A young man with dark, curly hair is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a blue and black wetsuit and is holding a white surfboard with a black and red stripe. The background shows a beach with waves crashing in the distance.

T H E
New Era
O C T O B E R **2 0 0 6**

**COVER STORY:
ON A WAVE
OF GOOD
ADVICE,
P. 24**

**WE
BELIEVE
IN YOU!
P. 2**

**WHY DID
YOU JOIN THE
CHURCH?
P. 14**

**EATING MY
WORDS, P. 10**

**ATHLETES' SECRET
WEAPON, P. 18**

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Cover: *Jeremy Pownall*
of Sydney, Australia,
learns from his leaders.
See "Time to Listen" on
p. 24.

Cover photography:
Janet Thomas (front) and
Nathan Campbell (back)

Jeremy
listens to
good advice
about serving a
mission and
marrying in the
temple from his
Young Men
leaders. See
"Time to Listen"
p. 24.



To Run and Not Be Weary, p. 18



Worth It!, p. 42

**The Message:
We Believe in You!** 2
President James E. Faust
*We want to support you by believing
in you rather than fearing for you.*

Open Mouth, Insert Car 10
Rebecca Rice Birkin
*Trying so hard to be cool only ended
in embarrassment.*

**Idea List:
Becoming a Latter-day Saint Teen** 13
*Here are some ways to immerse
yourself in being a true LDS teen.*

**Q&A:
Questions and Answers** 14
*Now that I've joined the Church, some
of my friends and family are questioning
my decision. How do I answer them?*

**New Era Poster:
Come unto Me** 17

To Run and Not Be Weary 18
Joan Stewart
*Following the Word of Wisdom pays off
for youth in one Montana branch.*

I Wouldn't Cheat 22
Roy D. Atkin
*I did just fine when the teacher
switched the tests.*

Time to Listen 24
Janet Thomas
*Jeremy Pownall of Sydney is all wet
when he listens to some good advice.*

Call Brett Now 28
Tyler C. Burch
*We'd just met and had nothing in
common. Why was I feeling so
impressed to call him?*

Home 31
Megan Walker
*No matter where I go in the world,
attending church feels like coming home.*

What's Up? 32

I Know What I Know! 34
Elder Monte J. Brough
*Our five senses are not adequate for
coming to know eternal things.*

I Never Knew Her Name 38
Cody Clark
*One kind act made all the difference
for me at school and in life.*

The Extra Smile 41

Worth It! 42
Veronica Garcia Walker
*All the struggles I had becoming a
member paid off in my own family.*

Instant Messages 44
*Dancing up a storm; reaching a goal;
facing a deadly illness; the right song
for humming.*

What's in It for You 47

We've Got Mail 48

**Poem:
Seasonal Traffic** 49
Teresa Bateman

Photo 49
Lane V. Erickson

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We Believe in You!

BY PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

*We want to support you
by believing in you rather
than fearing for you.*



Each of you has to have the strength and integrity not to get too close to the Devil's Throat. Bravado in the face of certain death, physical or spiritual, is foolhardy.



Faith

I speak to you as one who stands on the edge of eternity. From that perspective, I see you as the choicest spirits ever placed on the earth. The promises in your generation's patriarchal blessings, if you are faithful, seem to exceed the promises in mine. You know better than I the challenges of living in the world today. The "Teenagers' Bill of Rights" declares: "Please support us by believing in us rather than fearing for us."¹ I want you to know that I believe in you. I believe you can be in the world but not of the world.

Avoiding "The Devil's Throat"

In the world there are many things of value to discover and much more to live for and hope for; however, as you move forward, you should be careful not to get too close to the Devil's Throat.

As a young man I served a mission to Brazil. It was a marvelous experience. I have returned many times since then in my Church assignments. One of the wonders of the world in that great country is Iguaçu Falls. In the flood season, the volume of water spilling over the brink is the largest in the world. Every few minutes, millions of gallons of water cascade into the chasm below. One part of the falls, where the deluge is the heaviest, is called the Devil's Throat.

Large rocks are situated just before the water rushes down into the Devil's Throat. Some of the braver Brazilians used to take passengers in canoes to stand on those rocks and look down into the Devil's Throat. The

water above the falls is usually calm and slow-moving, and the atmosphere tranquil. Except for the roar of the water below, there was no way to anticipate the danger that lay just a few feet beyond. A sudden, unexpected current could have taken a canoe into the rushing waters, over the cliff, and down into the Devil's Throat. While standing on a rock, a loss of footing or vertigo would have the same effect.

Spiritually, a Devil's Throat is concealed beneath the deceptively calm tranquillity of our lives and the world in which we live. Each of you has to have the strength and integrity not to get too close to the Devil's Throat. Bravado in the face of certain death, physical or spiritual, is foolhardy.

Strength to Overcome

You will do well not to challenge some things in life. This is particularly so with the commandments of God. I am very grateful for the principle of repentance, for we all make mistakes. But it is far better to make the right choice in the first place. This can be applied to marriage. Too many marriages fail, but it really is much better to get it right the first time. A song in *The Sound of Music* says, "Let's start at the very beginning."² If we are to understand the purpose of our lives, the beginning is indeed a very good place to start. Each of you is a son or daughter of God. We are created in

Strength

His image and likeness. What does that do for us? It raises us up so we can live above the ugly and sordid things all around us. It does not mean that temptation is eliminated, but rather that the Lord gives us strength to overcome all things. This is one of the reasons why we believe in you.

You Can Be Honest

We believe in you because we know you can be honest. A local television channel ran the story of a 10-year-old boy named Josh Bowers from West Jordan, Utah. He found a wallet that had \$530 in it. Josh didn't hesitate. He picked it up and took it to his mother. The wallet belonged to a mother of four, and the \$530 was rent money she couldn't live without.

Josh had some compelling reasons to keep the money. His father had recently been disabled on the job, so his family was living on Social Security. Then there were all the things Josh could have bought with the money. What he really wanted, as he said, was a new bike. But he knew the money was not his and that someone needed that money. The relieved young mother gave Josh \$40 for returning the wallet and the money. Josh planned to use some of the money to get his old bike tire fixed. But an anonymous viewer, on hearing the story, had Josh pick out a brand-new bike "to reward him for being an honest guy." He said: "Josh set an example that everybody should follow, and he looks happy."³

We may not all get a shiny new bicycle as a reward for our honesty, but a feeling of goodness will shine within us for doing what we know is honest and true. Ultimately, we will receive an eternal reward.

We Recognize Your Potential

We believe in you because we recognize your strength and capacity. As a boy working on a farm, I learned that all kinds of devices can give you power to do things you cannot accomplish with your own strength. In those days we had to move big boulders by hand. We would get a long pole and put the strong end of the pole under the rock we wanted to move. Then, resting the pole on a smaller rock close by the big rock, we would pull down on the small end of the pole, which would cause the big rock to move. The longer the pole, the more leverage and the easier it was to move the big rock.

We have progressed from poles to power machinery. Today you have computers with the Internet and e-mail to increase and expand your capacity. But you will need to gain certain skills to keep up with modern technology. For example, when I was in college we wrote papers by hand, but now they are expected to be typed, usually on a computer. Computers even have a spell checker! With the development of power machinery, the rise in technology, and better health habits, the world is getting more competitive. A 3.5 grade point average used to be worth an academic scholarship, but a higher GPA is needed today. Records in sports are now higher; this pushes achievement levels higher in that area as well. So to achieve your potential, you will not only have to work hard, but you will also have to work smart to employ all the leverage you can.

The world is getting more competitive. A higher GPA is needed today. To achieve your potential, you will not only have to work hard, but you will also have to work smart.



Dignity

The greatest leverage for good, however, is on the spiritual level. This will come as you use your spiritual gifts to enhance your natural gifts and abilities. This spiritual leverage can be diminished or even destroyed if you get too close to the Devil's Throat. For example, I warn you against the dangers that lurk in the Internet, movies, and books, which lead away from your destiny. Daily study of the scriptures is an excellent way to keep your spirituality safe from the Devil's Throat.

People Are Noticing Your Integrity

We believe in you because of your integrity. We not only know of your integrity, but people around the world are taking notice. A businesswoman based in Salt Lake City called a company in Virginia. After completing the business transaction, the owner asked her where she was from. On learning that it was Utah, he said, "What part of Utah?" I quote her account of what happened next:

" 'Salt Lake City,' I responded.

" 'Salt Lake City? Well, you must be a Mormon,' he stated matter-of-factly.

" 'Yes, I am,' I said.

" 'I have two girls who work for me who are Mormons,' he continued. 'They're the best employees I've ever had. Those two

Honesty

You are the best!
That is why we
believe in you!
Honorable men
and women
will personally
commit to certain
self-imposed
expectations.
They need no
outside check or
control. They are
honorable in their
inner core.

girls are only seniors in high school, but they keep my store cleaner than any of my other employees, and they treat my customers great. They're really polite and pretty . . . you know, the "all-American" type.'

"He said, 'Those two girls are amazing. Would you believe that they get up at 5:00 a.m. every morning and . . .'

" 'Go to seminary!' I inserted.

" 'Well, I don't know what it's called,' he continued. 'But it's some type of religious training. Then they go to school all day, and come work for me until 8:00 p.m. I don't know how they do all of the things they do, but I'm sure impressed.'

" 'Would you believe that Mormon youth all over the world are going to early-morning seminary, five days a week?' I asked.

" 'Well, that's one thing I have to say for your church,' he said. 'You're sure raising your children right. They're the best.' ”⁴

And you are the best. That is why we believe in you! As President Gordon B. Hinckley frequently says: "It all comes down to personal integrity." Integrity is the value we set on ourselves. It is the fulfillment of the duty we owe ourselves. Complete and constant integrity is a great law of human conduct. Self-respect and dignity as sons and daughters of God should both advance your gifts and talents and act as a restraining influence.

Honorable men and women will personally commit to certain self-imposed expectations. They need no outside check or control. They are honorable in their inner core. Integrity is the light that shines from a disciplined conscience. It is the strength of duty within us. Moses gave the following counsel: "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord,

or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth" (Numbers 30:2).

Some things should never be done; some lines should never be crossed; vows should never be broken; some words should never be spoken; some thoughts should never be entertained. Membership in the Church requires that we measure up to certain standards. It isn't easy. It demands much of us.

You Choose Morality

We believe in you because you choose to be chaste. The Lord gave us our bodies and along with them our passions. He does not expect us to stifle our passions, but rather to bridle them (see Alma 38:12), which means to channel them so that they can be used for the purposes He intended. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated in the October 1998 general conference:

"Human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union. . . .

" . . . If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy *and* your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love."⁵

It is so important to make decisions early about correct dating habits so that you can say, "I don't know who I'll marry yet, but I certainly know where."⁶

It is also important to keep our minds clean and pure. While Elder Dallin H. Oaks was serving as president of Brigham Young

Spiritual

Chaste

Righteous

Disciplined

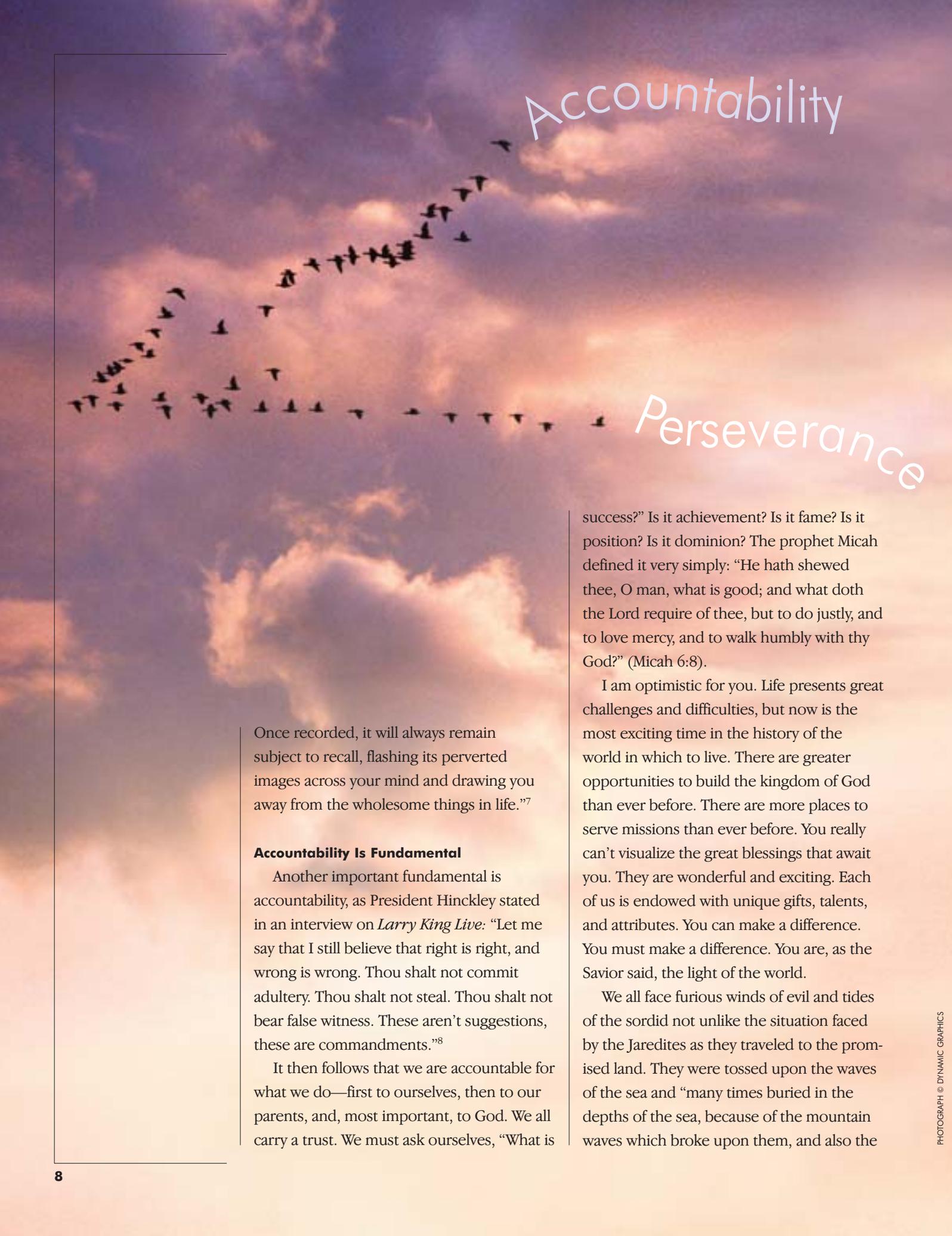
Pure

Moral

University, he gave some excellent counsel regarding what we take into our minds:

“We are surrounded by the promotional literature of illicit sexual relations, on the printed page and on the screen. For your own good, avoid it. Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won't vomit back filth.





Accountability

Perseverance

Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.”⁷

Accountability Is Fundamental

Another important fundamental is accountability, as President Hinckley stated in an interview on *Larry King Live*: “Let me say that I still believe that right is right, and wrong is wrong. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. These aren’t suggestions, these are commandments.”⁸

It then follows that we are accountable for what we do—first to ourselves, then to our parents, and, most important, to God. We all carry a trust. We must ask ourselves, “What is

success?” Is it achievement? Is it fame? Is it position? Is it dominion? The prophet Micah defined it very simply: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8).

I am optimistic for you. Life presents great challenges and difficulties, but now is the most exciting time in the history of the world in which to live. There are greater opportunities to build the kingdom of God than ever before. There are more places to serve missions than ever before. You really can’t visualize the great blessings that await you. They are wonderful and exciting. Each of us is endowed with unique gifts, talents, and attributes. You can make a difference. You must make a difference. You are, as the Savior said, the light of the world.

We all face furious winds of evil and tides of the sordid not unlike the situation faced by the Jaredites as they traveled to the promised land. They were tossed upon the waves of the sea and “many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the

Diligence

Trust

great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind” (Ether 6:6). But they were protected because “when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish” (Ether 6:7). In our time there are vessels that protect against these terrible spiritual tempests, and they are our temples, homes, quorums, wards, and stakes.

You Are Children of Great Promise

You are children of great promise. You have received the covenants of the Lord with His people. Be careful not to get too close to the Devil’s Throat. He would like to devour you. You must use the leverage of both technology and the Spirit of God to reach your potential. You must strive diligently to do this. We want to support you by believing in you rather than fearing for you. Though you may have ordinary ability and intelligence, by perseverance and hard work you can find happiness beyond your dreams and expectations. This will come about as you keep the commandments of the Lord.

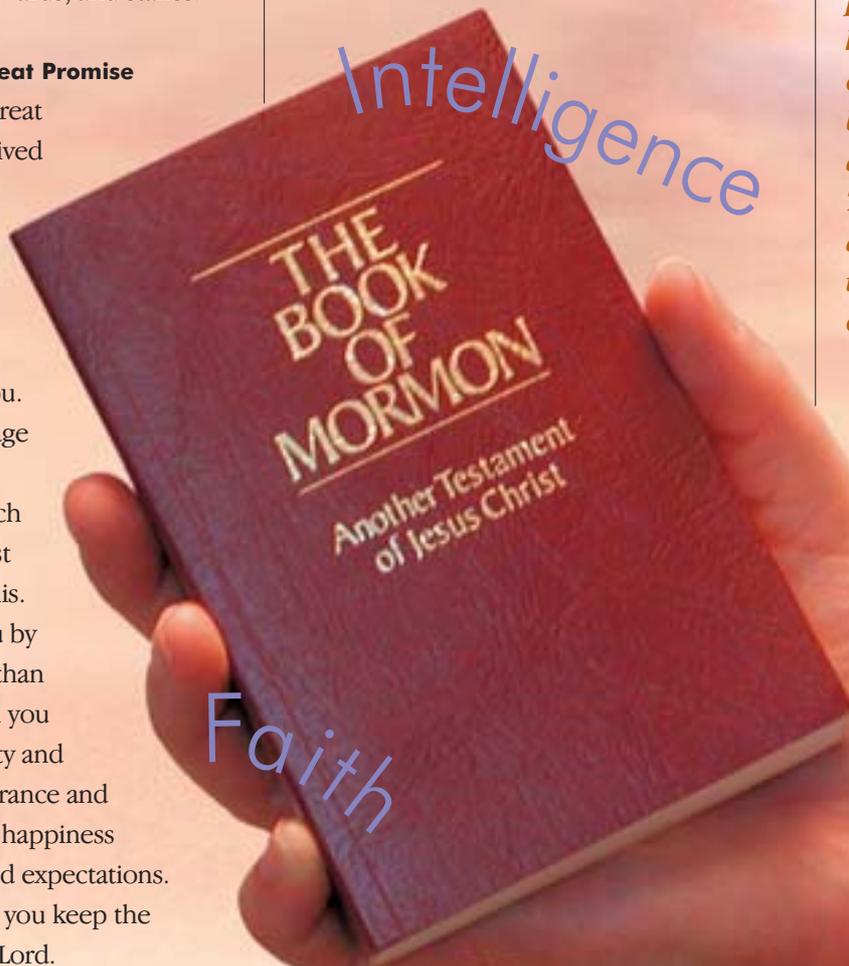
I pray that the Lord will watch over you and keep you safe. I pray that the Lord will strengthen you in heart and soul to go forward in faith and courage. **NE**

From an address given at Brigham Young University on November 1, 1998.

NOTES

- ¹ *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul: 101 Stories of Life, Love and Learning*, 307.
- ² Oscar Hammerstein, “Do-Re-Mi.”
- ³ “Honest Boy Returns Lost Wallet and Money,” KUTV, Sept. 8 and 10, 1998.
- ⁴ Annette Larsen Proulx, “I’m Impressed,” *New Era*, July 1998, 49.
- ⁵ “Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 76–77.
- ⁶ “Bride in the Mirror,” *New Era*, Aug. 1997, 49.
- ⁷ “Things They’re Saying,” *New Era*, Feb. 1974, 18.
- ⁸ CNN, Sept. 8, 1998.

Intelligence



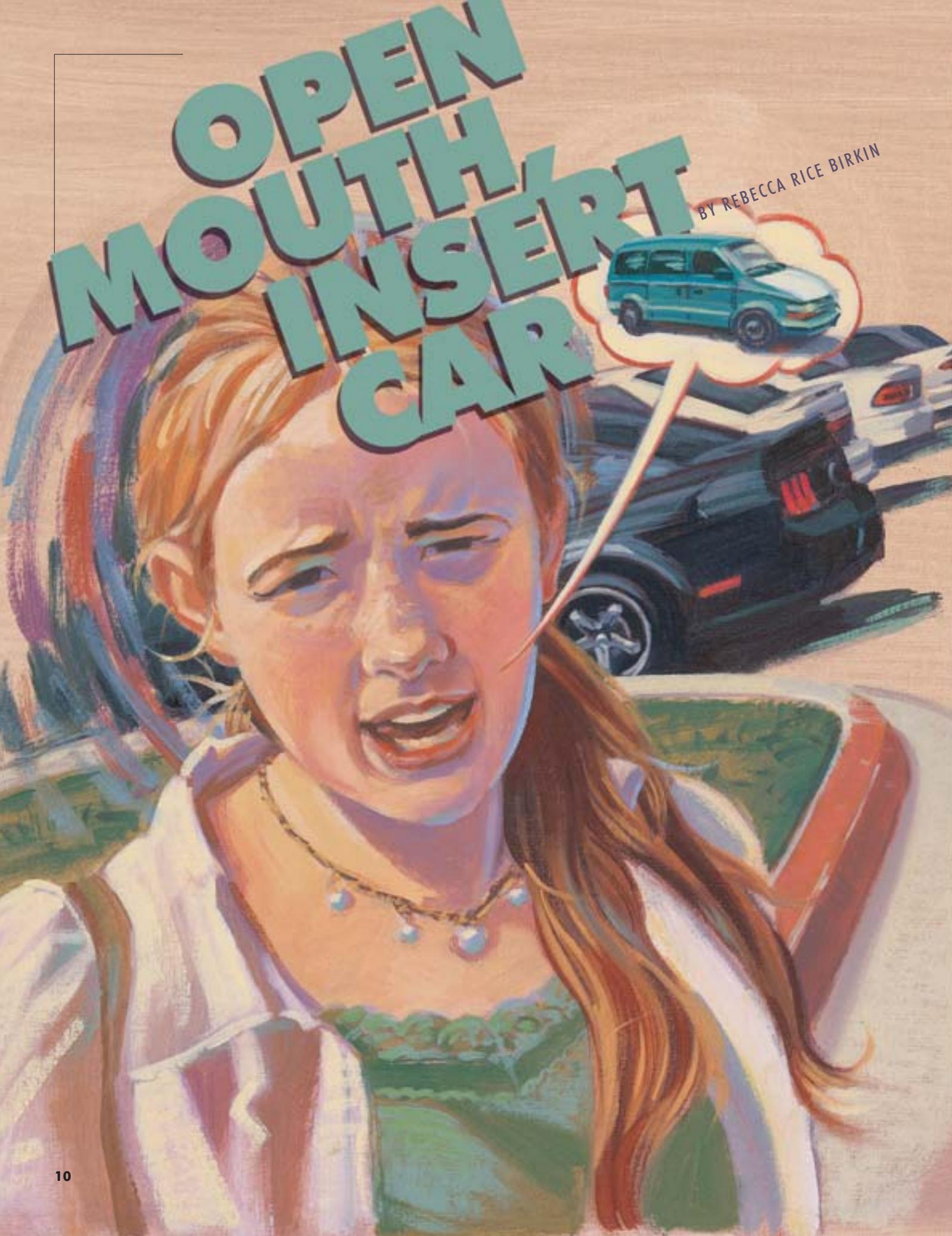
Faith

Courage

Though you may have ordinary ability and intelligence, by perseverance and hard work you can find happiness beyond your dreams and expectations. This will come about as you keep the commandments of the Lord.

OPEN MOUTH INSERT CAR

BY REBECCA RICE BIRKIN



“Nice pants,” a girl giggled as she walked past me into class. I stood in the hallway of my new junior high school, confused by her sarcasm.

“What’s wrong with my clothes?” I whispered to myself.

It didn’t take me long to figure it out. In this school, designer clothes were the standard, and my jeans didn’t have the right label. I just didn’t fit in.

As the unkind comments grew, so did my feelings of inferiority. Along with my schoolwork, I started studying the other students’ styles. Time and new clothes helped end the teasing. Yet I still spent hours worrying that I didn’t measure up.

My craving to feel accepted continued into high school, where luxury cars in the student parking lot were a common sight. I would rather have been seen careening through the halls in a baby buggy than caught driving our family car. It was a minivan, old and turquoise. A recent accident supplied the final touch—a white hood. The van reminded me of a blue-and-white suede loafer, so I named it Old Blue Shoe.

Since I walked to school, Old Blue Shoe didn’t concern me much—that is, until my parents bought a new car and offered me the ancient vehicle. Was I grateful for something to drive? Hardly—I’d rather walk.

A short time later in history class, my teacher assigned a joint research project. Instead of the usual disappointment, though, I was overjoyed—my teacher had announced that Rick and I would be in the same group. Not only was Rick one of the smart kids, but he was also seminary president and an ath-

lete. This was my chance to impress him, to prove that I could fit in with the popular kids. Before class ended, we’d agreed to do our work at the university library. Then I walked home, smiling the whole way.

That night, my parents dropped me off at the library so I wouldn’t have to drive the van. But I cringed when my parents said, “Get a

ride home from one of your friends, okay?”

The library research time flew by, and I felt relieved when Rick offered to take me home. We walked down the library stairs and outside, talking about school. As we reached the parking lot, my insecure feelings

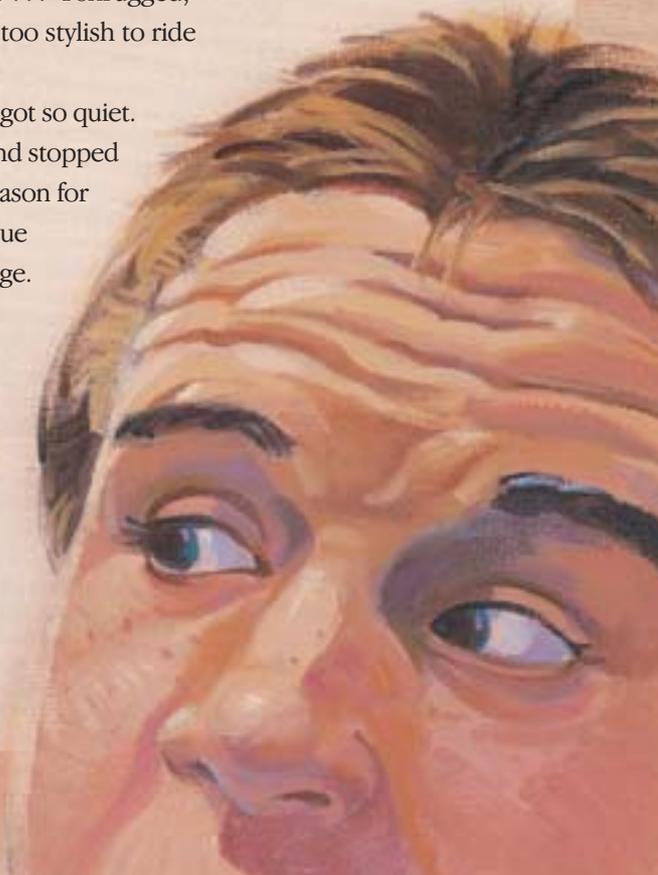
poked at me, and I felt the need to explain why I was reduced to begging for rides. “My parents bought a new car and offered me their van,” I said, “but it was this ugly dinosaur, and, you know . . .” I shrugged, hoping to suggest I was too stylish to ride in a car like that.

I wondered why Rick got so quiet. He pulled out his keys and stopped in front of his car. The reason for his silence hit like Old Blue Shoe’s ghost on a rampage. It was a blue minivan—a newer model, but otherwise identical to the car I’d just ridiculed.

My stomach dropped. I opened the car door and slid into the seat, wishing I could hide in the glove box instead. I wanted to apologize, explain

It only took one conversation to show me how ridiculous it was to give in to pride.

was trying too hard to fit in, until Rick, one of the smart, athletic, popular kids, taught me a lesson I needed to learn.





was too embarrassed to speak, but I knew I deserved to be humiliated. I couldn't believe I had been so worried about appearances.

that his car was nice, in much better shape than my parent's van. Yet I was too mortified to say a single word.

Rick didn't speak either, except to ask for directions to my house. He pulled up to my curb, then left with a simple "Bye."

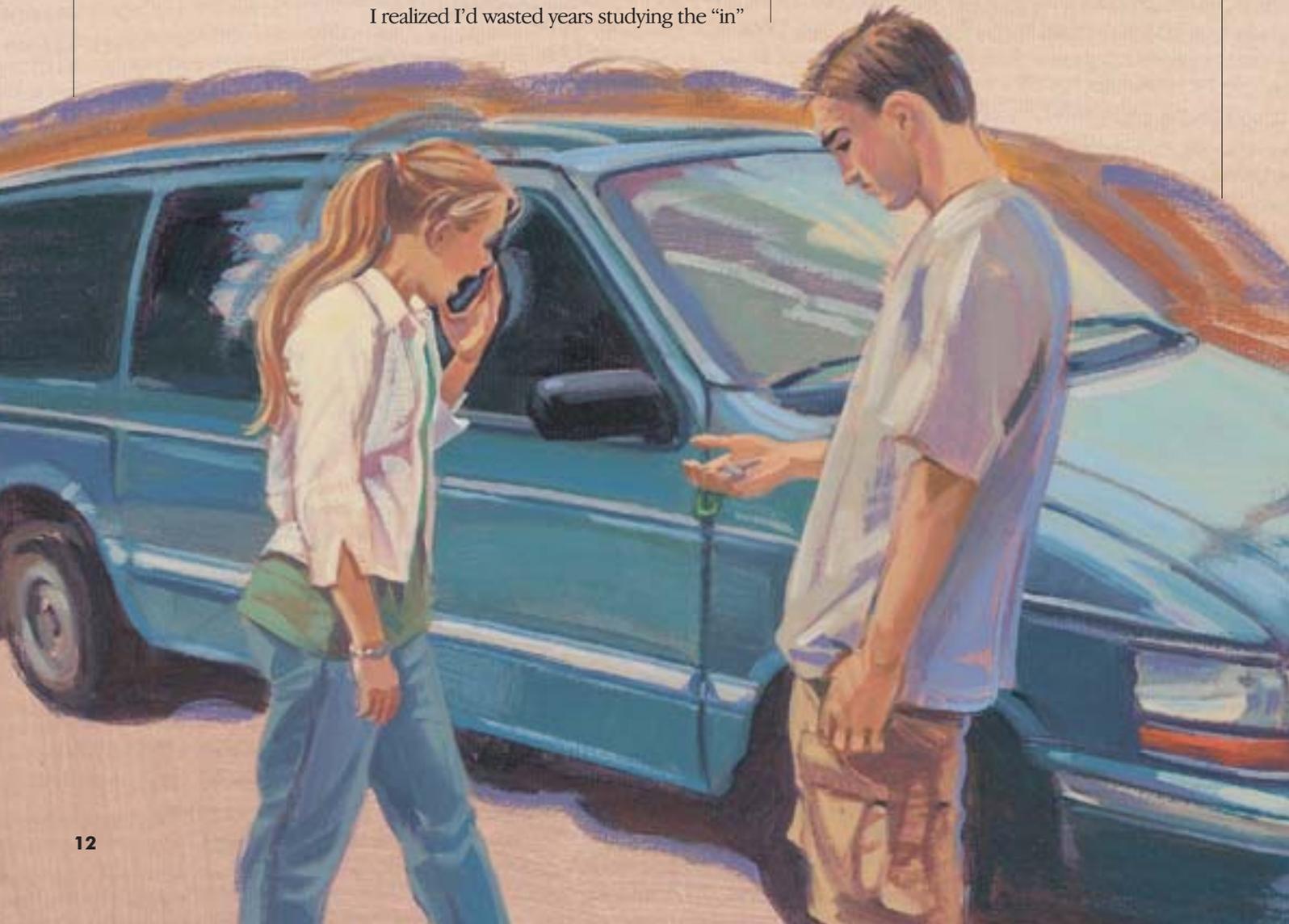
My face burned with humiliation as I walked to my front door. Worse, I knew I deserved every bit of my embarrassment. I went inside and sank onto the couch to think. Until that night, I'd thought self-confidence came from appearance. Although my comment bothered Rick, driving that car didn't. He had an assurance based not on looks, but an internal quality I lacked.

I realized I'd wasted years studying the "in"

crowd, when I should have been working on what was inside. I wanted to change, to be more like Rick—a person who could have a "bad car day" without letting it ruin my feelings of self-worth.

I made a goal to stop just following others and try to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. As I looked to Him, I began to gain a confidence based not on how I looked, but how I served.

I learned a secret I wish I'd known before Rick gave me that ride home. I was much happier when I spent my time thinking of others instead of worrying about what they thought of me. **NE**



BECOMING A LATTER-DAY SAINT TEEN

What a great decision you've made to be baptized and confirmed. As a new member of the Church, you will find many happy things to fill your life. The following activities and programs will help you learn and give you guidance in all parts of your life.

Attend Aaronic Priesthood or Young Women. Each Sunday, you'll meet with the other teens in your ward or branch, the boys in Aaronic Priesthood and the girls in Young Women. Each week, the lessons will be geared to your age group.

Join your family in holding family home evening. Part of being a Latter-day Saint is becoming a better person. Family home evening can help you learn to be more kind and loving to your family as you study the gospel with them.

Go to Mutual. During the week, the youth and your leaders will get together for group or class activities and participation in service or sports. It's the place where you'll get to know good people, make friends, and have a lot of fun.

Attend seminary. From age 14 to 18, you can attend seminary, where you'll have a chance to really get into the scriptures with an interesting teacher and classmates who are also there to learn. Even if you have to get up early to attend, you'll learn more than you could have imagined.

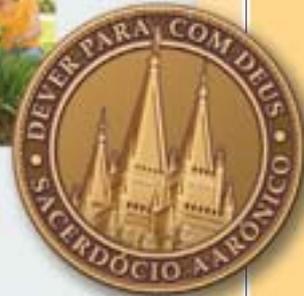
Work on your Personal Progress or Duty to God program. Your Young Women or Aaronic Priesthood leaders will give you a small book outlining Personal Progress or Duty to God and

explain the program to you. Your parents and leaders will help you choose the goals and experiences to work on. These programs can take several years to complete and will help you learn to set and achieve goals and develop important new skills.

Study the scriptures daily and pray often. Through prayer and scripture study you can receive answers to your questions and comfort in your trials. In prayer, give thanks for your blessings.

Learn to listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy

Ghost was given to you at your confirmation. As you learn to understand and respond to promptings from the Holy Ghost, you will feel God's love for you and you will experience spiritual growth. **NE**



Q & A

*“Now that I’ve joined the Church,
some of my friends and family are questioning my decision.
How do I answer them?”*

NEW ERA

Being a new member of the Church is challenging enough without criticism or doubts from friends or family members. But getting baptized and confirmed was the right decision, and being a member of the Church is a great blessing. Those who are questioning you just don’t understand that—yet. With your help, patience, and good example, however, they can understand, and even if they don’t approve of your decision, they may at least come to respect it.

It will be good for you to prepare to answer your family’s and friends’ questions. It will give you a chance to think about why you became a member of the Church. You will remember answers to prayers and spiritual experiences you have had. As you share your testimony and conversion story with those who are questioning your decision, you and they will feel the Spirit.

If they are questioning your decision

■ **Joining the Church was the right decision. You can help your family and friends understand that truth, but it may take some time.**

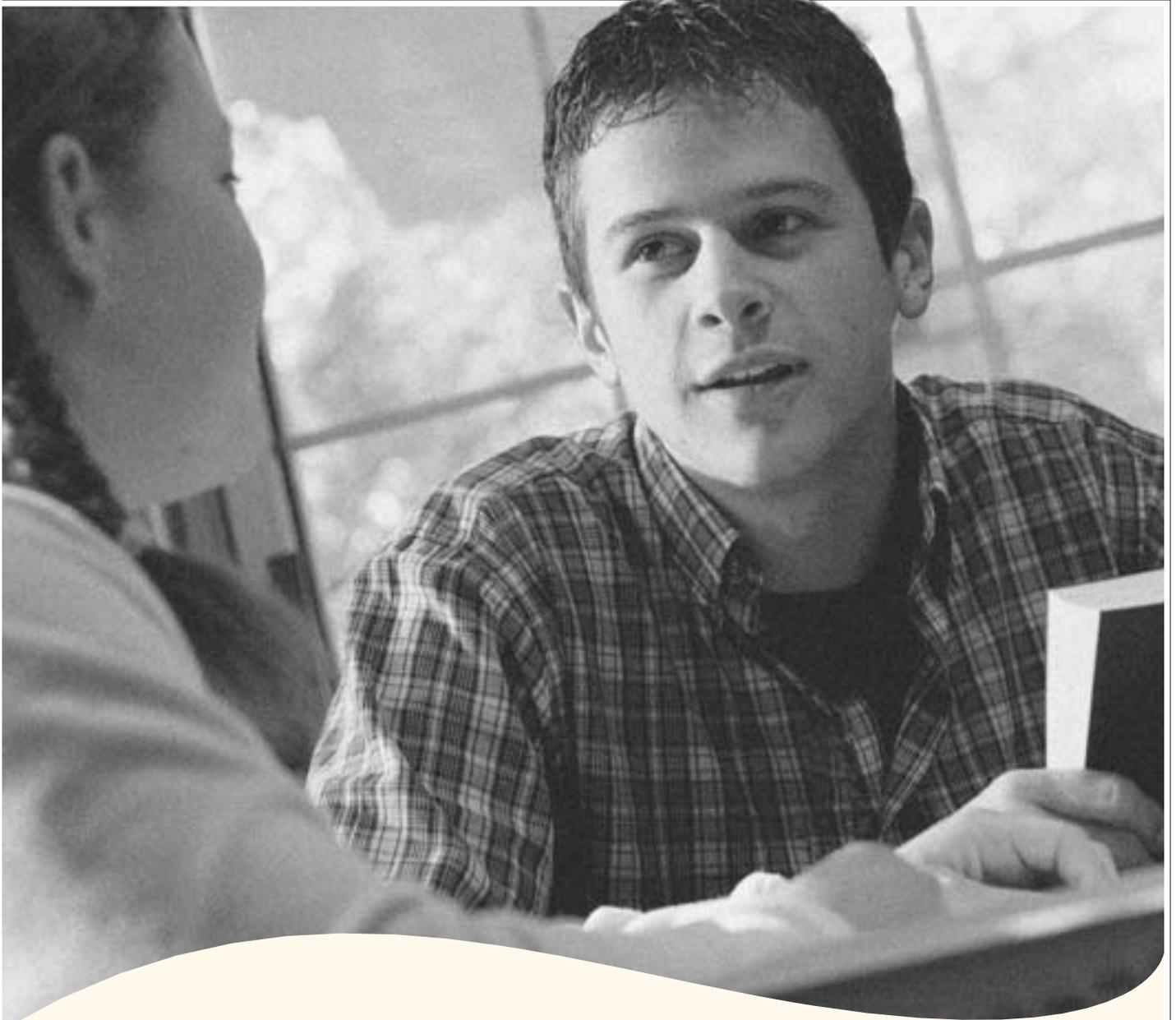
■ **Share with them your testimony and conversion story. It will be good for them to hear and good for you to recall spiritual experiences you have had.**

■ **Invite them to church and Church activities, and introduce them to other members.**

■ **Continue to do things that invite the Holy Ghost in your life so you can be comforted and guided in this challenge.**

because they’re not familiar with the Church, you could tell them what the Lord told people in His day: “Come and see” (John 1:39). Invite your friends and family to church, to Mutual, to family home evening, to a Church activity. Let them know they are welcome to see what the Church is and does. At these activities, they will meet other Church members and feel the peaceful influence of the Holy Ghost. When they do, they will begin to understand why you became a member of the Church. As they feel the Spirit and have their questions answered, they might even join the Church later, and your testimony and good example will have helped them.

Even though you may have lost some friends because you joined the Church, remember that you have gained a lot of new friends now that you’re a member. Get to know your brothers and sisters in the gospel. They can help you through this



challenge. Some have probably gone through what you're going through.

It's not your responsibility alone to handle the concerns of those who are questioning your decision. The full-time missionaries, supportive friends and family members, home teachers, and other ward or branch members can help.

Sometimes all you can do is pray for those with beliefs different from yours. Respect their beliefs, and be friendly as you "agree to disagree."

Most important, stay close to the Lord through daily prayer and scripture study and weekly attendance at church and Mutual. This trial won't seem so hard when you find comfort and strength in these things. The Holy Ghost can guide you to know what to say and do.

The Lord knows you are going through this trial, and He knows you can handle it. He can guide you to help those who are questioning your decision. **NE**

READERS



I would tell them that I had some doubts at first, but I found out that all the bad things I'd heard were untrue and all the good things I'd heard were true. The more I spoke to the missionaries, the more this religion made sense to me. They answered all my questions. I feel very good about my decision to become a member of the Church.

Cody D., 14, Texas



Explain to them the feeling you felt—and still feel—when you were baptized and when you read the scriptures and pray. Try to show them how your life changed for the

better. And maybe one day, through your influence, they will join the Church. So stay strong.

Jasmyrn S., 16, New South Wales, Australia



Actually, I was the one who questioned at first. I was a teenager when my mother and brother met with the missionaries. I listened only halfheartedly. But when they joined

the Church, I saw that the things they had learned agreed with what I'd been taught my whole life. After I joined the military, I sought out the missionaries, went to meetings, studied and prayed, and then went home to be baptized. The gospel made me happy, and the Spirit told me it is true.

Nicole V., 20, Georgia



I tell my friends that I joined the Church because I can feel the influence of the Holy Ghost when I go to church. This not only helps me grow spiritually but also gives me guid-

ance for my school life and daily life. I am grateful that missionaries helped my family join the Church. I found out that when we build our lives on Jesus Christ's gospel as the foundation, it is the best happiness we could ever have in this life.

Fan J., 17, Taiwan



It's hard when people question your decision. But there's a difference between others doubting you and you doubting your own testimony.

Respond by holding strong to your testimony; that's the best thing you can do. Sometimes their reaction might not be the best, but the truth will always prevail.

Michael W., 17, Alabama



“When new members come out of the world into the kingdom of God, they leave much behind them. Oftentimes they too must leave behind friends and even family as well as social contacts and a way of life that is not compatible with the standards of the Church.

“After baptism, the new member of the Church must learn how to become a fellow citizen with the Saints in the kingdom of God through study, prayer, member example, and nurturing.”

—Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 80.



I would tell people that I was baptized because I found out for myself that this is the true Church and that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me and want me

to return to Them. I believe in eternal life and that one day my family can be together forever. Baptism is the first step on the path that will lead us back to live with Heavenly Father and our family again. The fact that I could ask and receive an answer that this is true comforts me and makes me happy.

Ignacio R., 17, Chile



Be careful not to overreact. Talk things through, and be a peacemaker whenever you can. Reassure them that you love them. They don't have all of the same beliefs

you do, but a disagreement doesn't need to become an argument. Ultimately, they will judge how right your decision is based on the way you act. Give them a chance to see changes for good in you.

Ricky J., 19, Idaho

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

NEXT QUESTION

“One day I read 1 Nephi 7:12, which says that the Lord is able to do all things for us if we exercise faith in Him. How do we exercise faith in Christ?”

SEND YOUR ANSWER, along with your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and a photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo if you are under 18) to:

New Era, Q&A, 11/06

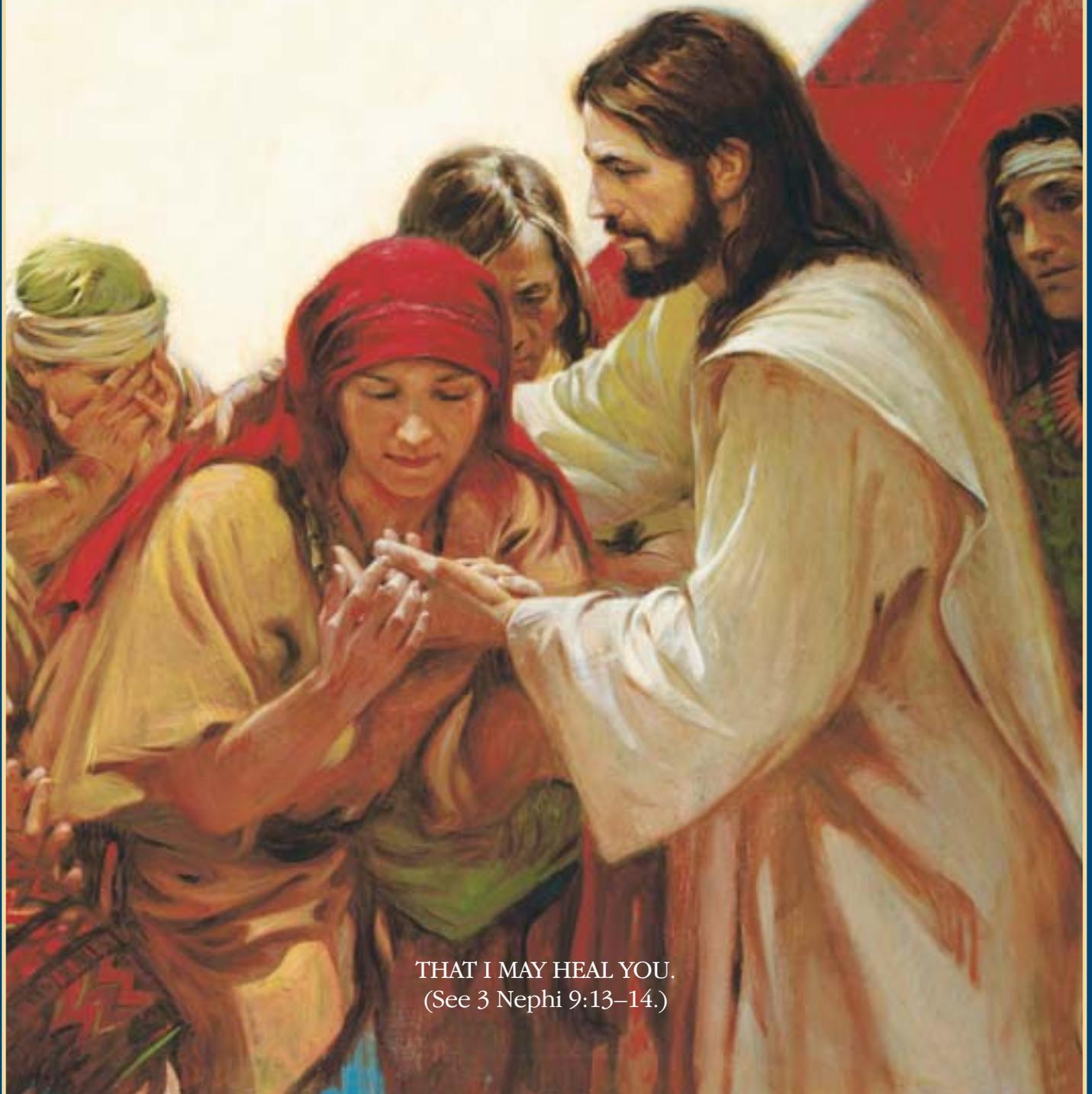
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420

Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA

Or e-mail: newera@ldschurch.org

Please respond by November 15, 2006.

COME UNTO ME



THAT I MAY HEAL YOU.
(See 3 Nephi 9:13–14.)



BY JOAN STEWART

In a small town in the Big Sky State of Montana, young LDS athletes are making a big impression.

TO RUN AND NOT BE



Only 15 students at Shelby High School are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But this handful of students stands out in a big way in their school and in the community of Shelby, Montana. In fact, almost half of the athletes from Shelby High School who qualified for last year's state championships in track and field were members of the Church.

What's even better, they know where their strength comes from.

"The Word of Wisdom helps me in my athletics by keeping my body healthy and clean," says Cori Thacker, a Laurel who is a sophomore standout in softball, basketball, and volleyball. "It also helps me say no to peer pressure in high school, and by doing that, I set an example for others. My friends look up to me for standing up for what I believe and doing the right thing."

Senior Daniel Bridge, a priest in the Shelby Branch, was the Montana state champion in cross-country and also qualified to go to state in four track-and-field events.

Blake Thacker also qualified for state in four events as a sophomore and took second place in the 200-meter run. Because he keeps the Word of Wisdom, Blake feels confident that the Lord will keep His promises and help him perform his best. "If I am sore or if I am nervous for a race, I say a little prayer. The Word of Wisdom also helps me in my personal life because people always seem to look up to me to do the right thing," says Blake. "My



WEARY



Youth from the Shelby Branch in Montana say that living the Word of Wisdom gives them an athletic edge. They represent their high school—and their religious beliefs—well. Left: Amanda Stewart runs the 800-meter. Far left (top to bottom): Daniel Bridge, races in cross-country competition; Brent Thacker runs the 300-meter hurdles; Cori Thacker pitches for the softball team.



Right: Shane Brown crosses the finish line to win the mile relay. Below: Youth of the Shelby Branch gather in front of their meetinghouse. Far right (top to bottom): Brooke Flesch runs relay; Brice Stewart makes his approach for the long jump; Amanda Stewart hurls the javelin; Blake Thacker wins the 200-meter.





friends respect me for who I am and what I do.”Where could you find better examples of the Lord’s promise in the Word of Wisdom? “And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; . . . “And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18, 20).

Walking a Higher Road

This trend of outstanding LDS athletes coming from the Shelby Branch has been going on for several years now. A few years back, four young men from the branch were members of the mile relay team that held the best time going into the state finals. Today all four of these young men are serving full-time missions for the Church.

“Seminary helps me set an example to my friends because they find it impressive that I get up early to go to seminary before school,” says Amanda Stewart. She competes in basketball, volleyball, and track. “Keeping the Word of Wisdom helps me so much in my athletics. I don’t get worn out because there are never unwelcome chemicals in my system.” And her friends have noticed. “I’m very fortunate to have great friends who respect my choices. In fact, they help me stick to my standards.”

As the hymn “True to the Faith” proclaims, “Shall the youth of Zion falter in defending truth and right? . . . No!” (*Hymns*, no. 254). Even though the number of LDS youth in Shelby is relatively small, the lasting impression they have on their friends and schoolmates is big.

“People ask me all the time why I get up so early just to read scriptures,” says Lance Flesch, a priest who wrestles, plays football, and runs track. He lets them know that being a member of the Church is a privilege with lots of benefits. Good physical health and a clear mind are just two of them. Lance says that going to seminary and holding fast to gospel standards “helps remind me to be in the world but not of the world. Having the Spirit helps me to set an example. I constantly have a companion encouraging me to walk the higher road.” **NE**



BY ROY D. ATKIN

It didn't matter that everyone was doing it; I had to be honest.

I WOULDN'T

CHEAT

After a number of students dropped out following our freshman year, my dental school classes became even more competitive. Everyone worked hard to be at the top of the class. As the competition increased, some students decided that the way to succeed was by cheating. This troubled me greatly. Every day I prayed that I would be blessed to learn the assigned material and remember what I studied. I knew I couldn't ask the Lord to bless me if I cheated. I felt strongly that if I did my part, the Lord would grant me this blessing.

During summer break, I went to visit a dentist who had graduated from my school. I talked to him about cheating. He said he had encountered the same problem.

"What did you do?" I asked.

"What could I do?" he replied. "I had no choice but to cheat occasionally."

I pondered his answer. Here he was, a successful dentist, and he had cheated to get his degree. But I knew I couldn't cheat. I wanted to be right with God even more than I wanted to become a dentist.

My junior year, I was offered a copy of an upcoming test in a crucial class. Obviously that meant some of my classmates would have the test questions ahead of time. I declined the offer. When the corrected test papers were returned, the class average was extremely high, making my score low in comparison. The professor asked to speak to me.

"Roy," he said, "you usually do well on tests. What happened?"

"Sir," I told my professor, "on the next exam, if

you give a test that you have never given before, I believe you will find that I do very well.” There was no reply.

We had another test in the same class. As the test was handed out, there were audible groans. It was a test the teacher had never given before. When our graded tests were handed back, I had received one of the highest grades in the class. From then on, all the tests were new.

That was not the end of the Lord’s blessings to me. At the end of their senior year, all dental students have to take practical tests—performing procedures on patients while professors watch and grade their performance. If you don’t do well on these practical tests, you don’t graduate. In the early winter of my senior year, I slipped on a patch of ice and broke my right arm. Immediately I felt grateful that it was only January, assuming the cast would come off in six weeks. But I was informed I had broken the scaphoid in my wrist, one of the most difficult bones to heal. I would be in a cast for six months. In despair, I realized I couldn’t work on patients with a cast on my right arm.

I asked for a priesthood blessing. In that blessing I was told not to fear, all would be well. After some weeks I discovered that my fingers were perfectly agile, even with the cast on. When I arrived at the testing area, the professors shook their heads, insisting there was no possibility I could perform the necessary procedures. I asked them to let me try, and if they were not satisfied I would withdraw. Each patient looked surprised upon seeing my cast, but I was able to perform the procedures to the complete approval of the examining professors. I graduated in the top of my class.

I know the Lord blessed me for my commitment to be honest. I learned that when we do what the Lord asks, He is a powerful ally for our success. With Him, we can accomplish more than we could possibly do on our own. **NE**

TIME TO



Waiting to catch the perfect wave and talking with mates that have made wise decisions is the perfect place to think about the future and plan for what's next in their lives.

BY JANET THOMAS

Body-boarding is Jeremy's passion at the moment, although he knows the sea and sand will be left behind when he serves a mission.

A mission is a couple of years in the future, but it's something 17-year-old Jeremy thinks a lot about now. Where will he be called? Will he have the opportunity to learn a language? What will a mission be like? What more can he do to get ready?

Jeremy Pownall lives in Sydney, Australia, a place known for its famous opera house, great climate, relaxed lifestyle, and surfing. Actually, body-boarding is his passion right now, although he pretty much only gets to go for a few hours early Saturday mornings. He is just getting his mind around the fact that when he goes on his mission he'll be

leaving the beach and the waves behind. After all, a lot of his surf mates have done it. In fact, those mates are the very ones who are the most effective in convincing him that he really can serve a mission and be more than happy about it.

"There's nothing like an early-morning yarn going to the surf," he says. "I go with the returned missionaries in the ward and my Young Men leaders. They are great advice givers. All of them say that there will be great experiences *in* your life, but a mission is the best experience *for* your life."

What do a bunch of LDS surfers talk about at the beach? Jeremy smiles slightly and says,

LISTEN

“We talk about the waves we’ve caught and the places we’re going to travel to, where we would like to go on a mission or where they’ve been on their missions. The older guys tell us to definitely marry in the temple. And they remind us that we are going to marry the girls we date.” Being surrounded by surf and sand seems to be the right spot for all this good advice to sink in.

Jeremy admits that he really is a listener. And he soaks in the good advice that comes from his mentors, the ones who are a few years ahead of him on the road of life. “They tell me that if I ever do something that I regret, to never feel uncomfortable about

going to my bishop or talking to my parents.”

In another instance, at Young Men camp, he listened when someone got up and spoke about his patriarchal blessing. “I hadn’t thought too much about that,” he recalls. “A week later I went for my interview, and a month later I got my patriarchal blessing.”

In talking about his testimony, Jeremy mentions one of his mentors in particular. “He’s one of my dad’s friends from New Zealand. Whenever he comes here, he goes out of his way to take me surfing. It’s a perfect opportunity for us to talk. The talks I’ve



Jeremy lives an active, well-rounded life (center, top to bottom); at the beach; at church; playing drums with his band; loading up the car; and at home. Family members still living at home (far right, left to right) are: Jeremy; father and mother, Simon and Yvonne; younger sister Brianna. His Young Men adviser and surfing mate, Wayne Innis, offers lots of good advice.



had with him are a major part of my conversion story.”

Sometimes it is in the relaxing moments out in the water or on the drive to the beach when what is said is the easiest to listen to. For Jeremy, that’s where his own testimony came into focus.

The next step in his conversion was bearing that testimony. “I think my testimony grew exponentially when I started bearing it more often and more freely. I feel more confident.”

After all, he points out, he does live in the mission field every day. “A lot of people respect me for my morals, especially here in Australia. Here people at 14 will start going to parties, getting drunk, and trying smoking and drugs. They respect me for still being an interesting and outgoing sort of person, yet not doing any of that stuff.”

Jeremy has big plans for the future. His success in school and his interest in learning languages might lead to becoming an ambassador or diplomat. “Everyone complains about how world leaders are doing things at the moment. I think I could do a better job. Maybe they need the Spirit to guide them.”

Jeremy is sensitive to the impressions of the Spirit. He listens to those who have made good choices. He pays attention to his seminary teacher and his youth leaders. And he likes what he hears.

The bottom line is that he is happy. He had a friend tell him once that she envied people from his church because they all seemed to be happy. Jeremy agrees. He says he has always treasured that about the gospel. “I’m blessed to live in Australia. I’m blessed to have a good family and be brought up in the gospel. I don’t want to waste it.” **NE**



CALL BRETT NOW

BY TYLER C. BURCH

I knew I should call him. But what should I say?

My heart thrilled at the thought that the Lord might use me to help Brett come closer to Him. But as I sat considering the impression, doubts began to creep in.

It was a chilly Wednesday afternoon when I opened a white envelope with a blue Mount McKinley stamp. As a missionary in southern Brazil, I always looked forward to Wednesdays because it was preparation day, and that meant reading my mother's encouraging letters.

This particular day my mother's letter did not appear different from any other letter she had sent me before. The envelope was covered with the usual colorful Primary stickers, and I opened it quickly. My mother wrote that Brett had just received his mission call to Tokyo, Japan. As I read, I could not control my smile, and I tried to hide my moist eyes from my companion. My mind went back to the day I met Brett.

One Sunday at church a family friend introduced me to his son, who had recently moved back home. "Hey, Tyler, this is my son, Brett."

Brett was chatting with his family in the bench behind mine. I politely smiled and leaned back over the bench to meet him. I figured this was what his dad hoped I would do. He had informed me previously that

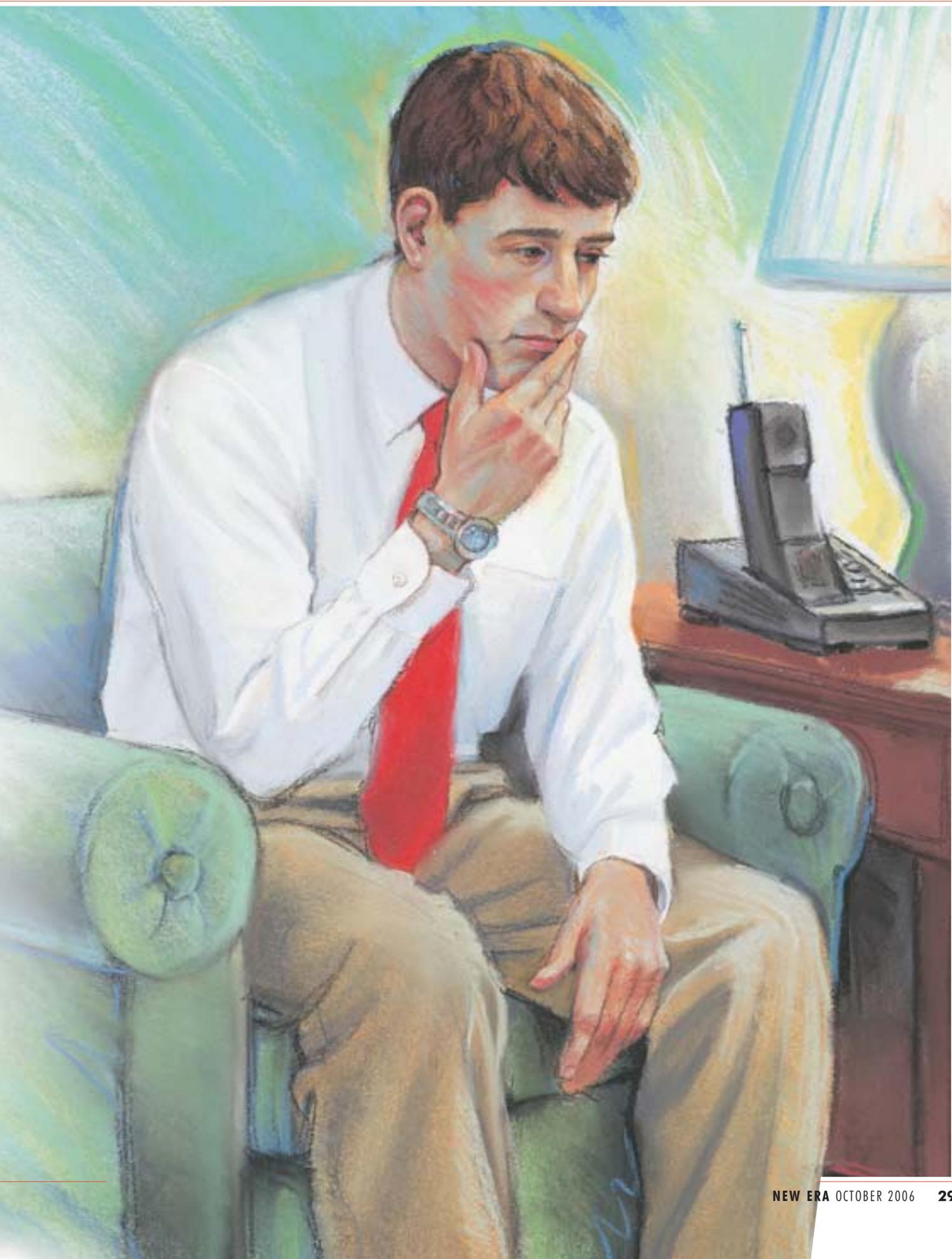
Brett was less active in the Church. Brett appeared nice enough, with his brown, gel-slicked hair and red pullover sweater. I remember thinking, "This guy seems cool. We'll have to hang out sometime." As the day wore on, I forgot all about Brett and my good intentions to become his friend.

Hours later, after a delicious Sunday dinner, a thought came to my mind, "You should call Brett now."

As an enthusiastic priest and soon-to-be missionary, I longed to feel the Lord's influence more powerfully in my life. My heart thrilled at the thought that the Lord might use me to help Brett come closer to Him.

But as I sat considering the impression, doubts began to creep in. "I barely know this kid," I thought. "What will I say?"

Recognizing the source of these doubts, I made a conscious decision to follow the prompting to call Brett. I said a short prayer: "Please help me know what to say to Brett. I really want to help." After the prayer, I felt an odd mixture of apprehension tempered with faith. Not wanting to allow any time for my fears to return, I quickly grabbed the



Brett and I started going to institute and church together.

We became good friends, and I realized later that the call I had been inspired to make came at just the right time in Brett's life.

telephone and dialed his number.

As the phone rang, I tried to decide what I would say to Brett.

"Hello?" I heard. It was Brett's voice.

"Hello, Brett. This is Tyler, the guy who sat in front of you at church. What's up?" I tried to sound cool.

"Oh, not much. How are you?"

"Umm, good." There was an awkward pause. "Hey, I was wondering if you would like to go to ummm . . . institute maybe this Thursday night. It's a long drive, and I would like someone to go with me."

"Sure, Tyler, that sounds cool," was his response.

"Awesome. I'll pick you up at 6:30." After a little more small talk, I hung up the phone. I eased into my chair and smiled.

We went to institute and church together that week and a couple weeks thereafter. Brett and I became good friends, and I realized later that the call I had been inspired to make came at just the right time in Brett's life. He longed to feel closer to the Lord. Just like me, he was in desperate need of a friend who could give him support and encouragement.

Sitting in my apartment in southern Brazil, thousands of miles away from home and more than a year since I had met Brett, I became fully aware that the Lord had inspired me to be one of the friends Brett needed. Gratitude overwhelmed me as I realized that, despite my weaknesses and insecurities, the Lord can magnify my efforts and make up for my shortcomings. If I desire to serve Him, His hands will mold me into the servant He wants me to become. **NE**





HOME

BY MEGAN WALKER

I stepped out of the car in my Sunday best and opened my umbrella. My host father merely smiled and pointed to a red brick building, saying, “Das Gebäude dort drüben.” I thanked him and watched his car roll back into traffic.

When I left home in the United States to come to Germany I thought I didn’t need the Church, that I wouldn’t notice two weeks without sacrament meeting. But the past two weekends I had noticed. I noticed something missing that now made me

quicken my pace as I approached the building shown to me the night

before by the two missionaries serving in this small German town.

When I reached the door, an elder opened it and beckoned me inside. The room was about the size of my bedroom and had plain, whitewashed walls. Four rows of chairs and a plain wooden table holding one tray for bread and another for water were all this tiny room had in the way of furniture. White lace covered the windows.

Though the room was small and the people unknown to me, the first thought that entered my mind was “I’m home. I’m home.”

I sat down and the service began. We sang “The Spirit of God” (*Hymns*, no. 2) loud and clear in German, and my heart sang with the familiarity. Never had that hymn had a greater impact on me.

I wanted to laugh and dance and say to the people walking on the rainy streets, “Don’t you realize? Don’t you realize this Church is true? Isn’t it wonderful?”

The sacrament prayer began, and I bowed my head, listening to the familiar prayer in German. I listened intently, loving each word. I’m home. I’m home.

Tears began to form in my eyes as a plastic sacrament tray was passed. Though the congregation was small, the Spirit was strong. Others were crying too. I felt the Spirit burn and leap inside my heart as it never had before.

I looked through the lace curtains at the gloomy world outside and smiled through my tears. Thousands of miles away from my family, I knew I was at home in the Church. **NE**

ILLUSTRATION BY ROGER MOTZKUS



CLEAN IT UP

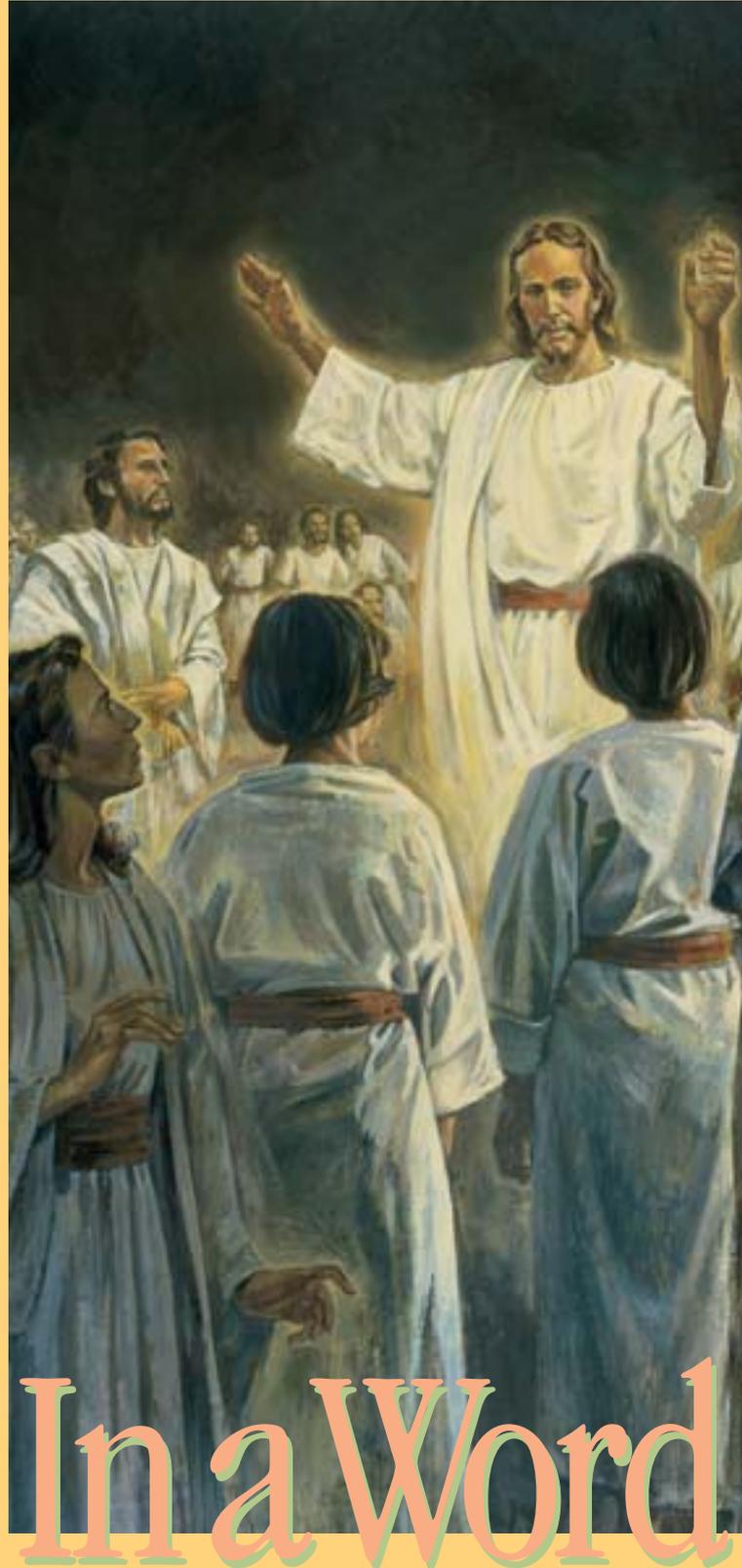
Sometimes it's easy to look past the poverty and problems in your own backyard. That's what youth from the Roanoke Virginia Stake wanted to avoid when they decided to help out some people right nearby, at the Roanoke Area Rescue Mission, a faith-based homeless shelter, which also runs a separate facility for needy women and their children.

Young men and women from the stake joined in with young adults and a few missionaries to participate in "Clean Sweep Day." The volunteers did everything from picking up trash off the streets of the neighborhoods surrounding the rescue mission, to serving food, washing dishes, set-

ting tables, refilling water glasses, and emptying the garbage.

Before the youth went to the rescue mission for the service project, they collected sugar and napkins in their various wards and branches for several months. They donated these items to the rescue mission, which serves around 900 people every day.

For these youth, it was a very real example of what King Benjamin taught in the Book of Mormon: "And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).



In a Word

S*oul*: The term *soul* is used in at least two ways in the scriptures. First, a spirit that is united with a physical body, whether in mortality or after resurrection, is called a soul (see D&C 88:15–16). Second, our spirits are sometimes called souls (see Alma 40:15–18; Abraham 3:23).

“A FRIEND MAKES IT EASIER FOR US TO LIVE THE GOSPEL BY BEING AROUND HIM. SIMILARLY, A TRUE FRIEND DOES NOT MAKE US CHOOSE BETWEEN HIS WAY AND THE LORD’S WAY. A TRUE FRIEND WILL HELP US RETURN WITH HONOR.”

—Elder Robert D. Hales, “The Aaronic Priesthood: Return with Honor,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 40.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE WILTON WARD, ELK GROVE CALIFORNIA STAKE

CAN YOU CROCHET?

Recently, the Young Women organization of the Wilton Ward, Elk Grove California Stake, decided to join forces with the Relief Society sisters in their ward and learn to crochet items for those in need and for patrons of the Sacramento

California Temple.

The project helped the young women develop in three different areas: they learned a new skill, they got to know some of the Relief Society sisters better, and some of them even extended the activity into one of their Personal Progress projects.

“I had a lot of fun learning to crochet with my friends,” said Stephany Mayer. “Since then I’ve been able to make gifts for Relief Society sisters and babies in the ward. I have also learned to make other crochet items like sweaters and tablecloths.”

Called to Serve

“Called to Serve” (*Hymns*, no. 249) was the very last song to be put in the 1985 hymnal. At first, it wasn’t scheduled to be included because it was written as a children’s song. Then in April 1985, at a meeting on Temple Square attended by General Authorities,



regional representatives, and mission presidents, more than 100 missionaries from the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, marched into the Assembly Hall singing this song. The experience was electrifying and secured a place for “Called to Serve” among our best-loved hymns.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT REIER

"I KNOW WHAT I KNOW!"



BY ELDER MONTE J. BROUGH
Of the Seventy



*How can one say, "I know?"
Because the Lord has told us
we can be certain.*

When I was just a small boy, my mother was elected to be the treasurer of Rich County. She had no babysitter, so I often spent time in her office. The office had a huge walk-in vault that had been out of use for many years. One day while playing in the office, I learned how to open the vault. I mentioned to my mother that I had operated the vault. She didn't give my achievement much thought.

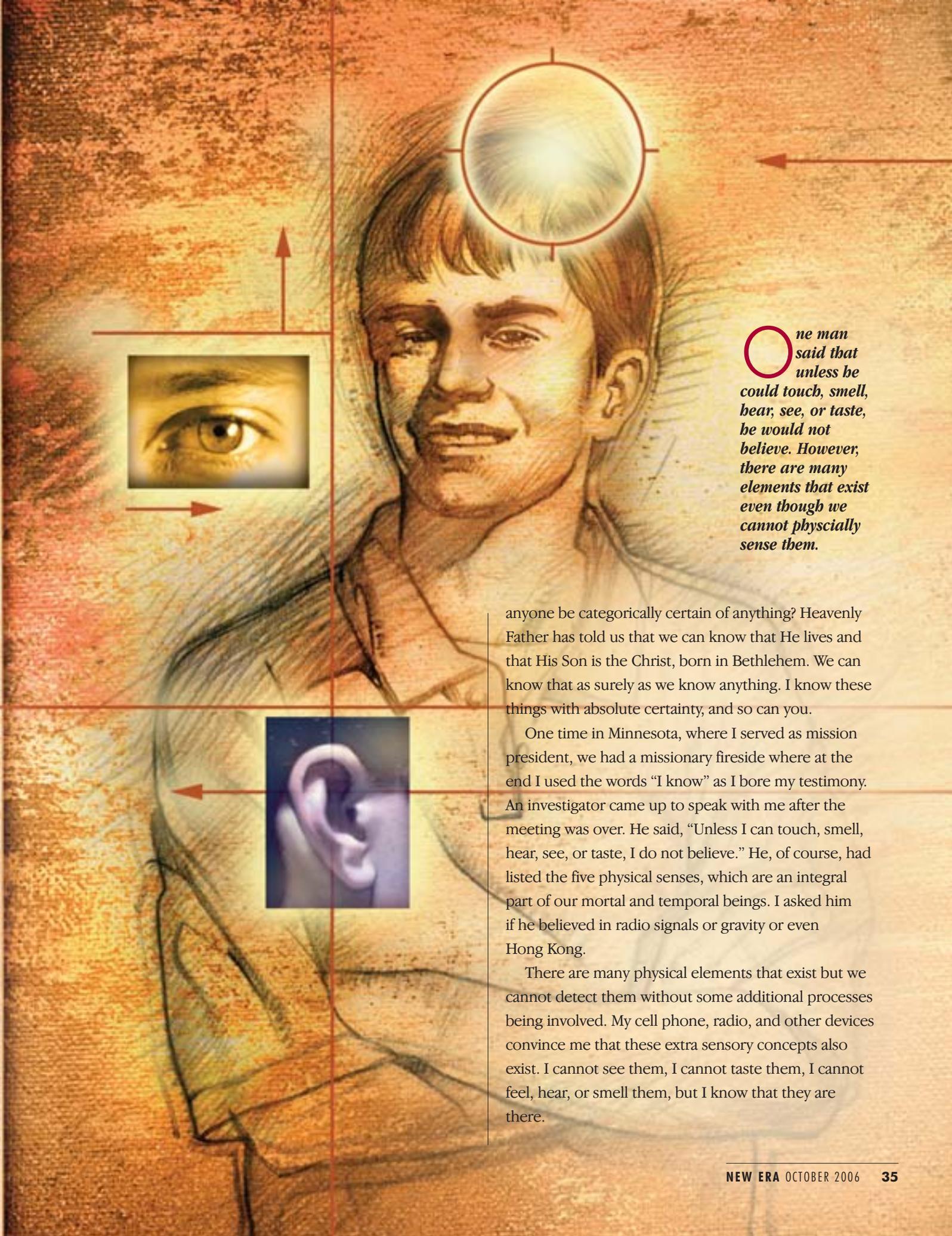
Years later, my younger brother and his friend accompanied mother to the office as I had years before. In the course of the day, the two little boys locked themselves in the vault. My mother discovered the accident but could not open the vault. Soon, men with cutting torches, drills, and the other equipment were trying to open the vault in which the two little boys were entrapped. It

was airtight, with only enough oxygen to last the two boys for a couple of hours. The vault stood up for its designed purpose to resist any kind of forced entry. It was impenetrable. In desperation, mom went into another room to kneel in prayer. During her prayer the brief incident of years ago when I mentioned I knew how to open the vault came into her mind. She quickly ran out of the building and up to my school to find me.

We both ran back to the county building, making our way through the many observers and uniformed rescuers to the vault. We prayed to remember the combination, which came back to me to allow me to open the door. All the workers clapped their hands when the huge vault door finally came open.

I know that my mother's ability to remember that brief incident which happened many years previously, came from God. I know that He helped me remember the combination to the locked safe.

But how can one say, "I know?" How can



One man said that unless he could touch, smell, hear, see, or taste, he would not believe. However, there are many elements that exist even though we cannot physically sense them.

anyone be categorically certain of anything? Heavenly Father has told us that we can know that He lives and that His Son is the Christ, born in Bethlehem. We can know that as surely as we know anything. I know these things with absolute certainty, and so can you.

One time in Minnesota, where I served as mission president, we had a missionary fireside where at the end I used the words "I know" as I bore my testimony. An investigator came up to speak with me after the meeting was over. He said, "Unless I can touch, smell, hear, see, or taste, I do not believe." He, of course, had listed the five physical senses, which are an integral part of our mortal and temporal beings. I asked him if he believed in radio signals or gravity or even Hong Kong.

There are many physical elements that exist but we cannot detect them without some additional processes being involved. My cell phone, radio, and other devices convince me that these extra sensory concepts also exist. I cannot see them, I cannot taste them, I cannot feel, hear, or smell them, but I know that they are there.

Our physical senses are unlikely, by themselves, to produce the ability to say “I know!” But there are “spiritual” senses to guide us, senses like understanding and perception.

How Does One Come to Know?

Let us first examine the sense of hearing. For example, I picked up the phone one day to hear a voice say, “Would you hold the phone a moment? President Kimball would like to speak to you.” After extending a call to serve as a mission president, he asked that

I keep the call confidential until it appeared in the *Church News*. I anxiously waited for the

news. Three or four weeks passed without any confirmation of the telephone conversation. I honestly began to wonder if I had actually heard the prophet’s voice. Without some verification, I learned, I did not completely trust my hearing.

What about seeing? Just observe a basketball game and see how the referee and the players see so very differently. It continues to amaze me how two people can observe an event and yet see it in a very different fashion. How many times have I thought I saw something only to have others see it differently. You can’t trust your sight.

I have come to believe that our physical senses, while very powerful, are very inadequate and really not trustworthy. The Lord confirmed this idea of unreliable senses when He explained why He used parables:

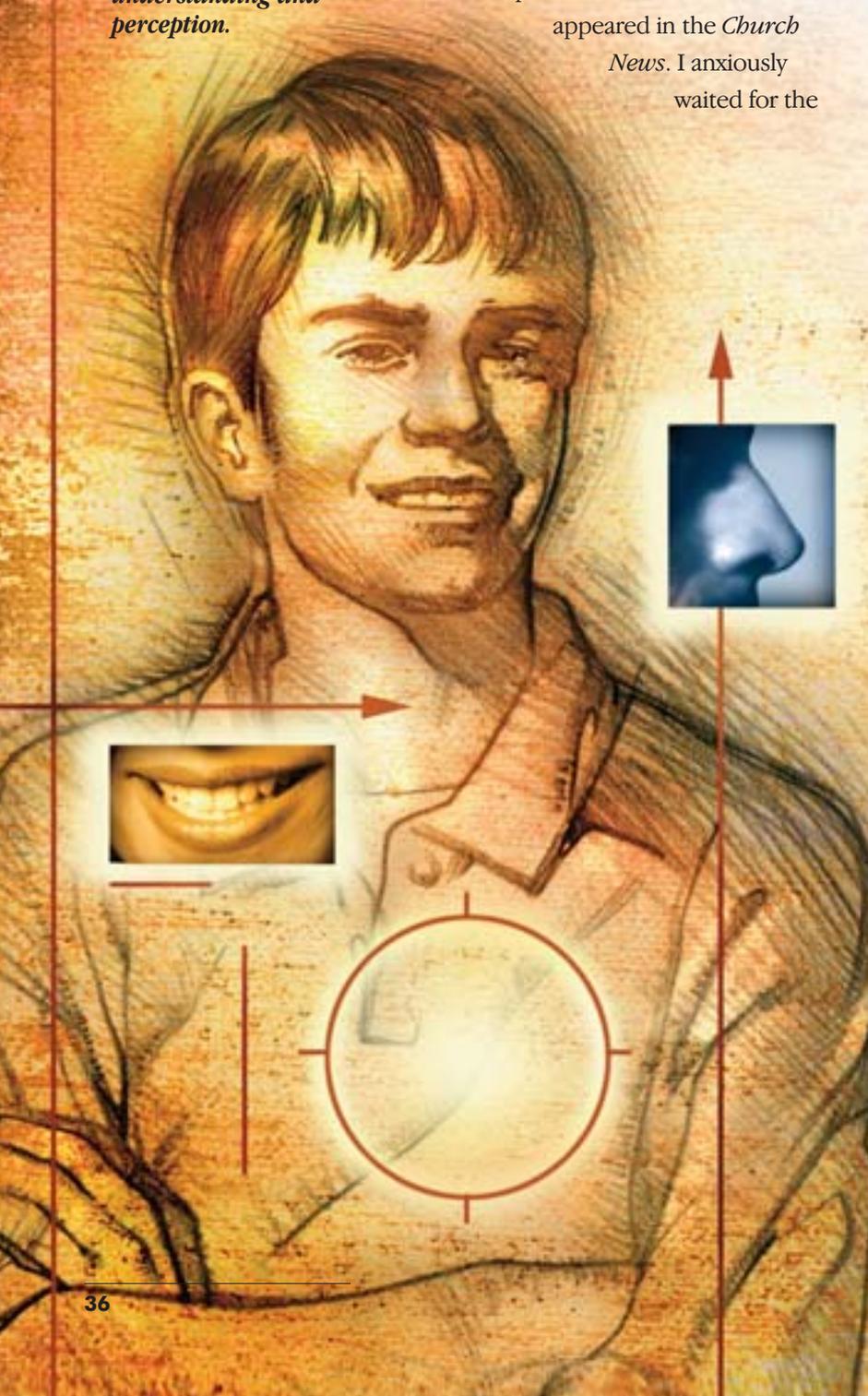
“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

“And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive” (Matthew 13:13–14).

By now it should be clear that the accumulation of information from our five physical senses is very unlikely, by themselves, to produce the ability to say “I know!” But there are what I will call “spiritual” senses. These are senses that we can take with us when we leave this mortal existence. The development and use of the several categories of spiritual sense are also called “principles of intelligence” (see D&C 130:18–19).

The Spiritual Sense of Understanding

In explaining His use of parables, Jesus identifies two spiritual senses: understanding



and perception. Perception is part of understanding, but reinforces the nature of the sense of understanding. We can see but see not, hear but hear not because of the absence of understanding and perception.

The words *perception* and *discernment* are very similar. Discernment is the ability to comprehend that which might be hidden or obscure. It is a spiritual sense that is a very important element in the whole concept of agency. The development of our spiritual senses is an important part of our ability to function as a human being.

I first became aware of this sense when I was on my first mission some 43 years ago. I recall being interviewed by my mission president. I had the distinct impression that he could look right into my soul. Seventeen years later, while I was serving as a mission president, I came to know that he could. I often had the experience of knowing more about a missionary than he or she ever thought I did.

Another spiritual sense closely related to understanding is that of wisdom. Wisdom is the accumulation of understanding, learning, and experience that occurs over a lifetime. We can pray for understanding and wisdom, and the prayer would please the Lord (see 1 Kings 3:9–12).

Emotion as a Spiritual Witness

Emotion is also a spiritual sense. Emotion in all of its expressions is an important and pervasive part of our spiritual being.

One of my outstanding missionaries once suggested that he didn't think he had a testimony, because he never cried or felt tears as others did while expressing their testimony. He had great feelings but could never cry. I asked him what time he got up.

"6:00 a.m.," he replied.

Did he study as outlined?

"Yes," he explained.

Was he out the door doing his missionary work?

"Yes."

I explained that I deeply believed in his testimony because of his actions. He was developing the qualities of understanding and experience by the manner in which he was conducting his life.

There are other spiritual manifestations, besides tears, that affect the mortal person, such as a "burning" heart.

The men on the road to Damascus "said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

Oliver Cowdery was taught, "You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right" (D&C 9:8).

The Gift of Peace

To feel that something is right brings peace—a confirmation from the Holy Ghost that something is true. So, we return to our basic question, "How do I know?"

Knowledge is gained in a multitude of ways. Apparently, the plan of mortality is such that some experience with a physical body is required. We learn from pain, sickness, time, and age. These lessons are only available through experience with the physical senses. After that, the Lord asks two questions: "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:23).

The Christ confirmed the final spiritual gift as He declared: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

No more certain knowledge can come to you than that bestowed by God through the witness of the Holy Ghost.

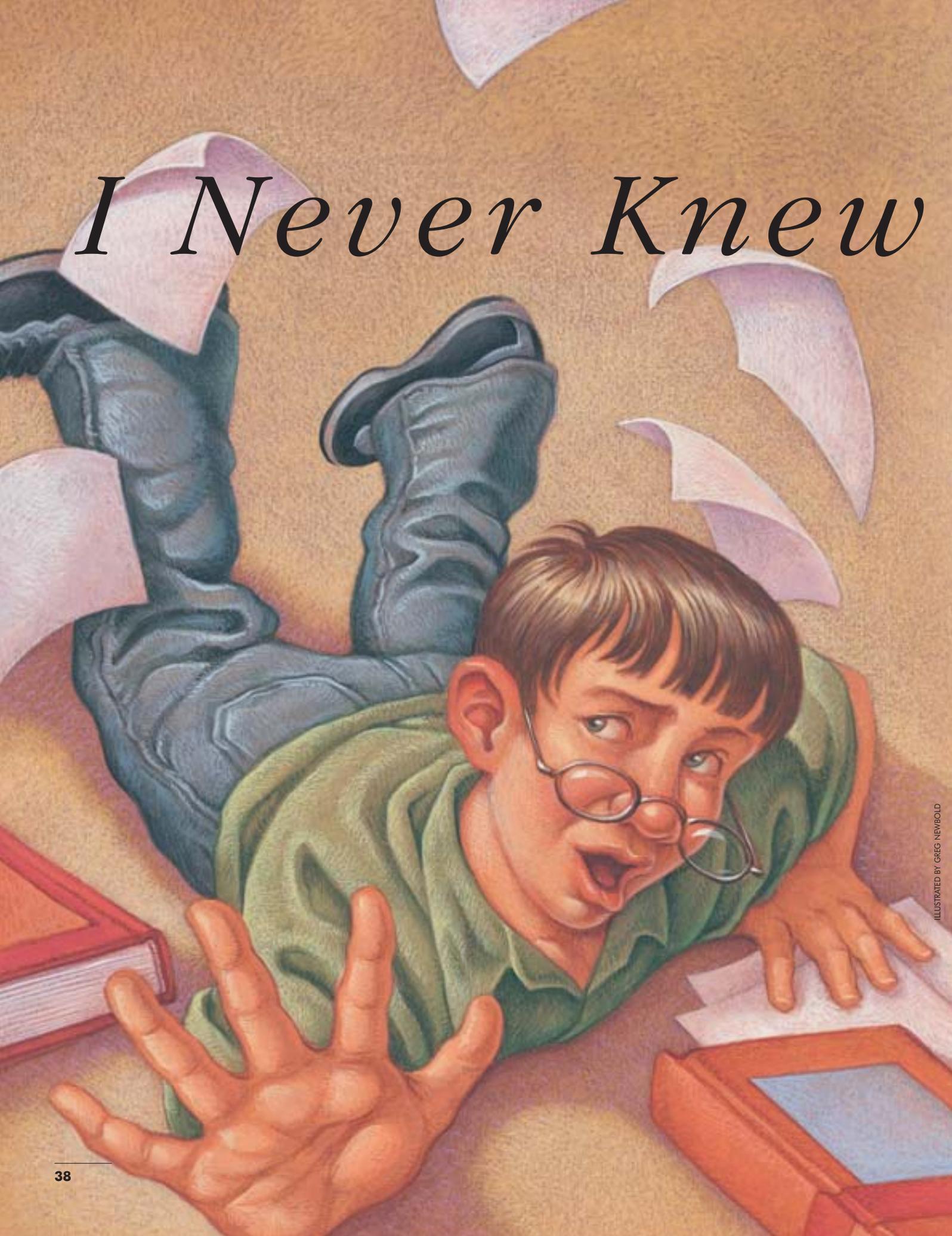
Love and Knowledge

Finally, the peace that knowledge of the things of God brings begets love for Him and for His children.

I love my wife. How do I know that I love her? I just know. I love many people, but with a different type of love. I love God. I love His Son. I love His Church. I know that I love them. I have felt the burning in my bosom. I have heard the "still small voice," and I have a collection of physical and spiritual senses that all point to a complete and comprehensive conclusion: I know what I know! **NE**

From an address given at Brigham Young University on May 18, 2004.

I Never Knew



ILLUSTRATED BY GREG NEWBOLD

HER NAME

BY CODY CLARK

She could have walked right on by me, but instead she did something to help.

The year after I turned 12, several things changed in my life. I was ordained a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood. I was old enough to join the Boy Scout troop in our ward. And I moved up from elementary school to junior high school.

Just beginning the seventh grade brought many new experiences. I rode a bus to school every day. I had seven teachers instead of one. I put my backpack, lunch sack, and jacket in a locker each morning—no more coat hooks or cubbyholes. And I had different books and papers for every class.

I was especially proud of the three-ring binder that had reams of blue-ruled notepaper and folders for each subject. By the time the first few weeks of school had gone by, each folder was thick with homework assignments, handouts, and other school papers.

Going to school with eighth- and ninth-grade students was one of the biggest changes of all. I often felt small and unnoticed as I hurried down the halls, dodging classmates and strangers who seemed much more confident than I ever felt.

In several of my classes, I sat with students who were two and even three years older than I was. My first-year Spanish class had students from all

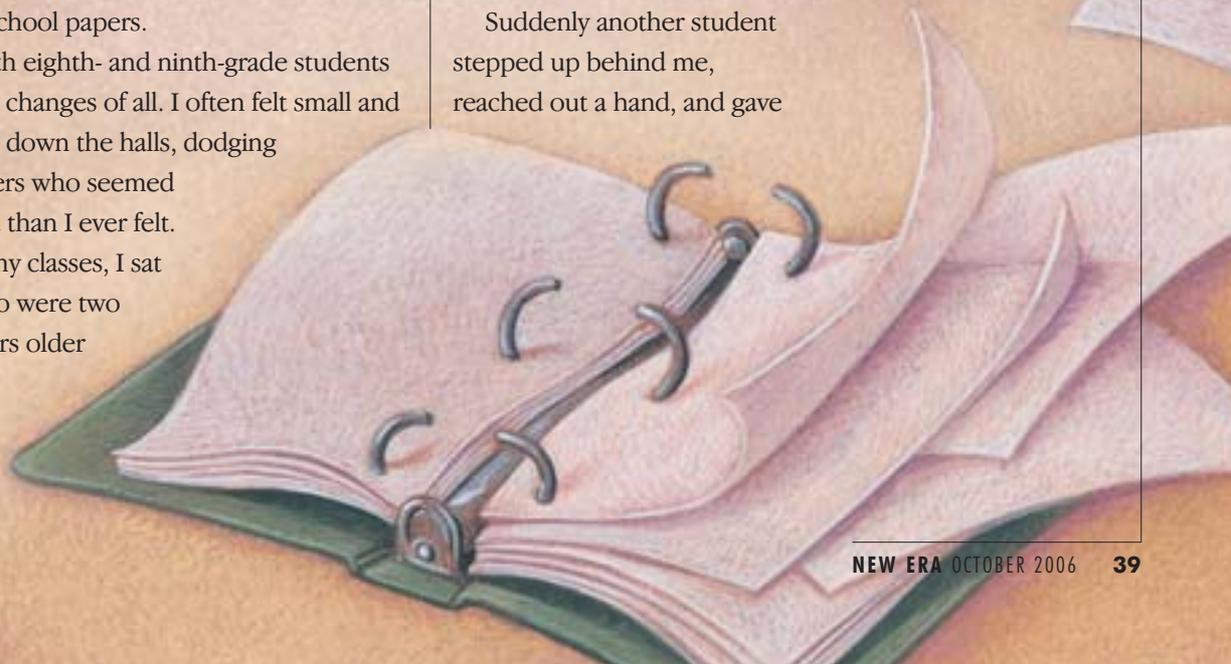
three grade levels: seventh, eighth, and ninth. One boy, a ninth-grader named Jared, was tall, liked to talk, and frequently said things that made the students and even our teacher, Mr. Bishop, laugh.

I wanted to do that, too, but there were so many new things all around me that I often felt shy and usually stayed quiet. I was not small, but many of my fellow seventh graders were bigger than I was, and all my friends from elementary had lunch at a different hour.

One thing that made it difficult for me to adjust and make new friends was that during this first year I endured my share of rough pranks that junior high school students often play. I remember one in particular.

I was walking by the school's main office between classes, in an area where dozens of students were hurrying past in both directions. I had my usual armload of books, including my three-ring binder, nestled against my hip.

Suddenly another student stepped up behind me, reached out a hand, and gave





“Kindness is how a Christlike person treats others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes.”

—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 26.

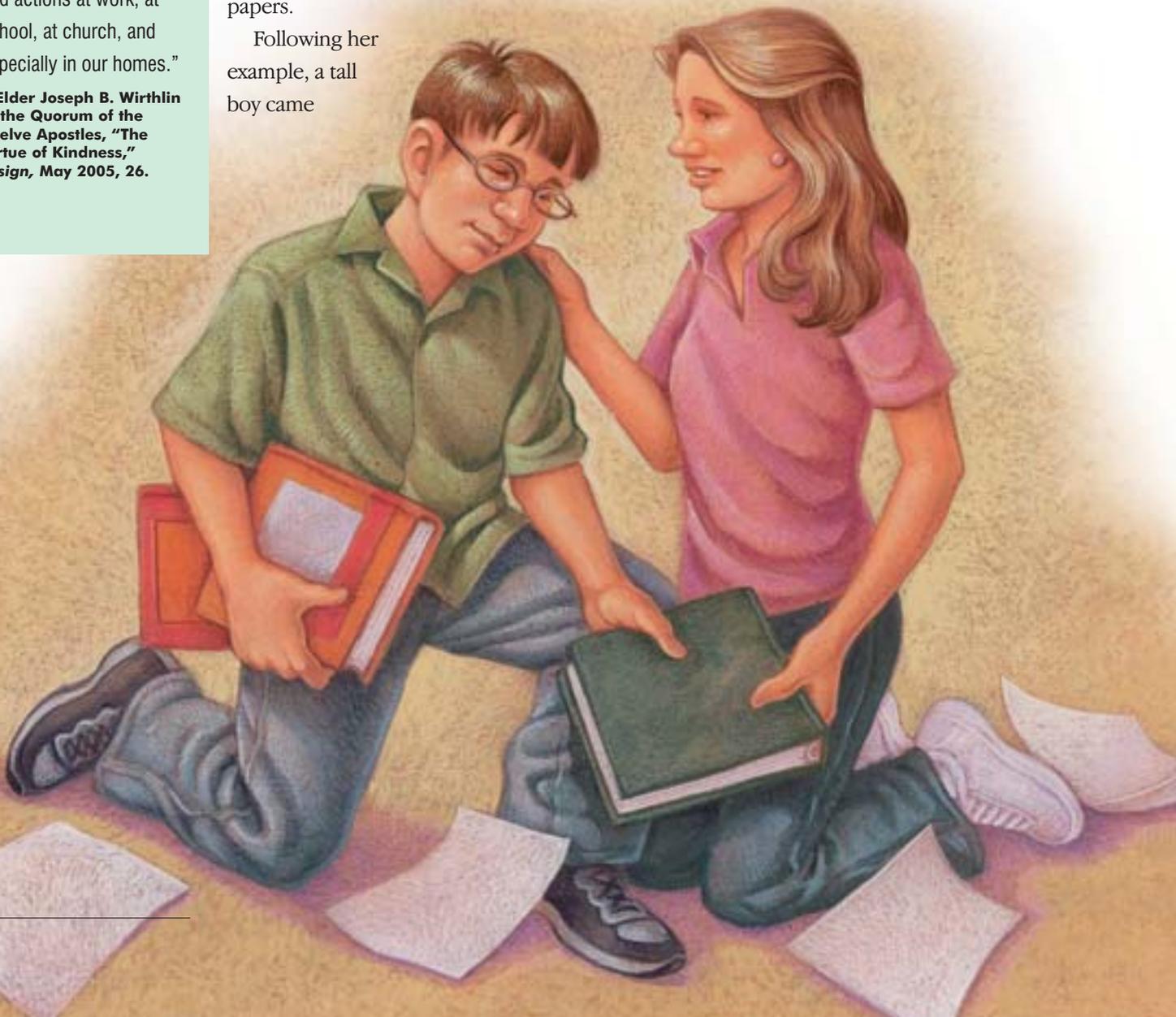
the books a hard flip. They flew out of my grasp and slid across the floor ahead of me. When the binder landed, it snapped open and folders and papers went spinning everywhere.

It was hard not to cry as I got down on my hands and knees and tried to scoop everything up as quickly as I could. I felt certain everyone was watching me, which only made me feel worse. Then a ninth-grade girl knelt down beside me and asked if I was okay. She smiled, squeezed my arm, and started to help me gather my books and papers.

Following her example, a tall boy came

over and asked me if I'd seen who had knocked my books out of my arms. It was Jared from first-year Spanish, and he too knelt down to help.

I never learned the ninth-grade girl's name, but I've never forgotten her kindness. Her actions reminded me of the Book of Mormon story of King Benjamin, who taught his people to always treat each other with love. And like Ammon, the great Book of Mormon missionary, this unknown friend of mine set an example by her actions that others followed. **NE**



THE EXTRA SMILE



“But other than *that*, I mean. Did you have a good time?”

“No, these are not costumes. We really are Mormon missionaries.”

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

ERIC LEACH



RYAN STOKER

Worth It!

BY VERONICA GARCIA WALKER

There are some special people in your future who are hoping you will do what is right. Their futures may depend on what you do today.

I joined the Church when I was 16 years old. My parents gave me permission, but they did not join with me. On the day of my baptism, my mother told me I could still “get out of it” if I wanted to. But I did not want to get out of it; I wanted to get into it and start my new life. I knew the gospel was true.

Not having my family at church with me, I often felt lonely on Sundays. But it helped when people from the ward would take me to church and sit by me. It also helped to have a calling. When I was called to teach the three-year-olds, I felt much more a part of my ward family.

I didn’t want my baptism to affect my family’s unity. Still, things at home were not always as I wished them to be. My family would do heavy work on Sunday and chide me for not participating. They told me I was lazy. I said I was trying to honor the Sabbath. My family liked to eat out on Sunday, and now I would not go. They said I was tearing apart our family, but I was just trying to live the commandments.

What kept me going was the Spirit of the Lord. I really felt it in my life. I felt it when I bore my testimony, when I read my scriptures, and when I prayed. These were all things I learned to do from my teachers at church. I listened very hard and tried to learn the things that would improve my life.

But I often felt out of place at church because I was

learning so many new things. I bought some new long skirts to replace my short ones. When I wore them to church, I found out they were still too short to meet Church standards. I didn’t understand what my friends meant when they used Church-related abbreviations. I was too nervous and shy to ask them the meanings of things.

What helped was the teens befriending me and taking time to include me. They seemed to have a natural way of caring for new members. Another thing that helped was visualizing my family in the next life. I never wanted them to be disappointed in me for not living the gospel when I knew it to be true. Even though times were difficult when I was a teenager, I tried to think of the future and my responsibility to my family. If I did not live the gospel, how would my family ever have a chance of accepting it?

Now I am older and married and have teenagers of my own. They are strong in the Church and do not have problems knowing things about the Church that I had to learn from experience. They fit in well and serve in the presidencies in their classes. When I was a teenager I was trying to be a good example for my mom and dad. Unfortunately, they never did join the Church. But I did not realize then that doing what was right was crucial to teenagers I would meet later in my life, who became dearer to me than life itself—my own children.

What you choose today will affect the people who are in your life now. But there are also some special people in your future who are hoping you will do what is right. Their futures may depend on your choosing what is right today. No matter how awkward others may make you feel for making right choices, in the end it will all be worth it. **NE**

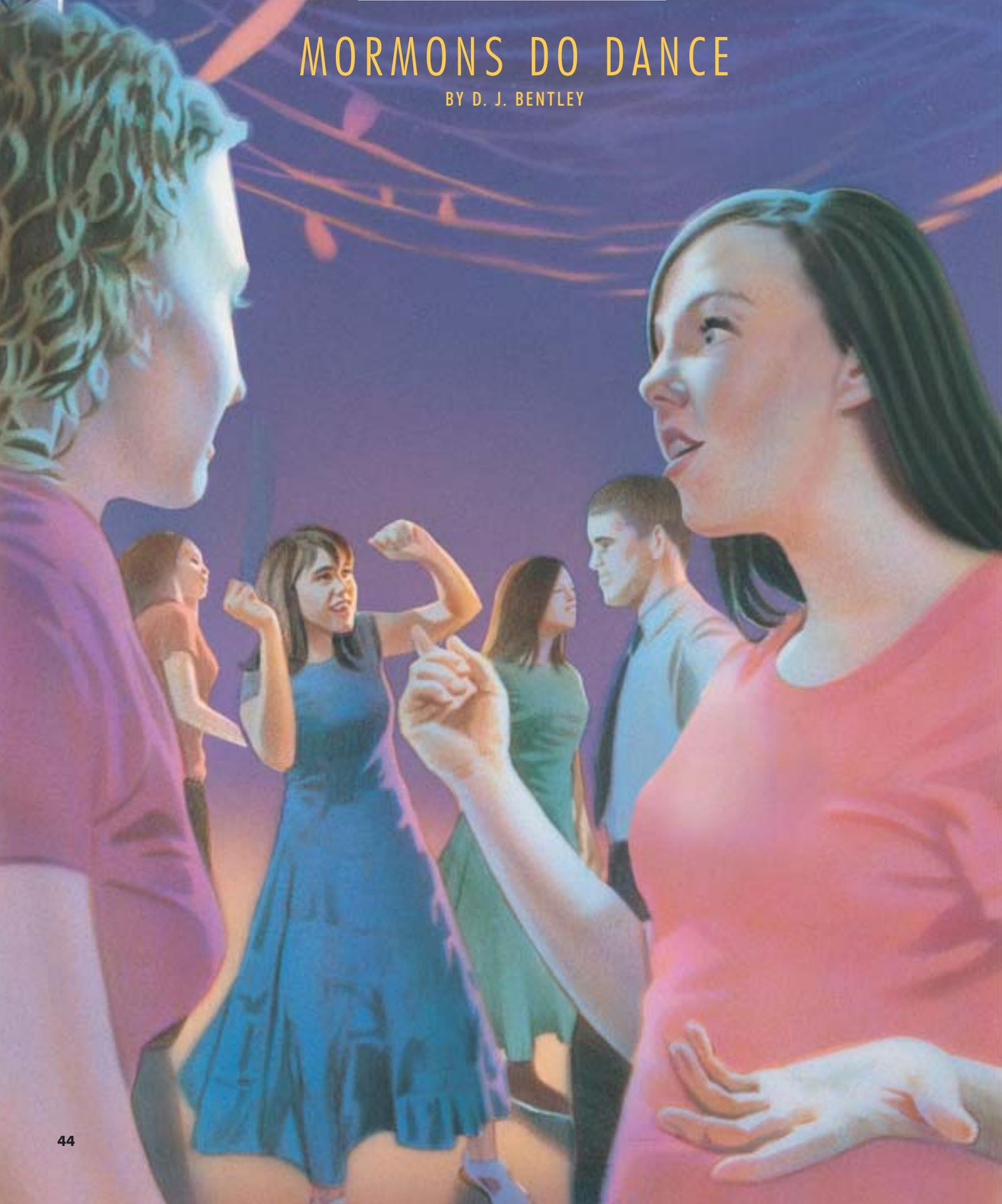




INSTANT MESSAGES

MORMONS DO DANCE

BY D. J. BENTLEY



MY PERSONAL PROGRESS

BY NAKAIYA PHARELLE HUDSON

I wandered through the crowd at my California high school. I'd just finished taking my geometry final, and I was trying to clear my head of angles and parallelograms to get ready for the Spanish final that was coming up next. My overtaxed brain was just starting to conjugate a particularly tough verb when three students I didn't recognize walked up beside me.

"If you're going to be a Mormon, why not be a good one?" one girl spat out.

"What?" I answered timidly.

"We saw you at the dance on Friday!" the girl retorted.

I quickly scanned my memory trying to figure out what I had done to convince them I wasn't a good Mormon. I had been at the school dance last Friday. I had worn a dress that was stylish but modest. I was with a group of friends, and we had danced and had a nice time and gone home.

"So?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Mormons don't dance!" another student accused.

I had to chuckle as my mind's eye surveyed my bedroom at home. At that very moment my bed was piled high with yards and yards of pink taffeta fabric. I was in the midst of sewing my ball gown for a dance festival in Salt Lake City. Ten thousand youth from all over the country would be gathering for the event. Of course Mormons dance!

I happily told them of the event and also told them about the great stake dances that were held every month at the church with up-to-date music, and no smoking, alcohol, or drugs to interfere with the fun. I even told them how

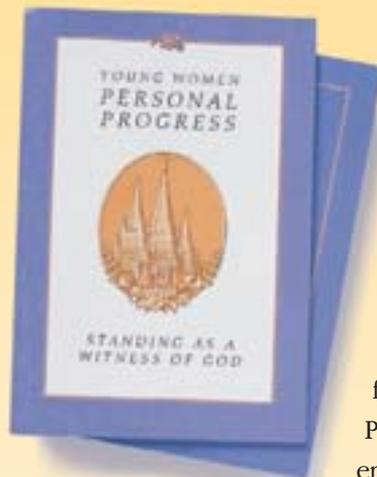
During my first few years in Young Women, I was at a stage in my life where everything seemed confusing and hard to deal with. I had lost hope in the dreams and goals I had for my future. My vision became clouded by the many temptations and pressures of the world. While I was going through these trials I knew that my best source of strength was the Lord.

Knowing this, I decided to make Personal Progress a top priority in my life. In doing so I have received many wonderful blessings and have come to understand that only through help-

Brigham Young instructed the pioneers to pull out their fiddles and organize dances from time to time when the wagons were pulled into a circle at night while crossing the plains. I told them that members of the Church like to enjoy life and that dancing can be a natural part of that.

Three stunned accusers now stood with their mouths open. I invited them to the next stake dance and told them how to get there. One pulled out his notebook and took down directions.

The anger on their faces had been replaced by understanding smiles. As they walked away, my mind went back to my seminary lesson from that



ing and serving others can we find true happiness.

I completed the Personal Progress program at age 14. I'm so grateful for the experiences I gained from putting Personal Progress first in my life. I encourage Young Women all over the world to work on Personal Progress. It is an inspired program from God.

The Personal Progress program has brought me closer to the Spirit, and I have received great comfort, peace, and assurance in times of need. I have gained a greater love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and my testimony has grown stronger. **NE**

morning. It was from Matthew 5:16—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Wow, it was true! I realized that for good or bad, I am an example to the world around me of what members of the Church say and do. My experience proved that people were watching me and judging the Church by my actions. Before I headed to my Spanish final, I said a silent prayer of thanks to Heavenly Father for His help in that discussion and asked for the strength and conviction to always be a good representative of His Church. **NE**

FAITH IN HIS PLAN

BY MIKE GORDON

Over the past year my best friend has been struggling with leukemia. He had to stay in the hospital for many months and had to undergo chemotherapy. I have prayed for him every night and have been able to see him make progress. Throughout this difficult time, I have grown to know that Heavenly Father is there for us, and He loves all his children. I know that He wants us all to return to live with Him someday and that He wants us all to be happy.

When I think about my friend's illness too much, I start to worry about the future. But when I think of Heavenly Father's love for all of us, the pain goes away. I have come to know that I can always turn to Heavenly Father in prayer and that He will be there.

When my friend had a relapse and his cancer returned, I wondered if all of our faith and prayers were in vain.

But I soon turned to the Lord for comfort and realized that no matter what happens, Heavenly Father loves my friend and will look after him. I just have to have faith in His plan. **NE**

HUM THE RIGHT

BY DANIEL PETT

My favorite hymn is "Choose the Right" (*Hymns*, 239). Whenever I feel tempted to do something wrong, or I'm in a bad mood and feel alone, I simply hum this song to myself and think about what God would want me to do.

I love music. It relaxes my soul whenever I am tense or stressed. I know that our Father in Heaven has inspired good music. I feel that everyone should have an uplifting song that they can use when life gets tough. I know that a righteous song is a prayer to God, and He will bless us (see D&C 25:12). **NE**

INSTANT MESSAGES features personal experiences, insights into favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for Instant Messages, please send it to

*New Era, Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA*

*Or e-mail it to
newera@ldschurch.org*

Please limit submissions to 400 words or less. They may be edited for length and clarity.

Mutual Activity Ideas

- Have an activity where members of the ward can introduce the youth to different careers. Under the direction of the bishop and your youth leaders, invite several ward members to present some interesting facts or demonstrations about their careers, combined with some advice on educational courses that would help in their chosen fields.
- As classes or quorums, read the article “Call Brett Now,” on page 28. Make a plan to call or contact each member of the class or quorum about Church meetings or activities. Include a plan for providing rides for those that need them.

Personal Progress or Duty to God

- In an inexpensive notebook or on a piece of paper, record how you use your time each day for two weeks.

Evaluate your choices and what you would like to change. Set some goals for using your time more wisely.

Family Home Evening Idea

- Refer to the article, “To Run and Not be Weary,” on page 18. Read the Word of Wisdom in D&C 89, and talk about what kinds of exercise would improve the health of your family. Take a walk or jog together. Ride your bicycles, or play an active, outdoor game.



SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 44–46.

Young Women Manual 1

Lesson 44: Using Time Wisely

Chris Crowe, “The Art of Juggling,” *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 26.

Poster: “Procrastination,” *New Era*, June 2006, 17.

To the Point: “Am I expected to read each book of scripture daily?” *New Era*, Aug. 2006, 30.

Lesson 45: The Value of Work

Gordon B. Hinckley, “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *New Era*, July 2000, 4.

Brett M. Condon, “Murmuring and Mowing,” *New Era*, July 2004, 8.

Lesson 46: The Purpose and Value of Education

Roy D. Atkin, “I Wouldn’t Cheat,” *New Era*, this issue, 22.

Paul VanDenBerghe, “Michael Knows,” *New Era*, May 2006, 20.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 1

Lesson 44: Becoming a Better Home Teacher

Thomas S. Monson, “Home Teaching—A Divine Service,” *New Era*, Nov. 1998, 4.

“A Home Teacher to the Prophet,” *New Era*, May 2005, 23.

Lesson 45: The Sacred Power of Procreation

Jeffrey R. Holland, “Personal Purity,” *New Era*, Feb. 2000, 4.

To the Point: “How do I know when what I’m feeling is love or lust?” *New Era*, Aug. 2006, 30.

Matthew and Janine Clarke, “Why Date?” *New Era*, Aug. 2006, 38.

Lesson 46: Decision Making

Wayne S. Peterson, “Decide Who You’ll Be,” *New Era*, May 2006, 40.

John H. Groberg, “Choose a Bright Future,” *New Era*, Sept. 2006, 38.

LAUGHTER NEVER CAME

In the May 2006 issue there was a story called "The Laughter Never Came." One of my dear friends isn't a Latter-day Saint. A lot of the time I won't mention the Church because I'm afraid that he may laugh at me because he has been known to laugh at some things that we believe in. When I read that article a blanket of peace came over me. It helped me not to be afraid of the laughing. Sometimes the Lord keeps the laughter away, and other times laughter and mocking falls as rain, but we shouldn't let it bother us. As it states in the Doctrine and Covenants, we need to "arise and shine forth" (115:5).

Heidi H., Idaho

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Thank you so much for the inspirational articles in the *New Era*. It always has an answer to a question I've been having in my life. It helps me so much. I can't wait for the next month's question to be answered! I also have a question that could be put in the magazine: what are some ways to help less-active members become more active whether we are in a class presidency or not?

Lori T., Arizona

ABOUT THE MILITARY

Thank you so much for including the story "From Mission to Military" in the June 2006 issue. I have always wanted to join the Army. This article was my personal favorite because it taught me how important serving a mission is and how it affects you in the future and with others. I know the mental and physical effects of war are difficult. But by going to church every Sunday and reading the Book of Mormon, I know the Lord will help me in hard times.

Daniel W., Michigan

AM I ON TRACK?

I love reading the *New Era*. It makes me feel like I am doing the right things in my life! Just recently I read the article "Right on Track" in the June 2006 *New Era*.

It made me realize the true meaning of family and why it's important to support and love each other. That's the secret of getting along. I took that advice and have tried extra hard to get along with my sister. Thank you for taking the time to publish each article! I love everything about the *New Era*.

Samantha A., Idaho

After receiving the June 2006 *New Era*, my family and I were not pleased with the cover story. Most young women and young men cannot afford to do that chosen activity. Doesn't the Church say to live within your means? What about those who don't have access to cars or even car races? Why not choose a story about family togetherness that most everyone can relate to?

Brittany P., Texas

Editor's note: The point of "Right on Track" was to encourage readers to spend more time with their family. We would love to hear about additional experiences with family togetherness, and we regret any misunderstandings this story might have caused.

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

*New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA*

Or e-mail us at

newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.



"The New Era . . . always has an answer to a question I've been having in my life."



SEASONAL TRAFFIC
BY TERESA BATEMAN

Autumn leaves wave red
Warning summer to stop and
Let winter speed past.



*“We talk about waves we’ve caught
and places we’re going to travel to,
where we would like to go on a mission or
where they’ve been on their missions.”*

See “Time to Listen,” p. 24.