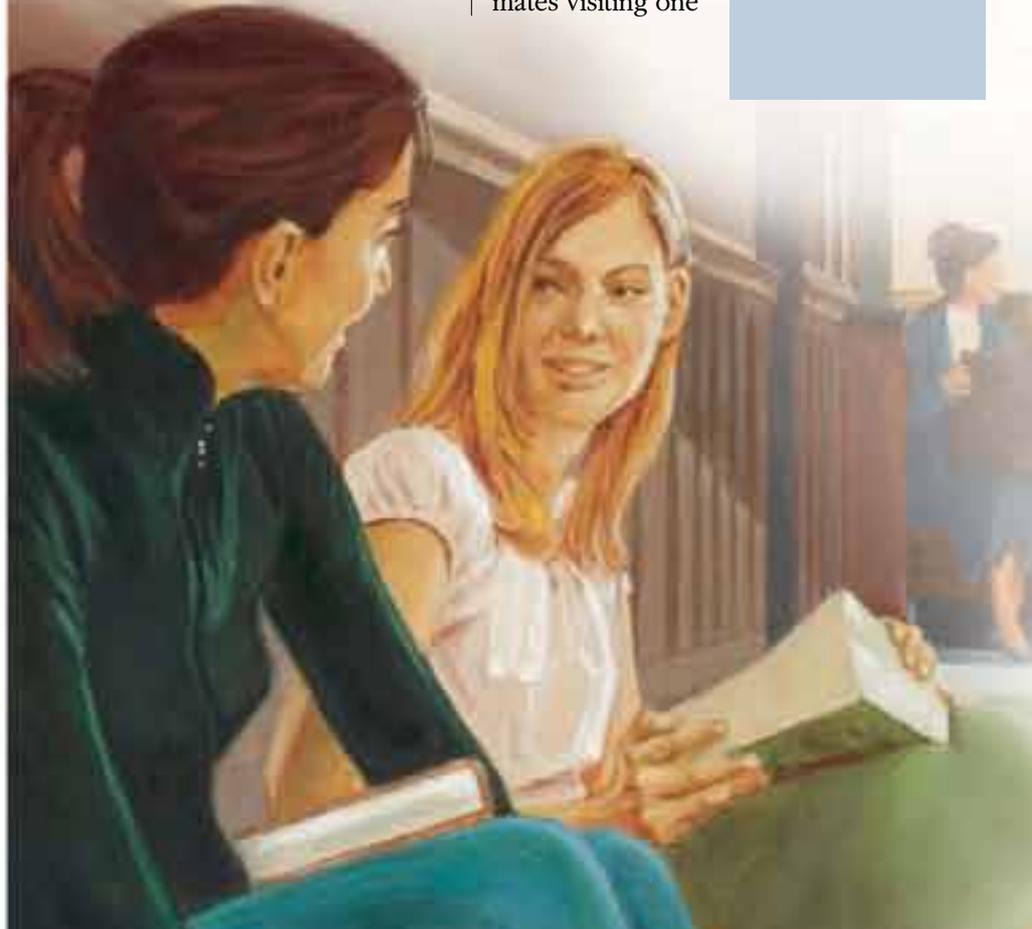
With a full schedule ahead of me, I dashed out the door early, my backpack full to bursting with the textbooks, self-defense uniform, dance shoes, sack lunch, and sack dinner I would need to survive yet another busy college day. I had two tests I didn’t feel prepared for, reading I hadn’t finished, and not enough time to get everywhere I needed to go that day.

Wearing the skirt I would need for my dance test, I felt ridiculous

with my huge backpack and desperate that I wouldn’t be on time to my first class. When I tripped and fell in the middle of a busy intersection in front of dozens of students and cars, my embarrassment and frustration, along with the hole in my new nylons, pushed me to tears. Seven o’clock in the morning, and I was already crying.

As I picked myself up and hobbled to school, I prayed fervently for the Lord to send someone to cheer me up. It would have been nice to see my mom, but she was two states away. Maybe the Lord could answer my prayer through one of my roommates visiting one

I prayed fervently for the Lord to send someone to cheer me up.



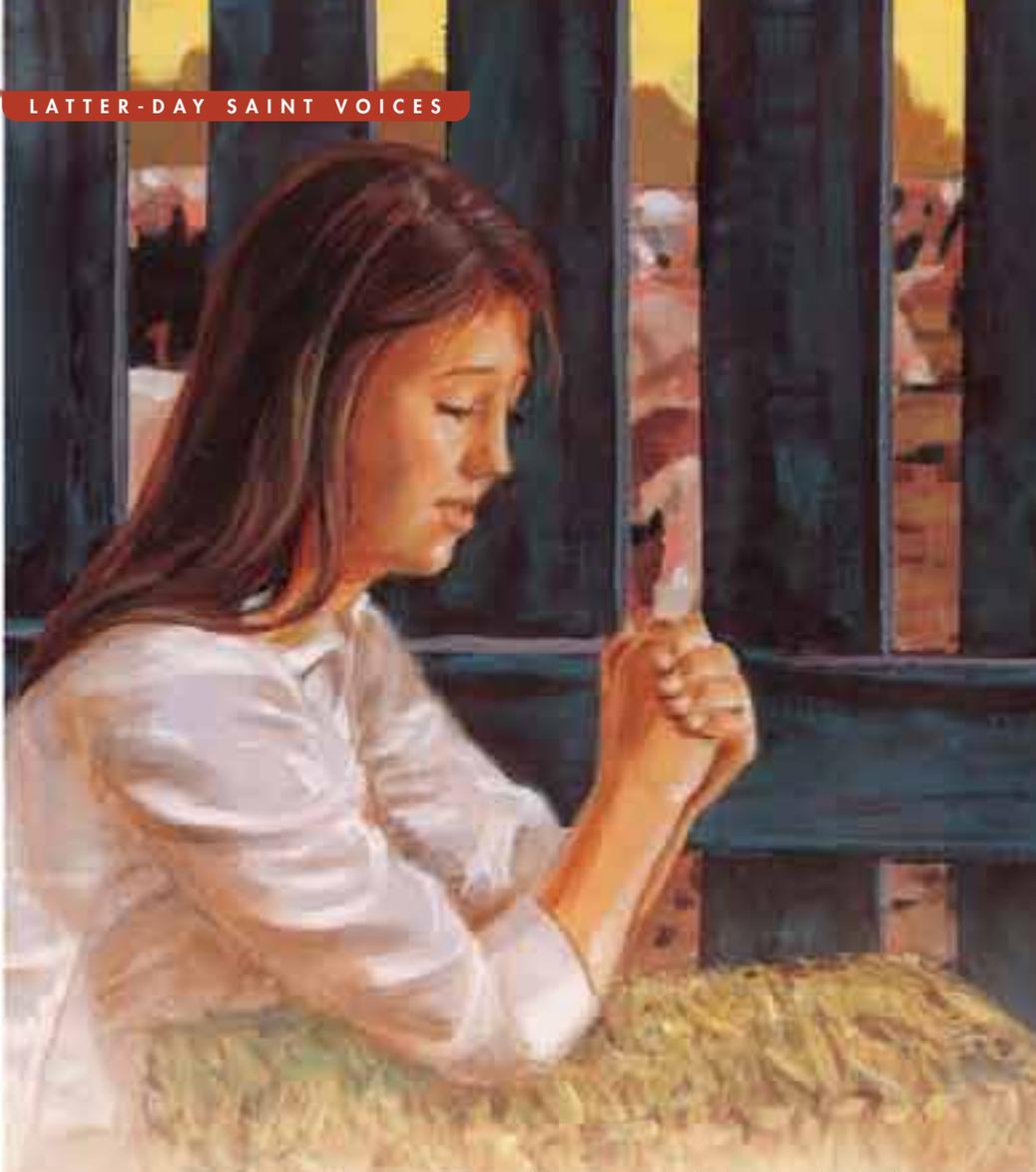
of my classes. Or maybe He would send that boy in the ward whom I liked so much.

I looked around expectantly as I hurried to my first class but didn't see anyone I knew. I took my first test, still in tears, and rushed to my second class, arriving late. I was still upset as I ran to my third class and as I hurried to get ready for my next test. I did better on my test than I had expected and was calming down a little when I found a quiet hallway where I could eat my lunch while studying. I was bent over my books when I heard someone call my name.

I looked up to see my visiting teacher, whom I had never before seen on campus. She sat down next to me, and we talked for almost an hour—not about my frustrations that day but about things that were going well for me, our plans, and things that worried her.

It wasn't until she left that I remembered my pleading prayer that morning. *Of course* the Lord would answer my prayer through the woman called to watch over me. I had wanted someone to cheer me up early that morning, but He knew I'd be ready to see a friend later in the day—when I had calmed down enough to be able to receive the comfort I needed and to extend comfort to another who had her own challenges.

The Lord knew me and sent me exactly what I needed exactly when I needed it. ■



MY PRAYER IN A STOCKYARD

By Connie Crookston Forsgren

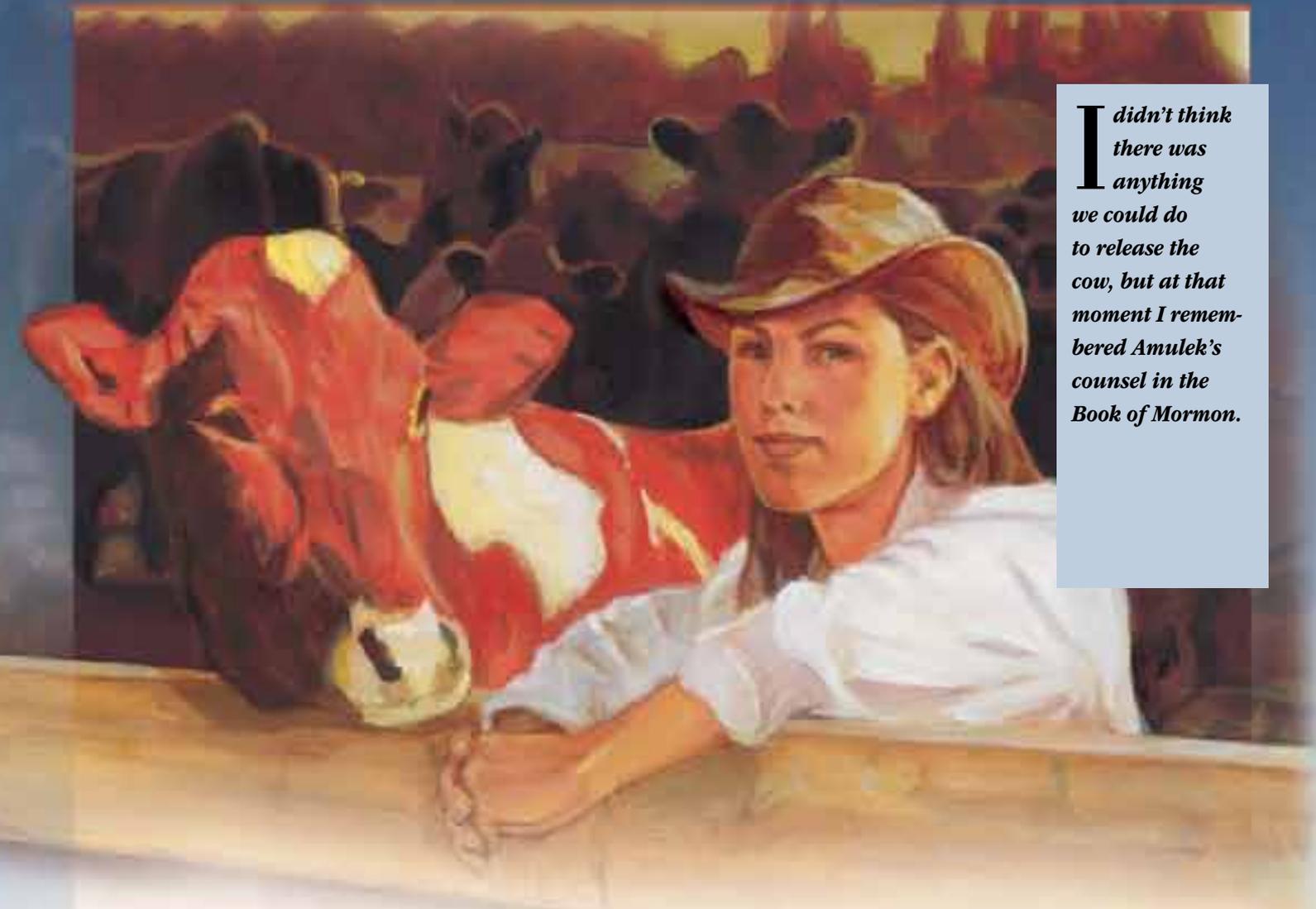
Because of a drought, my husband, John, and I had to either sell our beef cattle at a loss or move them from the Melba Valley, in southwestern Idaho, USA. Fortunately, John found summer range at a cousin's family farm, located in the Preston area, about 300 miles (480 km) away.

We arranged for a trucker to take all 40 cattle in one load, but he didn't like the looks of a rough ranch road that led to the

cattle pasture, still 20 miles (32 km) away. To our disappointment, he unloaded them at nearby stockyards. There we were, late in the day with 40 head of cattle to transport and no way to do it.

John stopped a local farmer, explained our plight, and asked for help. Minutes later Bishop Steve Meeks and his young son followed us to the stockyards to see what could be done.

The cattle had become unsettled. Seeing a broken section of fence at the stockyard, they ran toward it, seeking freedom. All the cattle hurdled the fence into another enclosure—except for one cow. She managed to get most of the way over, but one hind leg



I didn't think there was anything we could do to release the cow, but at that moment I remembered Amulek's counsel in the Book of Mormon.

slipped between two fence planks. She ended up hanging precariously on the fence, one front foot barely touching the ground. She kicked her other hind leg furiously in an effort to free herself.

Releasing the cow would require hoisting equipment. If she broke a leg, we would have to put her down. To lose a cow would put considerable financial strain on us.

The cow weighed more than 1,000 pounds (455 kg), and we could not get near her, nor help her if we did. The havoc on the fence made the rest of the cattle nervous.

I didn't think there was anything we could do, but at that moment

I remembered Amulek's counsel in the Book of Mormon: "Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks" (Alma 34:20). I withdrew myself from the others, knelt down, and prayed with all the sincerity of my heart. Concluding my supplication, I pleaded, "Heavenly Father, please help the cow."

I returned to the corral, the prayer still lingering on my lips. By now the cattle had quieted somewhat, including the one on the fence.

Suddenly, the largest of the milling animals broke away from the herd. Resisting our efforts to turn her back, she moved toward the dangling cow. Lowering her head, she dropped to

her knees, forced her way under the stranded cow, and staggered slowly to her feet. She lifted the tangled cow into the air and then lowered her. The cow was free! A hoist could not have done as well.

As the two cows ran back to the herd, Bishop Meeks stared in disbelief at what he had just witnessed. My tears flowed as I whispered, "Thank You, Heavenly Father."

Anyone who knows cattle will tell you that cows do not reason things out in their minds. But there is an explanation for this incident. Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. He answered mine—at a stockyard in Preston, Idaho. ■

STACKING WOOD IN KUOPIO

By Briant Jenson

In late summer of 1968 my missionary companion, Elder Ken Heaton, and I visited a part-member family in Kuopio, Finland. The mother and daughter were members of the Church, but the father was not.

At the wife's request, we taught her and her daughter the discussions—loudly enough for the husband to hear from where he was in an adjacent room. When we tried to get him to join us, he said he didn't have time. On one occasion his excuse was that he had a pile of lumber in the backyard that needed to be cut and stacked for winter.

"If the lumber were all cut and stacked, would you let us teach you?" we asked.

"Yes," he replied. But there was so much wood, he added, that it would take him a long time before he could complete the job.

Several days later, after waiting for the father to leave for work, my companion and I returned to the home. With the wife's permission, we spent the entire day cutting and stacking wood. We finished at 5:00 p.m., just before he returned home.

We couldn't wait to see his face, but we scurried away before he caught us. After riding our bicycles home and cleaning up, we pedaled back to the home at about 7:00 p.m.

"OK, the wood is cut!" we proclaimed. "Now will you let us teach you?"

He could only smile, nod his head, and join us in the front room. Several weeks later, after hearing the missionary discussions, this good brother was baptized and confirmed. ■



The wood is all cut!" we proclaimed. "Now will you let us teach you?"

MOVING 101

In today's world, we're often on the move. But the excitement and anticipation of moving somewhere new are often overshadowed by all the work that lies ahead: the sorting, packing, and heavy lifting. To make things easier for ourselves, as well as for anyone who is helping, there's much we can do ahead of time. Here are some tips on how experienced movers often handle the job.

De-junk. Start by sorting through drawers, cupboards, closets, and the garage. Sell or donate excess items; don't move junk from one house to another.

Rent needed equipment. Assess your furniture-moving needs ahead of time and reserve dollies or other equipment to help you move the big items.

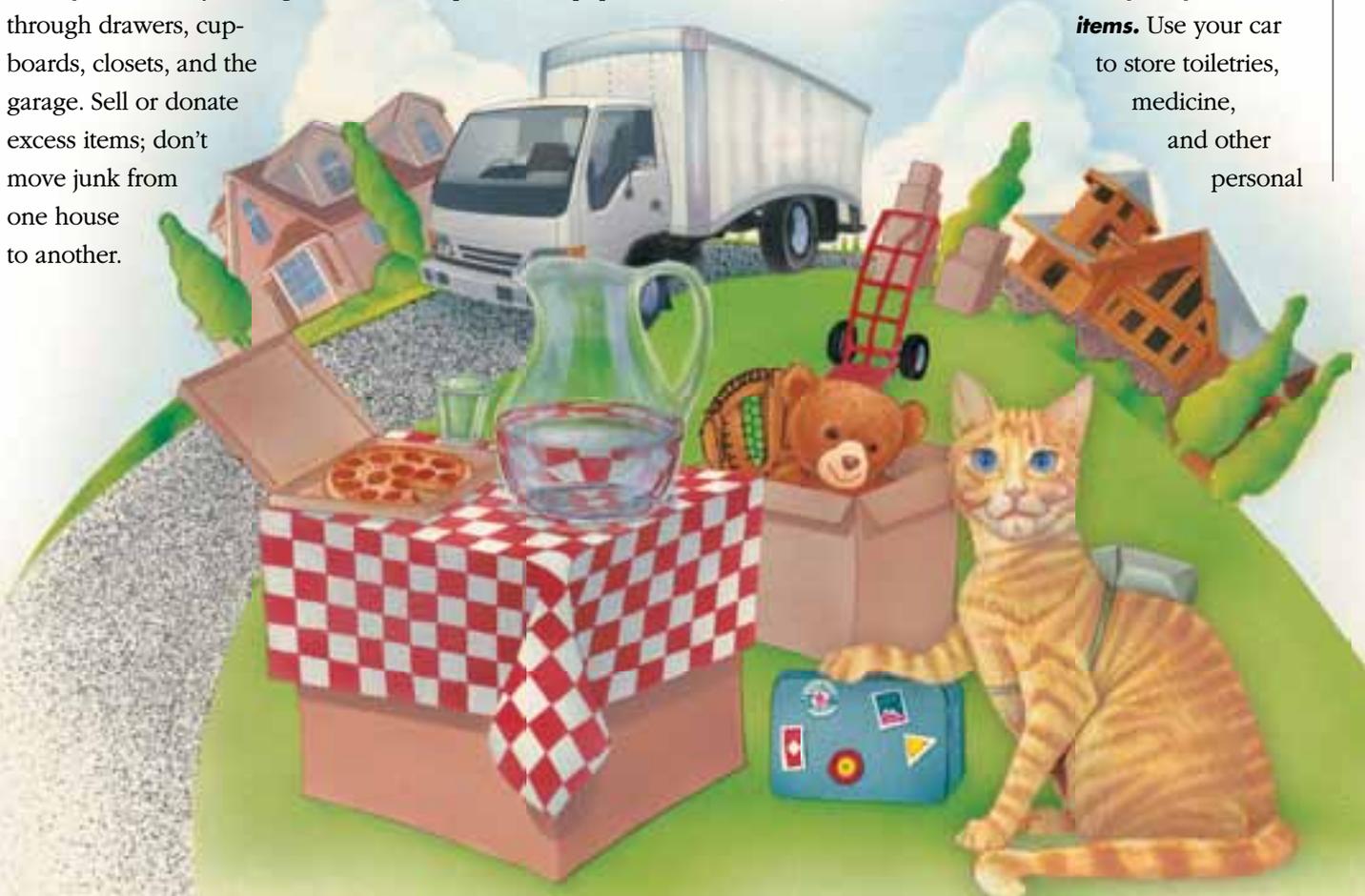
Ask for help. Enlist family and friends to help with packing and loading. If more help will be needed, you can ask the elders quorum president for help from quorum members to load your packed boxes and furniture.

Get lots of packing materials. Find or purchase plenty of boxes. You'll also need sticky labels, marking pens, newspaper or other filler, and

packing tape. You may also want to have old blankets on hand to keep furniture from getting scratched. Gather everything you need ahead of time, and put it where your helpers have access.

Label. Write on or color-code your packing boxes. Colored, peel-off stickers, available at office supply stores, can indicate at a glance where a box belongs. Red could be for the kitchen, blue for the den, and so on. If you like, you can label the boxes according to where they will go in the next house.

Prepare personal items. Use your car to store toiletries, medicine, and other personal





I Remember That!

When I was invited to give a talk in church about family home evening, I used my dad's notebooks as a resource. You see, when I was a child, my dad took notes during our weekly family nights. While reading more than a decade of entries, I laughed and cried as long-forgotten memories flooded my mind. Thanks to my father's foresight, I now have a treasury of family records. I'm pleased to say that I've continued the tradition with my own family.

We use a basic spiral notebook and an archival pen. With those simple supplies and a few abbreviations in mind, you can make the note taking easy. In our journal, the opening song and prayer, for instance, are abbreviated *OS* and *OP*. Then I write down the song title and who said the prayer. A few more ideas include *MET* (most exciting thing; family members share weekly highlights); *L* (lesson topic and comments); *FSST*

(family scripture study time); and *CS* and *CP* for closing song and prayer.

I also leave space to jot down noteworthy items like current events and family milestones. The best thing about this tradition is that it will serve our family for years but only takes a few minutes each week. Imagine your children a decade from now, reliving your Monday nights through the pages of these simple family records.
Cathy Ambrose, Utah



items you will need during the move. You might also want to keep plastic utensils, cups, and paper plates on hand.

Pack valuables. Don't delegate this task; only you know how your valuables should be treated.

Pack the walls. Take down pictures, decorations, and curtains—anything that's not screwed into the wall or part of the home sale.

Unplug. Before anything is moved, unhook cords and cables that might get lost or disorganized. Neatly coil and label them before packing.

Feed the crew. The day of the move, have simple food and drinks on hand. This does wonders to keep everyone energized and in good spirits.

Set aside cleaning supplies and equipment. Once everything is out of the house, you'll be able to clean quickly if you're well stocked and organized. Maybe a good neighbor will loan you a broom and vacuum if yours are already packed or if you want to double up and get the job done even faster.

Organize help on the other end. If you need help unloading in the new location, ask the local ward leaders in advance. Make sure they have a phone number where you can be reached.

If we do all we can ahead of time to prepare for a smooth move, others will gladly lend us a hand. In return, we can be quick to help others when they are in need.

Marita A. Orton, Virginia

THE SNUGGLE-TIME SOLUTION

A while ago, my husband's job required him to travel a lot. We knew it wouldn't be permanent and that he was doing what needed to be done to support our family, but our girls and I missed him. I prayed for help to get through this time period.

While listening to talk radio one day, I heard an idea that was new to me about parent-child relationships. I learned that bedtime is a good time to connect with children because most will do anything to stay up a little longer. Although my fuse was

often pretty short at night, I decided to give it a try. I'd spend 10 to 15 minutes of one-on-one time with each of our girls. While I was visiting with one, the others could lie quietly in bed and look at books, waiting their turns. I began to enjoy this quiet time snuggling with each one in my rocking chair. We talked about anything that was on their mind. I often had opportunities to talk about the gospel and share my testimony with them.

Snuggle time helped to fill some of the void we felt when my husband was traveling. The prompting to focus on each child individually was an answer to my prayers.

Cindy Jepson, Arizona

Church Courses Aim to Strengthen Marriage and Family Relationships

By Eric Eames, Church Magazines

With shifting societal values undermining the traditional family, the Church is committed to help “maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

While worldwide divorce rates fell slightly in 2007, a rise in the incidence of cohabitation and unmarried child-raising demonstrate society’s failing faith in traditional marriage and family.

Among its efforts to combat these trends, the Church has three courses and accompanying manuals aimed at helping members understand the doctrines regarding the importance of families. These resources will help them build and maintain enduring family relationships.

Courses Provide Resources

Revised in 2000, the *Marriage and Family Relations* manual gives special emphasis to the

proclamation on the family. The manual is divided into two parts: Part A, “Strengthening Marriage,” and Part B, “Parents’ Responsibilities to Strengthen Families.” The course is usually taught during Sunday School, and members may attend one or both parts of the course, depending on individual needs.

In 2006 LDS Family Services produced two new course manuals—*Strengthening Marriage* and *Strengthening the Family*. These courses are

being taught in LDS Family Services agencies and in some wards and stakes, though they are taught outside of the Sunday meeting schedule.

The Sunday School and the Family Services courses are similar in that they can help both those who are already married and those who are preparing to wed. The family sections assist parents in learning the importance of their roles in raising children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

There are also some key differences between the manuals. The *Marriage and Family Relations* manual addresses mainly members, focusing heavily on doctrines and principles found in the scriptures and taught by latter-day prophets and apostles to help members find answers for their own circumstances.

“A person who goes through this course would come away with a better understanding and testimony of the divine principles that are fundamental to happy marriages and family relations,” said David Marsh, manager of Curriculum Development for the Church.

While also centered on gospel principles, the Family Services manuals provide additional insights from professionals such as family counselors and therapists, explain pertinent research findings, and provide training to help participants (members or not) improve relationship skills through role-playing exercises.



Couples can learn important gospel principles and relationship skills through Church classes created to strengthen marriages.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLY LARSEN, ©IRI

Endorsing Marriage and Strengthening Family

The courses are particularly helpful in teaching newlyweds and converts the importance of eternal families and how to fortify families against societal influences.

“We have a lot of families coming into the Church from different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds,” Brother Marsh said. “The *Marriage and Family Relations* manual helps them learn what the Lord teaches about families.”

The couples in Sergio Navarro’s class in the Puebla Mexico Cholula Stake said the *Strengthening Marriage* manual gave them a desire to become better husbands and wives, and the role-playing exercises helped them develop skills to solve relationship problems.

Each lesson in the Family Services manuals contains three or more learning activities to help participants set goals and integrate gospel teachings. For example, in the “Communicating with Love” chapter in the *Strengthening Marriage* manual, the trained instructor helps participants practice responding to a spouse’s accusation without being defensive.

Brother Navarro said he has seen couples on the verge of divorce decide to stay together after learning these important gospel principles related to families. “It has been a wonderful experience to see how these marriages have benefited,” he said.

Prophets Encourage Couples to Continue Dating

The relationships of many LDS couples are in less danger from a blowup than they are from relationship burnout. Burnout occurs when the flame of love in a marriage dims because of neglect. The *Marriage and Family Relations* course teaches the importance of continued dating within a marriage—that is, making time for each other and showing affection in small ways.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said, “Love . . . cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestation of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2002, 40).

Finding Strength as Parents and Participants

The *Strengthening the Family* manual and the parenting section of the *Marriage and Family Relations* manual build on the marriage lessons by helping spouses to become united in how and what to teach their children. Sister Marta Tilley, a Family Services missionary in the Lakeland Florida Stake, said differing parenting styles produce a feeling of distrust and discord between parents and lead to chaos in the home.

Both manuals help parents to be united in their efforts and describe positive parenting skills, such as having family home evenings and family

For More Information

The *Marriage and Family Relations* manual is available through Distribution Services (LDSCatalog.com in the U.S. and Canada) in 38 languages, with production scheduled for 17 additional languages.

The LDS Family Services manuals are currently available in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, with translations

underway for German, Japanese, Russian, Swedish, and Ukrainian.

Ward and stake leaders interested in sponsoring a course should contact their local LDS Family Services office for more information.

Those in areas without a local Family Services office should contact Sharon Parr at parrsd@ldsfamilyservices.org. ■

meetings. The *Strengthening the Family* manual specifically helps parents understand children better so problems can be resolved with love and patience.

“These programs give you skills you can implement within the gospel standards and help you become a more successful parent,” Sister Tilley said.

Instructors have found that the real strength of

each program comes from the commitment and active involvement of participants. Each course encourages open discussion and interaction so couples can learn new skills from one another.

Ultimately, participants finish the courses with a better awareness of Heavenly Father’s love for them and how He is involved in every aspect of their lives. ■

Mesa Easter Pageant Kicks Off Season of Church Productions

After months of preparation and hard work, participants and viewers of the Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant will experience through music, dance, and drama the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Easter pageant, titled *Jesus the Christ*, is held on the lawn of the Mesa Arizona Temple Visitors’ Center. More than 400 participants reenact the King James Version of the Bible’s account of the

Savior’s birth, ministry, death, and Resurrection.

“I see over and over again the cast experiencing a joy that they have never felt before as they share their testimonies in a direct way with so many people,” said Nanci Wudel, director of the pageant.

Preparations for the pageant begin months previous to the performance. Volunteers of all ages, including individuals and families, participate as cast



An actor portrays the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Nauvoo Pageant.

Upcoming Pageants

The following pageants will be held throughout the United States in coming months.

The **Manti Pageant**, *A Testament of Jesus Christ*, performed adjacent to the Manti Utah Temple, incorporates stories of the Restoration, the Book of Mormon, and the local history of pioneers traveling to the Sanpete Valley.

Originating as a small performance in 1967, the Manti Pageant has developed into a performance with more than 500 cast members. There will be eight evening performances June 18–20 and 23–27, 2009.

The **Nauvoo Pageant**, *A Tribute to Joseph Smith*, held in Nauvoo, Illinois, celebrates the sacrifice, faith, and courage of the early Latter-day Saints who, because of their faith, built a city and temple for their God. The

pageant includes dances, hymns, and words taken from journals and historic records of the people who lived during this period. The pageant will run July 7–August 1, Tuesday through Saturday.

The **Hill Cumorah Pageant**, *America's Witness for Christ*, held in Palmyra, New York, includes scenes from the Book of Mormon and Church history.

Some of the scenes portrayed in the pageant include the account of Lehi's family and their travel from Jerusalem to the Americas as well as the account found in 3 Nephi 11 of Christ appearing in ancient America. Also in the pageant is the depiction of Joseph Smith's discovery of the gold plates and other events of the Restoration.

The pageant was first presented at a conference by a group of missionaries in the early 1920s and has grown

and evolved over the years into the large production it is today. The pageant will run July 10–11 and 14–18, 2009.

The **Clarkston Pageant**, held in Clarkston, Utah, showcases the life of Martin Harris and the contribution he made to the early Church. The performance shows the journey of trial and testimony that Martin Harris went through as he participated in the Restoration.

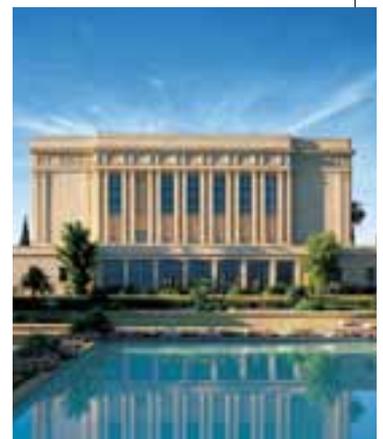
Sacred events that Martin Harris experienced—including being one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who were allowed to handle the gold plates—are depicted, along with the charge he felt to declare his witness throughout his life. The pageant, titled *Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew*, will run August 7–8, 11–15, and 18–21, 2009. ■

members, offer backstage support, and join in work crews to help put on the production. Casting for the 2009 production began in November 2008.

The Mesa pageant started as a sunrise service in 1928 and has since grown into one of the world's largest annual outdoor Easter pageants.

"I hope every person in our cast and audience leaves the pageant with his or her burdens lightened, a feeling of deep peace, and a strong desire to know more about the Savior and His plan of happiness for us," Sister Wudel said. "Everything we do for the pageant is to bring people closer to the Savior."

The Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant is set to begin with a public dress rehearsal on March 31, 2009, and will run April 1–2 and 7–11 in English and April 3–4 in Spanish. It is the first of many official Church pageants to be held in 2009. ■



The Mesa Arizona Temple grounds are the scene of the annual Mesa Arizona Easter Pageant.

Aid Organizations Winning Measles Battle

Measles deaths worldwide decreased by 74 percent from 2000 to 2007, according to health and relief organizations fighting the disease. The number of deaths dropped from 750,000 in 2000 to 197,000 in 2008. The significant decrease in measles deaths was due to extensive vaccination efforts.

The Measles Initiative is behind the vaccination effort that has saved millions of lives. The initiative is led by the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is also a partner.

“It is gratifying to know

that, due to the generous donations of time and means of selfless individuals, millions of lives have been saved,” said Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. “The Church praises the work that has been done by all organizations involved to eradicate measles and is proud to be a partner in this effort.”

The Church first became involved in the measles campaign in 2003. Using 54,784 Latter-day Saint volunteers, the Church has contributed to measles campaigns in 28 countries. In total, 189,261,345 children have been vaccinated in the campaigns where Church members participated, according to Church Welfare Services. The Church has also donated



An African boy receives a measles inoculation.

millions of dollars to the effort.

“We have provided financial support, but even more important, we’ve had thousands of members of the Church involved in helping with these campaigns,” said Garry Flake of Church

Welfare Services.

The United Nations’ goal is to reduce measles deaths by 90 percent from 2000 to 2010. The Church will continue to be a partner in helping to meet that goal. ■

Deseret Industries Serves Local Agencies

When members of the Driggs Second Ward, Driggs Idaho Stake, were looking for a service project, their local Deseret Industries helped connect them with the Family Safety Network, a nonprofit organization that serves abused children. The members prepared the organization’s backyard property for a fence, a community garden, and a safe place for children to play.

When young women in the Bountiful Utah Orchard Stake wanted to serve, through their local Deseret Industries they found the

Davis County Children’s Justice Center, another organization serving abused children. The young women donated 102 fleece blankets, several pairs of decorated flip-flops and books.

The Family Safety Network and the Davis County Children’s Justice Center are just 2 of nearly 400 agencies in seven states that participate in the Church’s Community Partnership Program.

“These partnerships forge a stronger link between members of the Church and the community in which

they live,” said Elder Vaughn Wilson, a missionary who is serving as a Community Partnership Coordinator with his wife, Sister Gwen Wilson. “A lot of people are looking for service project opportunities, but they often overlook their own communities. Agencies in their areas can certainly use the help.”

Members can call their local Deseret Industries store to find out which agencies the Church has partnered with and what kind of help those agencies need. If there is no Deseret Industries store in the area,

Elder Wilson hopes local leaders will encourage members to help established agencies within their own communities.

Aside from connecting agencies in need with volunteers willing to help, the Community Partnership Program provides selected agencies with a certain number of vouchers, which can be used like gift certificates at the Deseret Industries’ stores. Each organization is allowed to use the vouchers at its own discretion, helping families and individuals in a way the agency is not normally equipped to do.

For instance, the River



The Community Partnership Program allows Deseret Industries to aid other agencies as well as individuals.

Oak Center for Children in Carmichael, California, is nationally recognized for its programs that help children meet life's challenges.

However, the center relies on community support to meet the material needs of low-income families trying to keep their children or get them back. Child protection

laws in the area will not allow children to stay in homes that are without basic household items such as beds, seasonal clothes, blankets, and so forth.

So when a mother came to the River Oak Center in these very circumstances recently, they offered her vouchers to

the Sacramento, California, Deseret Industries, where she picked out the needed furnishings and blankets. Shortly after that her children returned home.

"Working together, we can give parents the strength to address the children's needs more fully," said Alice Gentry, community affairs manager for the River Oak Center.

In 2007, the partnership program helped 18,863 individuals, who redeemed more than \$700,000 worth of vouchers. Elder Wilson said the program helps the Church respond to local needs and provide for people in a variety of circumstances, including released prisoners, foster care families, teen mothers, and the disabled.

Other service includes helping refugee families

in Phoenix, Arizona, obtain furnishings and dishware and helping homeless people in Seattle, Washington, get clothes for job interviews.

The partnership helps meet a broad spectrum of needs by dealing with established agencies that have the local experience to help, Elder Wilson said. ■

Flooding Damages BYU-Hawaii

Flooding on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, on December 11, 2008, damaged homes in Laie, Waianae, and Mililani, as well as several Church-owned buildings. Up to 12 inches of rain fell in about four hours, shutting down major roads and causing a rockslide. No evacuation orders were given but several schools closed. No Church members or missionaries were harmed.

The Brigham Young University-Hawaii campus suffered an estimated \$1.5 million in damages from the flood. Several campus buildings were flooded—the General Classroom Building, the Social Sciences Building, and 36 married-student housing apartments.

Church members teamed with the Red Cross to provide shelter and food on the BYU-Hawaii campus for those displaced by the flood. University students and Church members helped to clean up after the flooding. ■

WORLD BRIEFS

First Presidency Announces New Temple in Peru

A new temple in Trujillo, Peru, will bring the number of temples worldwide to 146 and the number of temples in South America to 17.

Two other temples are currently under construction in South America—Manaus, Brazil, and Córdoba, Argentina.

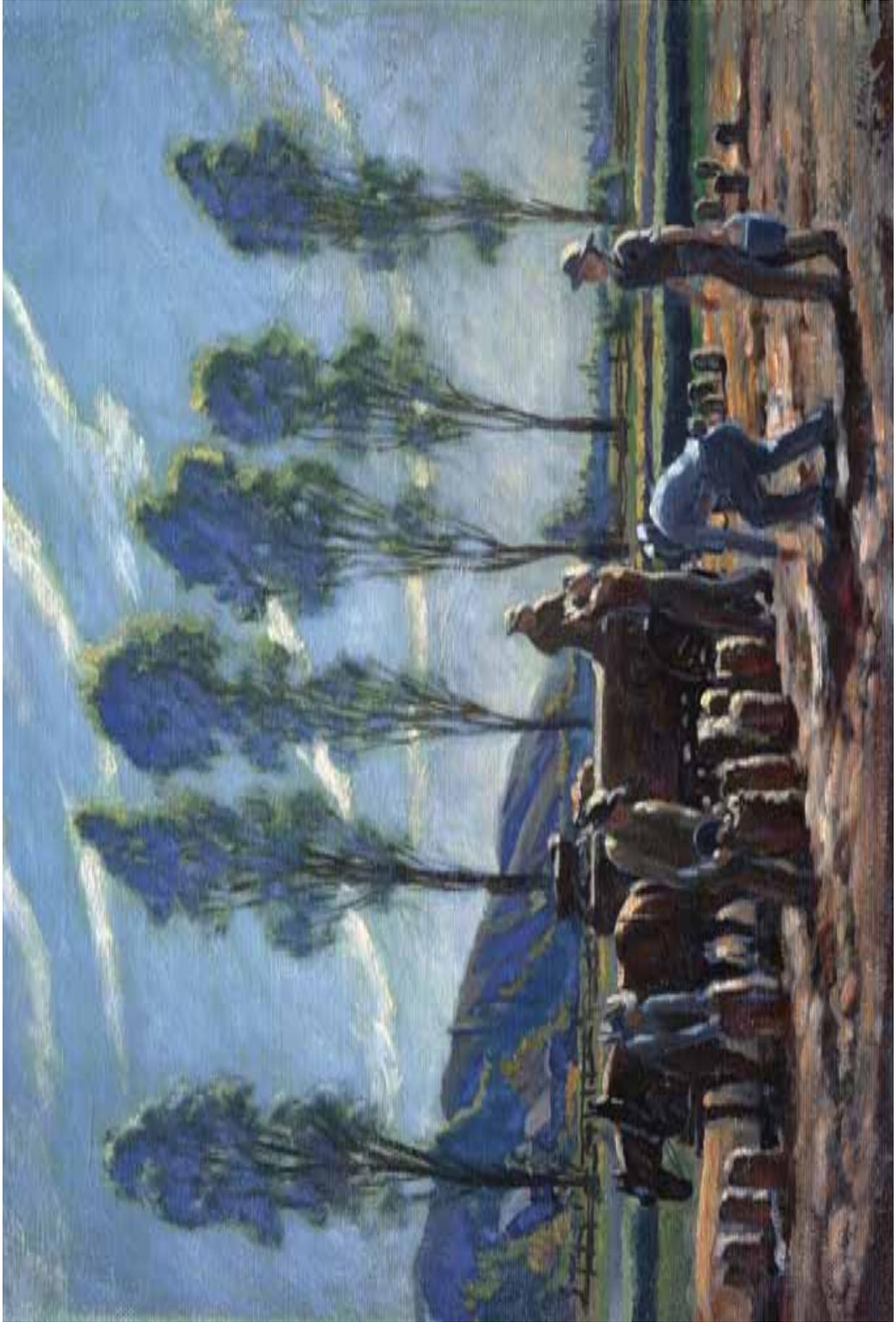
The Trujillo Peru Temple will be built on the site of the existing meetinghouse on Teodoro Valcárcel Street in Urbanización Primavera, Trujillo. It will serve more than 88,000 members.

FamilySearch Adds 25,000th Title

FamilySearch.org celebrated the addition of its 25,000th digitized title on December 15, 2008. The book, a history of Lewis County in the state of New York, was published in 1860. FamilySearch digitally archives titles that are unique, limited-run, out-of-print, or high-demand. The documents come from a variety of genres, locations around the world, and languages. To access the searchable digital documents at no cost, visit FamilySearch.org and click on **Historical Books under Search Records.**

Members Serve in Hospitals on Holiday

On November 27, 2008, Thanksgiving Day in the United States, members of the Beaverton Oregon West Stake prepared and served turkey dinners in three local hospitals. While food service to patients is not interrupted during holidays, the cafeterias of most hospitals are closed, leaving medical staff and visitors to fend for themselves. Members served dinner in the Doernbecher Children's Hospital, the Legacy Emanuel Hospital, and the Veterans Administration Hospital in Portland, Oregon. ■



Picking Potatoes, by B. Y. Andelin

“Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest” (Exodus 34:21).



As we follow the Church's counsel regarding family home storage, we learn that "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). And as we become more prepared, we learn that "independence and self-reliance are critical keys to our spiritual growth." See President Marion G. Romney, "The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance," p. 61; see also pp. 48, 50, and 56.

