

A photograph of three young people in a recording studio. On the left, a young woman with brown hair, wearing a dark blue polo shirt and large black headphones, has her mouth open as if singing or speaking into a vintage-style silver microphone. In the center, a young man with short brown hair, wearing a dark polo shirt with light blue and white horizontal stripes, is smiling and looking towards the microphone. On the right, another young woman with brown hair, wearing a pink top and large black headphones, is also smiling and looking towards the microphone. A circular pop filter is positioned in front of the microphone. The background is dark, and the overall lighting is warm and focused on the subjects.

THE New Era

JANUARY

2009

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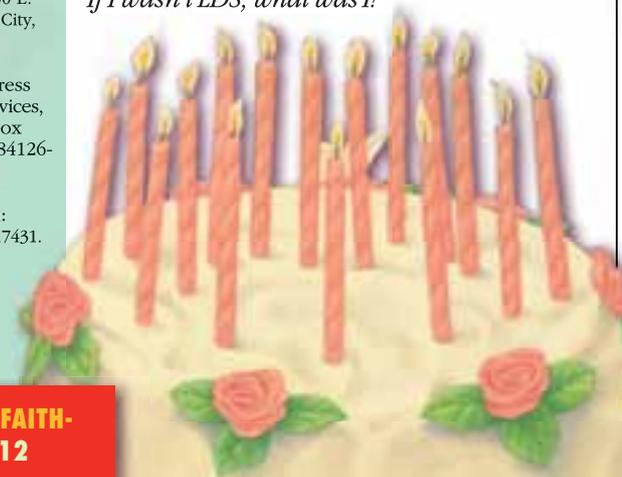
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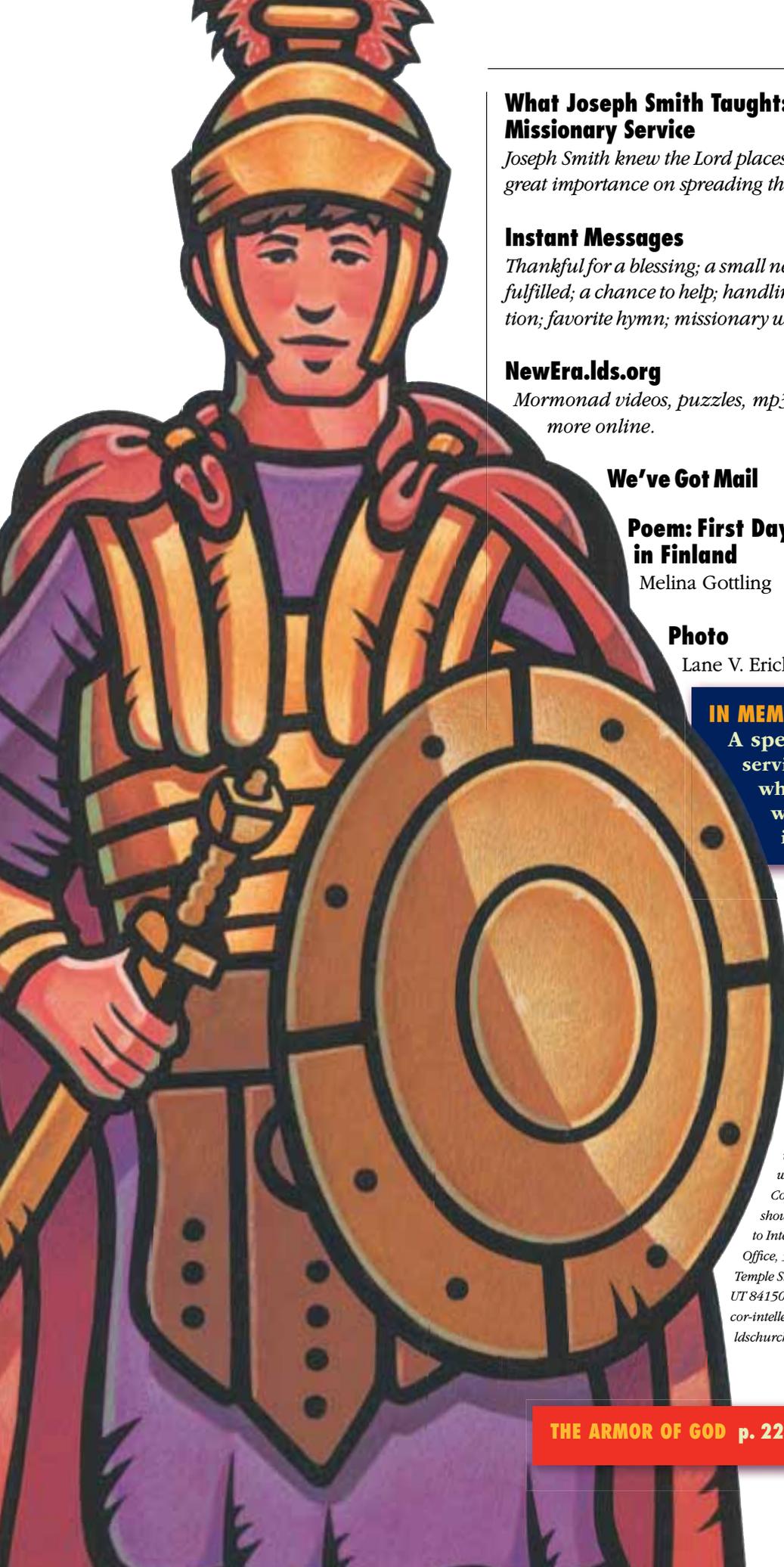
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IN MEMORIAM

A special insert on the life and service of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, who passed away on Dec. 1, 2008, will be included in next month's issue of the magazine.

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Cover: Music in the Gibbons family comes second. See "More Than Music," p. 16.

*Cover photography:
Hillary Holbrook (front) and
Richard M. Romney (back)*

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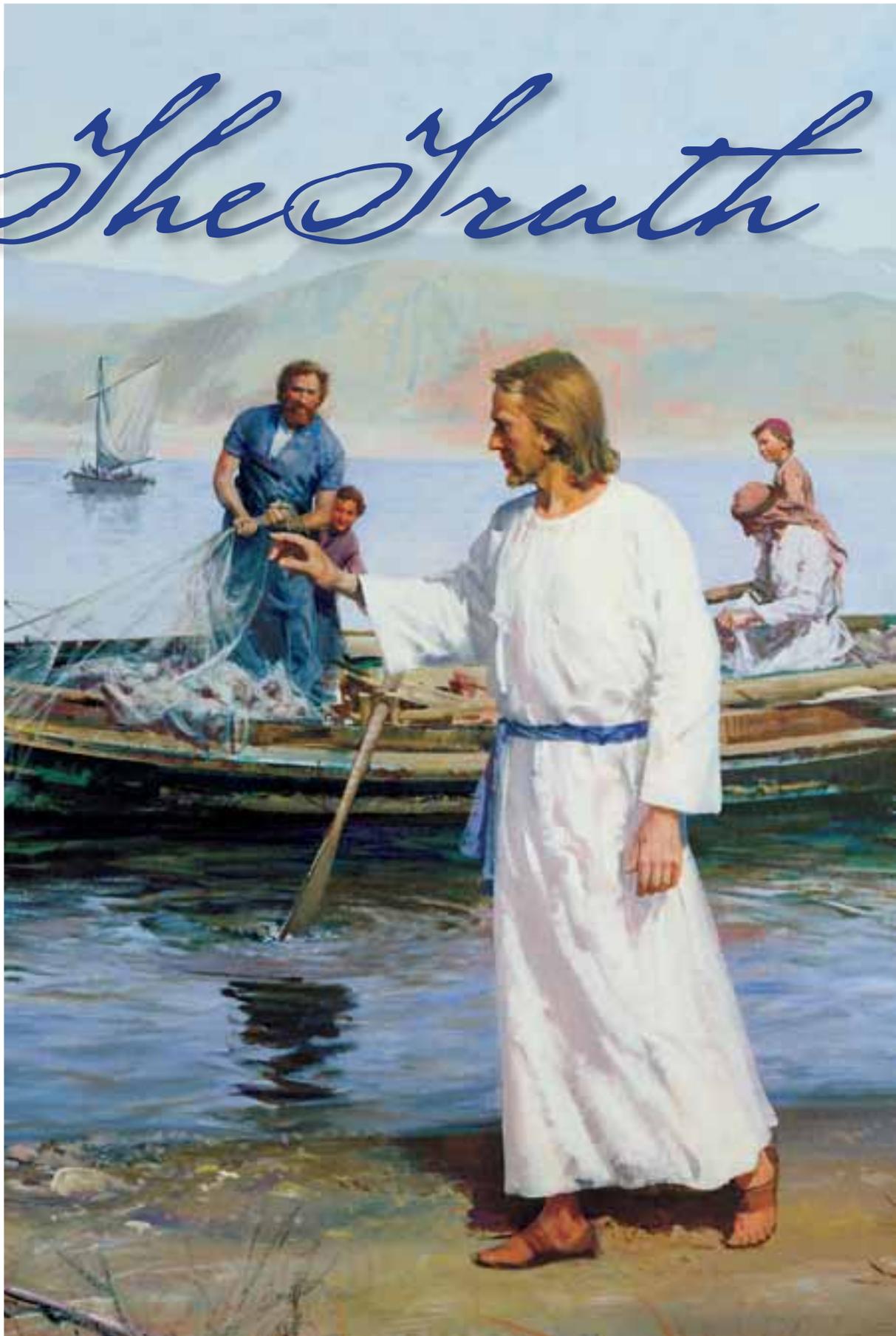
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The Truth

One of the most important accomplishments of the Savior was the establishment of His Church upon the earth.



IS ON THE EARTH ONCE MORE

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

The mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was comparatively brief. He lived only thirty-three years, and His ministry was only three years. But in those three years He taught the human family everything that is necessary to receive all of the blessings our Father in Heaven has in store for His children. He concluded His mortal ministry with the single most compassionate and significant service in the history of the world: the Atonement.

One of the most important accomplishments of the Savior was the establishment of His Church upon the earth. Paul taught that Christ “gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–12).

When Jesus called His twelve Apostles, He laid His hands upon them, ordained them, and conferred upon them the authority to act in His name and govern His church. Peter is commonly understood to have become the chief Apostle, or the President of the Church, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Early Christians endured the challenges of persecution and hardship. Peter and his brethren had a difficult time holding the Church together and keeping the doctrine

pure. They traveled extensively and wrote to one another about the problems they were facing, but information moved so slowly and the Church and its teachings were so new that heading off false teachings before they became firmly entrenched was difficult.

The New Testament indicates that the early Apostles worked hard to preserve the church that Jesus Christ left to their care and keeping, but they knew their efforts would ultimately be in vain. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Saints, who were anxiously anticipating the second coming of Christ, that “that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also warned Timothy that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; . . . And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Eventually, with the known exception of John the Beloved, Peter and his fellow Apostles were martyred. The Apostle John and members of the Church struggled for survival in the face of horrifying oppression. To their everlasting credit, Christianity did survive and was truly a prominent force by the end of the second century A.D. Many valiant Saints were instrumental in helping Christianity to endure.

Despite the significance of the ministries of these Saints, they did not hold the same



As a latter-day Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, my testimony, and the testimony of millions of faithful members of the Church the world over, is that the Church of Jesus Christ has been resored to the earth.

When Jesus called His twelve Apostles, He laid His hands upon them, ordained them, and conferred upon them the authority to act in His name and govern His Church.

apostolic authority that Peter and the other Apostles had received through ordination under the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When that authority was lost, men began looking to other sources for doctrinal understanding. As a result, many plain and precious truths were lost.

History tells us, for example, of a great council held in A.D. 325 in Nicaea. By this time Christianity had emerged from the dank

councils were held later in A.D. 451, 787, and 1545, with similarly divisive results.

The beautiful simplicity of Christ's gospel was under attack from an enemy that was even more destructive than the scourges and the crosses of early Rome: the philosophical meanderings of uninspired men. The doctrine became based more on popular opinion than on revelation. This period of time was called the Dark Ages. They were



The New Testament indicates that the early Apostles worked hard to preserve the church that Jesus Christ left to their care and keeping.

(Far right) Young Joseph looked for answers to his questions in the scriptures. He came upon a simple, direct admonition in the epistle of James.

dungeons of Rome to become the state religion of the Roman Empire, but the church still had problems—chiefly the inability of Christians to agree among themselves on basic points of doctrine. To resolve differences, Emperor Constantine called together a group of Christian bishops to establish once and for all the official doctrines of the church.

Consensus did not come easily. Opinions on such basic subjects as the nature of God were diverse and deeply felt, and debate was spirited. Decisions were not made by inspiration or revelation, but by majority vote, and some disagreeing factions split off and formed new churches. Similar doctrinal

dark largely because the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ had been lost.

Then in 1517, the Spirit moved Martin Luther, a German priest who was disturbed at how far the church had strayed from the gospel as taught by Christ. His work led to a reformation, a movement that was taken up by such other visionaries as John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, John Wesley, and John Smith.

I believe these reformers were inspired to create a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority. Similarly, God inspired the earlier explorers and colonizers of America and the framers of the Constitution of the United States

to develop a land and governing principles to which the gospel could be restored.

By 1820 the world was ready for the “restitution of all things” spoken of by Peter and “all [God’s] holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

At this time religious excitement was sweeping across the countryside in upstate New York. Ministers from different denominations vied zealously for the loyalty of the faithful in villages and towns, including Palmyra, the home of the family of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith.

The Smith family followed this religious excitement, and members of the family were “proselyted” to various faiths. Mother Smith and three of the children—Hyrum, Samuel, and Sophronia—joined one church (see JS—H 1:7), while Father Smith and his eldest son, Alvin, affiliated with another.

When 14-year-old Joseph, Jr., considered which church to join, he investigated each denomination carefully, listening to the respective ministers and trying to sort out the truth. He knew there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5), but which was the one he did not know.

Young Joseph looked for answers to his questions in the scriptures. While reading in the Bible, he came upon a simple, direct admonition 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” (James 1:5).

Joseph reflected: “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know” (JS—H 1:12).

With the simple faith of youth and motivated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Joseph decided to go into a grove of trees near his home and put the promise in James to the test.

On a beautiful, clear spring morning, Joseph retired to the woods. He paused when he arrived at a quiet, secluded spot. He looked around to make sure he was

alone. Then he knelt and began to pray. No sooner had he done so than an overwhelming feeling of darkness swept over him, as if some evil power was trying to dissuade him. Rather than surrender, Joseph intensified his pleas to God—and God Himself responded.

Reading from Joseph’s account:

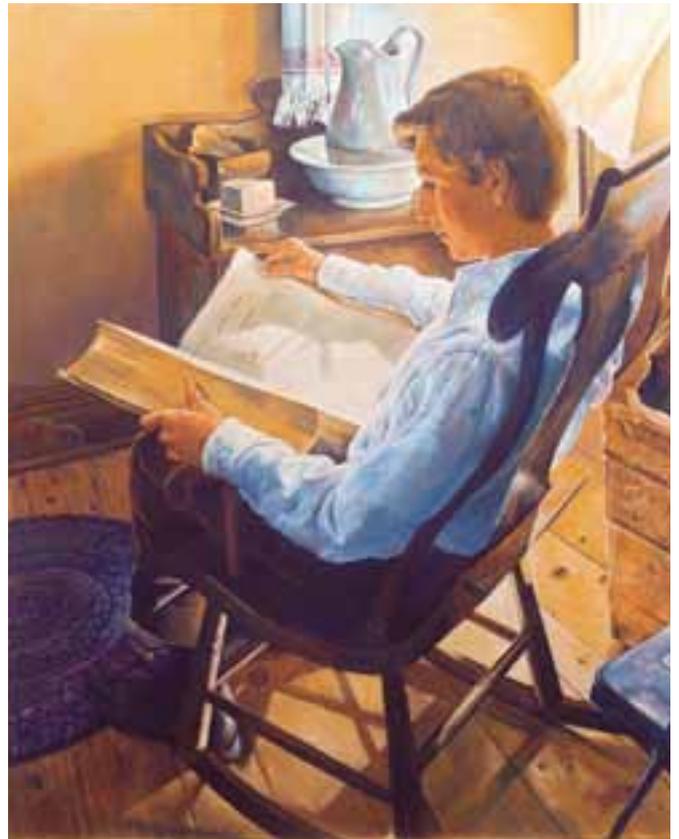
“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .

“When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (JS—H 1:16–17).

I testify those Beings were God, our Heavenly Father, and His resurrected Son, Jesus Christ, in one of the most supernal spiritual manifestations of all time!

They told Joseph he should join none of the existing churches.

Their mission accomplished, the Father and His Son,



The Father and the Son appeared in wondrous vision to young Joseph as a step in the restoring of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth.



Jesus Christ, departed, leaving young Joseph physically drained but spiritually enriched with exciting restored truth. He knew with certainty that God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, are real, for he had seen them. He knew they are two separate, distinct individuals. He knew that no church on the face of the earth had the authority of the priesthood to act in the name of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most important lesson young Joseph learned in the Sacred Grove is this significant eternal truth: the heavens are not sealed. God does communicate with mortals. He loves us today just as much as He loved those who lived anciently. What comfort that sweet assurance provides in a world filled with confusion and discouragement! What peace and security come to the heart that understands that God in heaven knows us and cares about us, individually and collectively, and that He communicates with us, either directly or through His living prophets, according to our needs.

I testify to you that this is true and that the Father and the Son appeared in wondrous vision to young Joseph as a step in the

restoring of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. As a latter-day Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, my testimony, and the testimony of millions of faithful members of the Church the world over, is that what I have told you is true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith and is administered today by a living prophet. These things I know!

This information is valuable to each of us only if we know for ourselves that it is true. Thankfully we have a simple but certain way to know. It requires some effort and sincere prayer. But it is worth it!

In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, an ancient prophet named Moroni gave a significant promise to those who would one day read this sacred book of scripture. His promise applies to every sincere seeker of truth. He wrote:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:4–5).

Moroni urges us to go directly to the Source of Truth for answers to our questions. If we seek Him humbly and sincerely, He will help us discern truth from error. You can know if these things are true by asking God. Listen for His answers; then respond to what you feel. If you will do so, I believe you will come to know as I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s true church upon the earth. **NE**

From an October 1994 general conference address.

MORMONAD

LET IT POUR!

RECOGNIZE THE BLESSINGS THAT ARE
RAINING DOWN ON YOU, AND ENJOY THEM
WITH THANKS. (SEE D&C 105:12.)

“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

An Example of the Believers

BY THE YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN GENERAL PRESIDENCIES

Can the influence of one righteous young man or young woman make a difference in the world? The answer is *yes!*

The Savior Jesus Christ trusts you with His name, which you received at baptism. He trusts you to represent the Church and your family by gratefully living a good life. He asks you to be “an example of the believers,” someone who will draw others to Him, work miracles, and help Him build the kingdom of God on earth.

The 2009 Mutual theme is found in 1 Timothy 4:12, where the Apostle Paul gives advice to his young friend Timothy. What Paul taught Timothy also applies to you today because you, like Timothy, are a believer! “You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day” when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored. You are part of a generation of destiny with “responsibilities of building the kingdom of God.”¹ You can influence

the entire world through the power of your faith and your righteous example. Paul knew that of Timothy, and we know that of you!

President Thomas S. Monson gave excellent counsel on how we can be an “example of the believers.” He said: “Make every decision you contemplate pass this test: What does it do to me? What does it do for me? And let your code of conduct emphasize not, ‘What will others think?’ but rather, ‘What will I think of myself?’ Be influenced by that still, small voice. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head at the time of your confirmation and said, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’ Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice which testifies of truth.”²

Believers have a growing personal testimony of Jesus Christ, they recognize the great blessing of personal testimony, and they desire to share

their knowledge with others. You can share your testimony by your words and your example.

President Monson also taught: “When firmly planted, your testimony . . . will influence all that you do throughout your life. It will help to determine how you spend your time and with whom you choose to associate. It will affect the way you treat your family, how you interact with others. It will bring love, peace, and joy into your life.”³

You live in a world that is competing for your time and attention. You face many pressures and are bombarded with many voices. Sometimes you can become confused about what to do and what is right. Each week you have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament and renew your covenant to “always remember [the Savior] and keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77). When you do this, you show Heavenly Father your



AN INVITATION TO YOUNG WOMEN

willingness to take upon yourself His Son's holy name. Your words and actions show others that you really are keeping your covenants. As you renew and keep your covenants, the Holy Ghost will guide you and "tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

The standards in *For the Strength of Youth* will also strengthen you and help you stand firm as an example. As you live these standards, you will have the guidance and the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Your thoughts and actions will be different from the world's, and your example will influence others. "You will feel good about yourself

Being an "example of the believers" is not easy. It takes daily effort to remember who we are and what believers do. We would like to invite you to do three things every day that can give you strength and help you be an example to your family and friends. As a presidency, we are doing these things—100 percent of the time. Would you be willing to join with us?

First, pray *every day*.

Second, read the Book of Mormon *every day* for at least five minutes.

Third, smile *every day*.

We invite you to smile because you are on the earth at this incredible time when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored. You have been taught by a prophet of God that the good people of the world will be drawn to you to the degree that you "are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways."¹

Think what would happen if thousands of young women like yourself did these three things daily!

Many of life's lasting successes are built on a foundation of doing small



Elaine S. Dalton (center), president; Mary N. Cook (left), first counselor; and Ann M. Dibb, second counselor.

things consistently over a long period of time. These three things are small and simple, but remember, "by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). We know you will discover the blessings of doing these three things daily. And if you forget one day, you can start again the next day.

We testify that if you will pray, read the Book of Mormon, and smile daily, you will be blessed for your efforts and you will be an example of the believers—a young woman who *can* make a difference in the world.

NOTE

1. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 104.



and will be a positive influence in the lives of others.”⁴ You will be happy, and your friends and family will be drawn to you by the light and happiness you radiate.

So we ask you, “Can one young man or young woman striving to live the gospel and be a worthy example

of the believers make a difference in the world?” We know with all our hearts that the answer is a resounding *yes!* We believe that as you are pure in your thoughts, conversation, and actions, you will make a difference. We believe in *you!* **NE**

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2001), 2–3.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 113.
3. *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 114.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 2.

TO YOUNG MEN OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Paul reminded Timothy of something very important—important to Timothy and to each bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands” (1 Timothy 4:14). Paul was speaking of the importance of the priesthood.

What does it mean to “neglect not” our priesthood? First, it means to live worthy of the blessings that flow through the priesthood. We ensure that our thoughts, words, and actions are pure. We live so as to be “an example of the believers” in all that we do: praying and reading the

scriptures daily, attending seminary, paying tithing, and, where possible, attending the temple to perform baptisms for the dead.

Second, it means to magnify the priesthood—to use the priesthood to serve and bless the lives of others. We can do this by fulfilling priesthood assignments; providing personal and quorum service; or reaching out to someone at home, school, or work who needs a kind word, a smile, or a pat on the back.

Third, it means learning about the priesthood and its duties. Read and ponder the scriptures about the priesthood, specifically Alma 13 and Doctrine and Covenants sections 13,



Charles W. Dahlquist II (center), president; Dean R. Burgess (left), first counselor; and Michael A. Neider, second counselor.

20, 84, 107, and 121. Read the talks given in the priesthood session at the most recent general conference, and then ask yourself, “How can I apply what I learned to help me magnify the priesthood?”

We love you. We have confidence in you. As you strive to magnify your priesthood, you will be better prepared to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary, and as Paul promised Timothy, your service and your example will bless your life and those around you. May God bless you in your efforts.

1 TIMOTHY 4:12

This year's Mutual theme tells us how we are to set an example to the world.

Let No Man Despise Thy Youth

Paul told Timothy that his relatively young age shouldn't matter when it comes to living the gospel and serving in the Church. Many young people have had powerful spiritual experiences. Look up these references to read about some of them: 1 Samuel 17:12–49 (David), 2 Nephi 2:4 (Jacob), Mormon 1:15 (Mormon), and Joseph Smith—History 1:7–20 (Joseph Smith).

How can you show your dedication to the gospel at this time in your life? Write about it in your journal.

Purity

Read the words of the hymn “More Holiness Give Me” (*Hymns*, no. 131), and ponder what it means to be an example of purity.

Charity



“We should sow within our hearts the seed of charity, the pure love of Christ. He is the perfect model of charity. His total life, particularly his atoning sacrifice, is a lesson in charity. His every act reflects absolute, unequivocal love for all mankind and for each one of us. His example

teaches us that charity means subordinating personal interests willingly and gladly for the good of others. I believe our progress toward exaltation and eternal life depends upon how well we learn and live the principle of charity.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Seeds of Renewal,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 8.

Example



“We need not wait for a cataclysmic event, a dramatic occurrence in the world in which we live, or a special invitation to be an example—even a model to follow. Our opportunities lie before us here and now. But they are perishable. Likely they will be found in our own homes and in the everyday actions of our lives. Our Lord and Master marked

the way: ‘[He] went about doing good.’ (Acts 10:38.) He in very deed was a model to follow—even an example of the believers.

“Are we?”

President Thomas S. Monson, “An Example of the Believers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 98.

Conversation

The Greek word means conduct or behavior.

Faith

To be an example in faith, follow the Apostle James’s teaching: “I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

Word

We show great self-discipline when we master our words (see James 3:2). Rather than tearing others down, our words should uplift (see Ephesians 4:29; D&C 108:7). To improve in this area, you might, for example, write down specific goals to give compliments, speak more kindly to family members, use more pleasant tones and expressions, and avoid profanity and offensive language.

Editors' note: This page is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation of the selected scripture verse, only a starting point for your own study.

WAITING

Faithfully

BY ELIZABETH RHODES

When people asked about my religion, what was I going to say?

Things were going great. I finally felt I was with the program: I attended Sunday meetings regularly, read my scriptures every day, had prayer morning and night, regularly fasted, paid a full tithe. I had even shared the Book of Mormon with one of my neighbors and was well on my way to completing the Young Womanhood Recognition requirements.

Just one problem.

It nagged at me, constantly in the back of my mind. I wasn't baptized yet.

Sweet 16, here I come, and the only thing I wanted for my birthday was to be baptized. I had asked my dad several times, and we had compromised. Yes, I could go to church more often now, but I still wouldn't step into a font until I turned 18. That was that.

This was some birthday. I flopped on the couch, realizing two years had passed since I first read the Book of Mormon and wanted to be baptized. I sighed. Two years down, two to go.

The doorbell rang. A salesman, I thought.

Ready for disappointment, I turned the corner and saw two silhouettes in the frosted glass. The missionaries!

"Hi, Liz, how are you?"

"Great! How are you? Come in!" They had no idea how glad I was to see them. They stopped by sometimes to see how I was doing and were always ecstatic when I made it to sacrament meetings.

"So what's happening?" asked Elder Rizutto.

"Oh, not much," I said. "Well . . . it's my birthday."

"Really? How old are you? Eighteen?"

"I wish."

My testimony was strong, I felt the Spirit often, and I knew Heavenly Father was watching over me. But I was tired of being patient. I wanted to be a Latter-day Saint, a real member with a certificate. When people asked me about my religion, I wanted to shout from the top of the hills, "I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Can't you tell? Can't you see the miraculous changes in my life?"

"We should go, it's getting late," said the elders after a short conversation. "We just wanted to see how you were doing."

"Wait. I just have one question. What do you call people like me? When people ask me what religion I am, I'm not sure what to say."

"You haven't been baptized, so you're a nonmember," one elder said.

"How do I tell a nonmember that I'm a nonmember?" I asked. "I believe in the Church. I have a testimony."

A pause.

"Liz, you are a daughter of God," said Elder Rizutto.

"And to be a Saint is to be a follower of Christ. If you believe Jesus Christ is your Savior, Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and the Book of Mormon is true, then you are a Latter-day Saint."

"Oh," I said quietly. He was right. Why had I been so

worried about a title? Heavenly Father knew the intent of my heart. He knew I was doing my best to be a good member of the Church—even as a nonmember. The gospel was not stamped on a certificate but in my heart. I still needed to be baptized for a remission of my sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, but I knew who I was.

Two more years passed. I was baptized

and received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those in authority.

Thinking back on the years of waiting, I wondered again why I had to wait so long to become an official member of the Church. Then I remembered what the missionaries told me, and I realized it didn't matter how long I had to wait or why. The baptism sealed in my heart the knowledge of what had been true all along: I am a daughter of God, a Latter-day Saint. **NE**



“When I repent, I have a hard time forgiving myself. How do I learn to forgive myself?”

Believe that the Atonement can work in your life. Heavenly Father wouldn't offer repentance if forgiveness weren't possible. If you repent, He will forgive you, so you can forgive yourself too.

If you have repented, you won't forget your mistakes, but you can feel at peace, knowing that the Lord has forgiven you. Feeling His Spirit can let you know that He has forgiven you, and you can move on with your life. He doesn't want you to worry about the past if you have corrected the problem.

Talk to your bishop or branch president about this if needed. If you are having a hard time forgiving yourself because you don't know if the Lord has forgiven you, your bishop can help you understand how to repent and how to recognize when you've been forgiven. (See D&C 58:42–43.)

Also remember that as you repent and correct the mistakes of your past, you will feel the blessings of the Atonement. Its power is changing your nature. You are gradually becoming more like Christ and more worthy of His Spirit. **NE**



Pray for Help

Forgiveness seems harder when it's me I need to forgive. If I have repented and done everything the Lord has asked me to do, then I have to remind myself that it's Satan who doesn't want me to feel better. Praying and asking Heavenly Father for His help always makes it easier for me to forgive myself. He always reminds me that He has forgiven me and loves me, so I should love myself enough to forgive myself. Heavenly Father has never let me down.

Mesa B., 16, Georgia



Alma's Example

I had an experience where I didn't feel that I was worthy and that I couldn't forgive myself. One day at seminary I talked to my teacher, and he told me to read Alma 36:12–20. In this scripture Alma tells his conversion story, and after reading this, I decided to pray as Alma did so I could receive an answer from God to know if I was forgiven. After that, I felt better and was able to forgive myself.

Elder Avelar, Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission

Confidence to Forgive Myself

When I repent, I know that Heavenly Father will forgive me for what I have done. That gives me confidence that if Heavenly Father forgives me, so should I. If you are having a hard time forgiving yourself, you should pray, and I know that you will receive an answer to your prayers.

Chanae G., 13, California

The Atonement

I too have had some problems forgiving myself. I have found that it is just Satan trying to make me feel that I have failed and that I can't succeed. I find that if I pray to Heavenly Father and ask for comfort and His help, I feel much better. Just remember that after you have done all that you can do, that's when the Atonement steps in and takes care of the rest (see 2 Nephi 25:23). Because of the Atonement we can be saved through grace from the true and living God.

Adam R., 16, Utah



The Source of Influence

If you truly repent, God will forgive you. He will remember your sins no more. If you are feeling guilty after you fully repent and if you are having a hard time forgiving yourself, think of the spirit that is influencing you. Is it from God or Satan? God wants you to feel sorry enough to repent and not repeat the sin. Satan wants you to continue to

feel bad afterward. Ask Heavenly Father in humble prayer to help you forgive yourself.

Jessica J., 16, Arizona



Small and Simple Things

When I need to feel forgiven, I do small and simple things like reading the scriptures, praying, taking the sacrament worthily, changing my thoughts, and so on. When I do these things, I feel the Spirit, and that informs me that I am close to God and that He has forgiven me. Feeling that Spirit lets me know that I am worthy and have truly repented. You also know you are forgiven when you are busy thinking, doing, and becoming more like Christ and leaving behind sin through your works of faith.

Elder Silva, 21, New York New York
South Mission

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

NEXT QUESTION

"A guy in my class teases me for being Mormon. He does it jokingly, but I can tell he has a low opinion of our Church. How can I help him see things differently?"

Send your answer by February 15, 2009, to:

New Era, Q&A, 2/09

**50 E. North Temple St., Rm. 2420
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0024, USA**

Or e-mail: newera@ldschurch.org

The following information and permission must be included in your e-mail or letter:

FULL NAME

BIRTH DATE

WARD (OR BRANCH)

STAKE (OR DISTRICT)

I grant permission to print response and photo:

SIGNATURE

PARENT'S SIGNATURE (IF YOU ARE UNDER 18)



BELIEVE IN THE ATONEMENT

Choose to believe in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Accept the Savior's forgiveness, and then forgive yourself. Because of His sacrifice for you, He has the power to 'remember [your sins] no more' (D&C 58:42). You must do likewise."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "To Act for Ourselves: The Gift and Blessings of Agency," Ensign, May 2006, 7.

MORE THAN A MOM

BY HILLARY HOLBROOK

Music is important for Grant Gibbons and his family, but there's something even bigger.

Grant Gibbons does not live in a quiet home. No, he doesn't live next to an airport or a set of train tracks. Instead, he and his siblings make their own music all the time. The four siblings still living at home are constantly singing and playing the piano, guitar, trumpet, flute, and other instruments. In fact, Grant and his two older brothers, Guy and Michael, just released a new CD. Music is a big deal to 16-year-old Grant and the other members of his family, but serving the Lord is more important.

Passing down musical talent

Everyone in Grant's family is musical, and they love to perform, especially together. When Grant was a child, he saw how music about the Savior could touch others' lives. "The very first time we were asked to perform as a family was for the Church," says Lucie, Grant's mom. "We did our first show on Temple Square, in Salt Lake City, and had a very spiritual experience. A man came off the street who had never heard of Jesus Christ. A sister missionary, who was acting as a hostess, took our children aside and said, 'This man was introduced to Jesus Christ by you kids.'"

Lucie says that from that point on, Grant and his siblings were hooked on touching other peoples' lives through gospel music. But they certainly aren't the first ones in their family to be devoted to music.

Grant comes from a long line of musicians. His grandfathers on both sides of his family were music educators and music store owners. His mom, Lucie, has a father who focused his career on band and choir. Grant's dad, Barry, has a father who spent many years performing in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. And together Lucie and Barry own a recording studio in Utah where many of their family's albums have been created. So it was no surprise that Grant, who is the fifth out of seven musical siblings, would also be gifted with music.



MUSIC FOR YOU

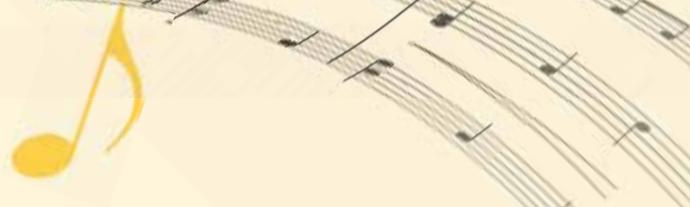
Download the song "Grandpa" by the Gibbons family at

NewEra.Lds.org.

You can also visit the Church's music Web site www.Lds.org/cm, where you can find sheet music and MP3 versions of seminary, Young Women, and Primary songs.



U S I C



Music is a major part of their lives, but the Gibbons siblings also know that they have to balance other important aspects such as their belief in gospel truths and keeping their family united.

Choosing a mission over music

Grant's musical talent started to show when he was only five years old. Because his four older siblings would play the piano and sing all the time, he decided that he wanted to join in the fun. Although Grant was only in kindergarten and could not yet read music, he says, "I started playing the piano by ear and would pick out melodies on the piano."

Michael, his brother, adds, "One thing Grant is good at is that he can listen to a difficult piece of music and be able to pick out all the parts on the piano."

Not only does Grant play the piano, but he also plays the trumpet and the flügelhorn, and, of course, he sings. Such a wide variety of talent was great to have when Grant, Guy, and Michael started to record their first CD. The three brothers had dreamed of making a CD but waited until Michael returned from his mission in Geneva, Switzerland, to start.

Michael says that before he served a mission there was never a temptation to stay home and record music. "I received assurance through prayer that my mission call was going to be right for me," Michael says. "When I got my call, I knew it was what the Lord wanted for me."

When he got home two years later, the three boys worked together, using their vocal and instrumental talents to produce a CD. Their goal in releasing it, Michael says, was to give youth and young adults

"safe, appropriate, and upbeat music to listen to." But the brothers will have to put future goals of making another CD on hold for a couple of years because Guy Richey, who goes by both his first and middle names, recently left to serve a full-time mission in Toulouse, France. In this family of musicians, serving the Lord is more important than music.

"Even if we had a top record in America right now, we would still go and serve the Lord. We know that serving is the most important thing," Michael says.

Making the mission a priority is an example to Grant, who says that his brothers and dad have paved the way for him. Grant wants to serve a mission, too. "Michael's decision process to go on a mission started with our father, who went on a mission. We look up to our father so much. He's such a great example to us that we have all felt that going on missions was the right thing to do," Grant says.

Michael gives Grant his best advice for serving a mission: "Go out with a smile every day and talk to as many people as you can. Be selfless and bring joy into other peoples' lives. If you're concerned about other peoples' needs, the stresses and sacrifices of serving a mission will not be a big deal."

In three years, when it comes time to serve a mission, Grant will have no doubt that giving up his musical career for two years to serve the Lord is the right thing to do. He is already preparing for that by following the Holy Ghost and building his testimony.

Attuning the spiritual ear

Although Grant can play by ear a song he hears on the radio, he's also working on training something else—his spiritual ear. "When I feel spiritual promptings, I follow



AnnAlyse, 17

AnnAlyse loves performing in high school musicals. She sings and plays the flute. She says that besides the gospel and her family, nothing has blessed her life as much as music. "I'm constantly touched by all kinds of music because of the passion that my whole family shares." AnnAlyse's favorite hymn is "Each Life that Touches Ours for Good" (*Hymns*, no. 293) because "the lyrics are perfect for how I feel about the blessing of my family and friends."

Michael, 22

Michael loves to jazz away on electric and acoustic guitars. He also likes to sing and play the piano. Michael's favorite hymn is out of the French hymnbook, and it's called "Souviens-toi," which in English means "Remember." His favorite memory was a time at the Nauvoo Pageant when his family performed a song about an auctioneer. "The song goes quite fast and is fun to perform together, but sometimes the solos would fall apart," he says with a laugh. "We just have a blast together even though it's not always perfect."



A FAMILY OF MUSICIANS

Grant and his siblings are all very musical. They love to sing and play a variety of instruments. Here's a little bit of information about each one:



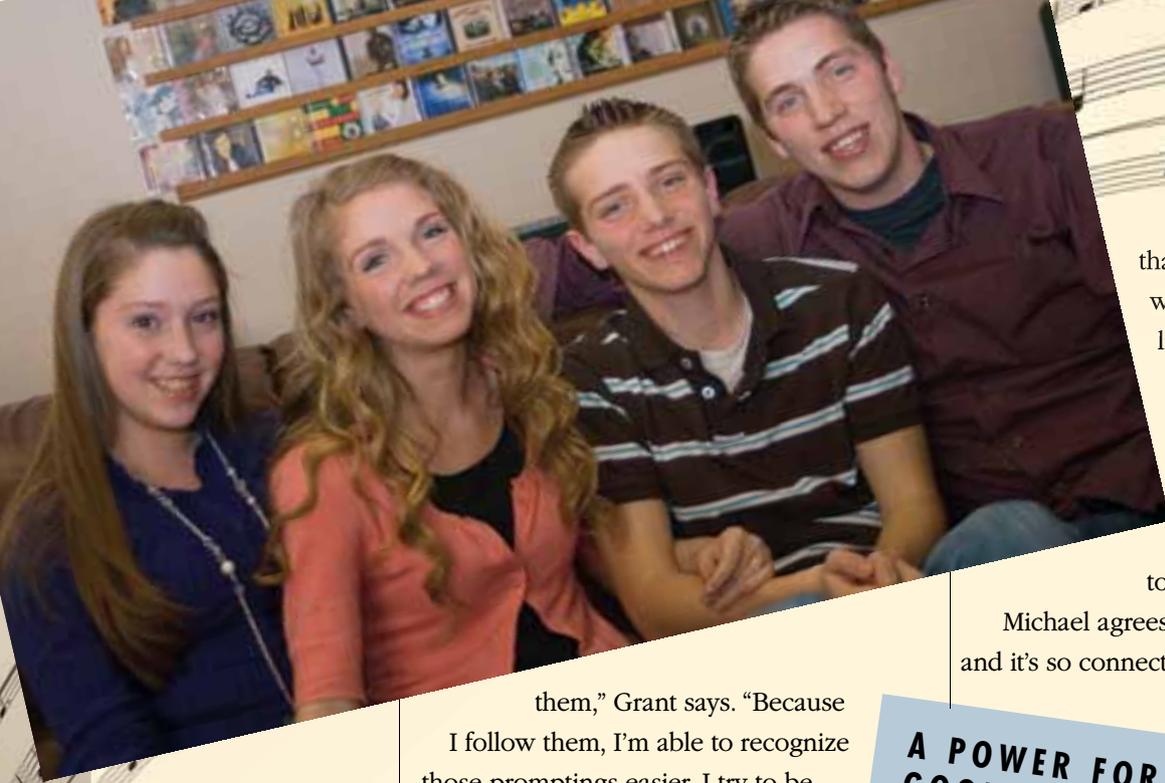
Aubrea, 14

Aubrea recently started playing the flute in her junior high school band and singing in the school choir. Aubrea has two favorite hymns. One is "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide" (no. 165). When she and her family attended the Nauvoo Pageant, she heard that song for the first time. "It's a prayer scene, and all the families are praying together [when the song plays]," Aubrea says. Her other favorite hymn is "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" (no. 19).

Grant, 16

Grant loves music. Every morning before school, he attends jazz band practice. He also practices the piano and trumpet daily. Grant's two favorite hymns are "Joseph Smith's First Prayer" (no. 26) and "Be Still, My Soul" (no. 124). Grant says, "I love to look at the lyrics of the hymns, as well as the scriptural references on the bottom of the page." After Grant serves a mission, he wants to attend college and study music. He also wants to teach music professionally.





The Gibbons have consistently looked for the good in music and are aware of the power songs can have in affecting attitudes. They are particularly careful to avoid inappropriate lyrics and offensive music that can drive away the Spirit of the Lord.

them,” Grant says. “Because I follow them, I’m able to recognize those promptings easier. I try to be better at listening to the Spirit.”

And why does he want to follow the Spirit? Because Grant has a testimony of the gospel. “Ever since I was little, my parents have taught us about the gospel,” he says. “The more I learn about it, the more I know it’s true. My testimony is always strengthened when I’m trying to live more like Christ.”

One way that Grant is able to live the gospel is by listening to good, wholesome music. When asked what advice he would give to teens who struggle with inappropriate music, he answers, “Just know



A POWER FOR GOOD OR EVIL

The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet tells us why we should listen to good music:

“Music is an important and powerful part of life. It can be an influence for good that helps you draw closer to Heavenly Father. However, it can also be used for wicked purposes. Unworthy music may seem harmless, but it can have evil effects on your mind and spirit. “Choose carefully the music you listen to. Pay attention to how you feel when you are listening. Don’t listen to music that drives away the Spirit, encourages immorality, glorifies violence, uses foul or offensive language, or promotes Satanism or other evil practices” ([2001], 20).

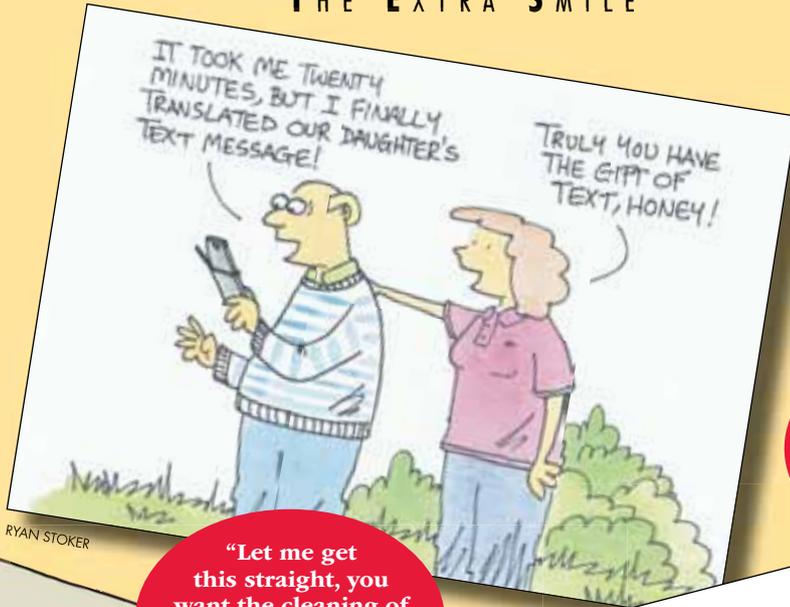
that inappropriate music is what Satan wants you to listen to, and it doesn’t please Heavenly Father when we don’t listen to uplifting things. We don’t always have to listen to Church music, but it has to bring a good spirit.”

Michael agrees. “Music is so spiritual, and it’s so connected to our soul that when we listen to music that is

destructive, uses bad language, or even has a feeling that is inappropriate, we know that it’s the wrong music to listen to,” he says. “Finding music that makes your soul and spirit feel good is very important.”

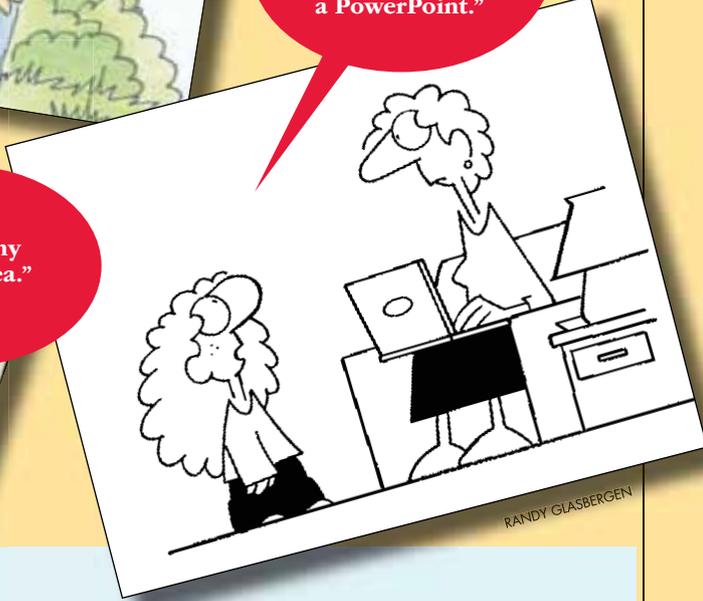
Grant’s mom, Lucie, says that good music is always playing in their home, and that creates a loving atmosphere. “It’s never quiet in our home; somebody is always singing or playing the piano,” she says. As if on cue, the family sings “Love at Home” (*Hymns*, no. 294) in perfect harmony. No, it is never quiet in the Gibbons’ home, but a spirit of love resides there. Music is a big deal to Grant and his family, but serving the Lord always comes first. **NE**

THE EXTRA SMILE



RYAN STOKER

"In case you want to know about my day, I e-mailed you a PowerPoint."



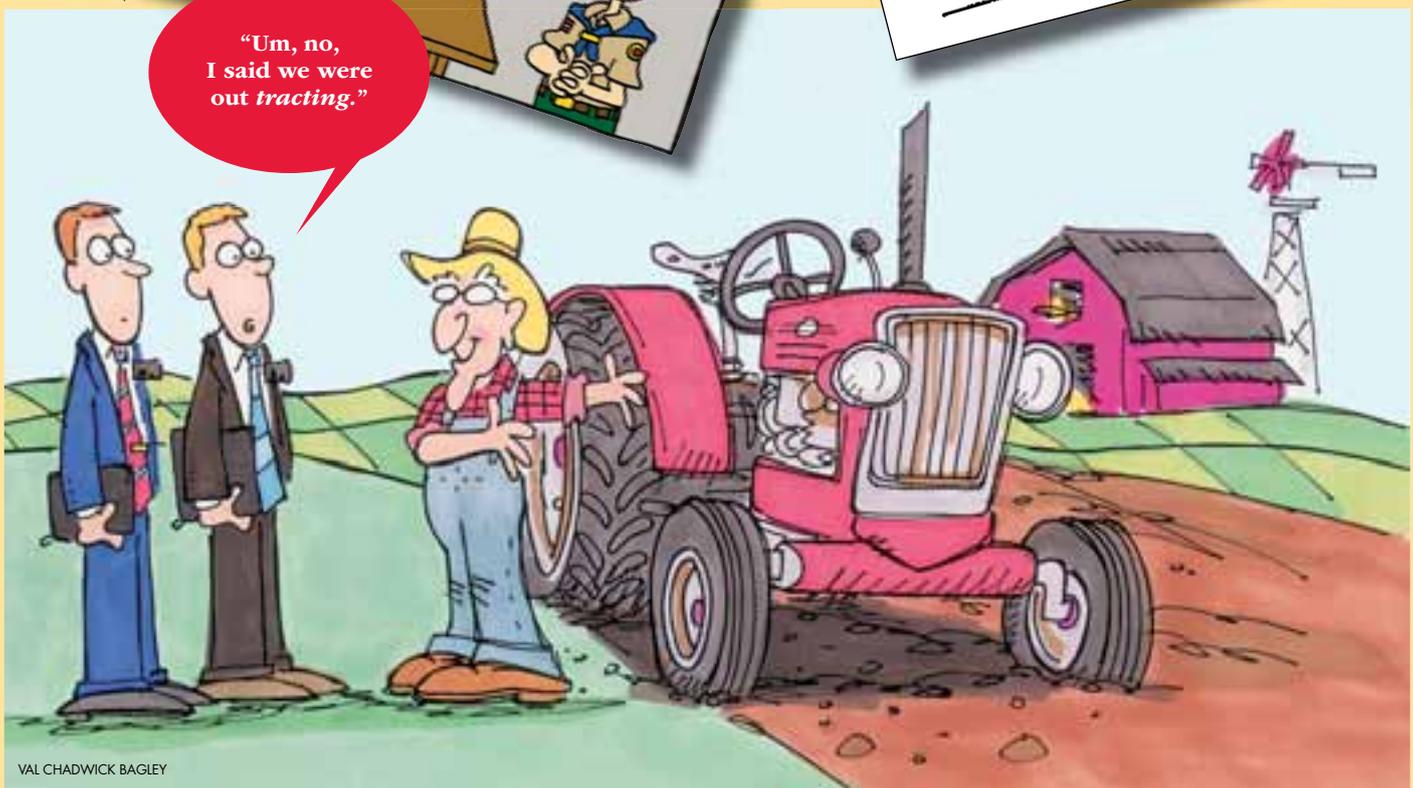
RANDY GLASBERGEN



ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF

"It was my mom's idea."

"Um, no, I said we were out *tracting*."



VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

THE ARMOR

The scriptures use a powerful illustration to teach us how

In the scriptures we learn that we are engaged in a battle against evil and that we must protect ourselves if we are to be victorious (see Ephesians 6:11–17; D&C 27:15–18). They speak of the “armor of God,” which will help us “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Here are some of the ways this armor protects us, as well as some ways we can secure it.

Whole armor

“Examine your armor. Is there an unguarded or unprotected place? Determine now to add whatever part is missing. . . . Through the great principle of repentance you can turn your life about and begin now clothing yourself with the armor of God through study, prayer, and a determination to serve God and keep his commandments.”

President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982),
First Counselor in the First Presidency,
“Put on the Whole Armor of God,”
Ensign, May 1979, 46.

Breastplate of righteousness

We should wear the “breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14; D&C 27:16). A breastplate protects vital organs such as the heart and lungs. Our righteousness, both in thought and deed, protects the core of our spiritual lives.

OF GOD

to protect ourselves in the battle against evil.

Helmet

We should put on the “helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17; D&C 27:18). Focusing our minds on Christ and His salvation will protect us from unworthy thoughts, keep our “eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5), and guide us in our decisions.

Shield of faith

We should pick up the “shield of faith, where-with [we] shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16; D&C 27:17). A shield is the most versatile and effective means of defense in battle. Our faith, if it is built upon Christ and His gospel, can defend us against the adversary’s numerous onslaughts, just as a shield, if it is made of the right material, will withstand volleys of fiery darts.

“In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how



Sword

We should wield the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17; see D&C 27:18). A sword is a weapon used to strike at the enemy. The word of God is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12), and the power of the Spirit can “carry [the truth] unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1), help people to “know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5), and even “thrash the nations” through the preaching of the gospel (D&C 35:13). With our testimony and the power and peace of God’s Spirit, we can strike against and conquer the enemy of all righteousness.

Feet shod

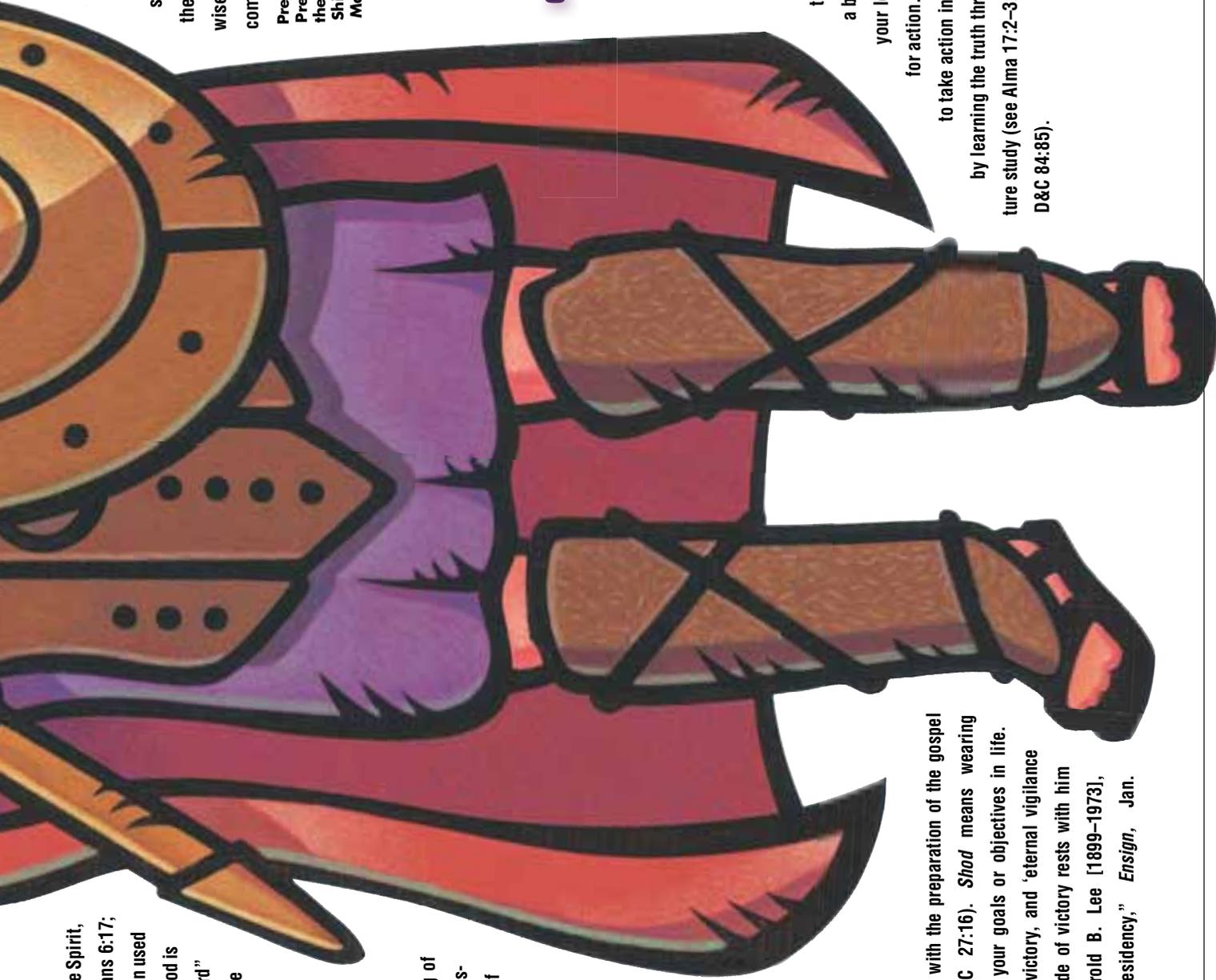
We should have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15; D&C 27:16). *Shod* means wearing shoes. “Your feet . . . represent your goals or objectives in life. . . . Preparedness is the way to victory, and eternal vigilance is the price of safety’ . . . The tide of victory rests with him who is prepared” (President Harold B. Lee [1899–1973], “Message from the First Presidency,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1971, 2).

to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Shield of Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 8.

Gird your loins

We should have our “loins girt about with truth” (Ephesians 6:14; D&C 27:16). *Loins* means the area between the hips and abdomen. *Girt* means tied around firmly with a belt. Generally, to “gird your loins” means to prepare for action. We prepare ourselves to take action in the battle against evil by learning the truth through prayer and scripture study (see Alma 17:2–3; D&C 11:21; D&C 84:85).



BACK ON THE ROAD

BY ROBERT JAMES

My car broke down, but it gave me time to think.

All weekend I avoided discussing a mission with my family. But now I couldn't avoid thinking it through.

When I was nearly 20 years old, being a Latter-day Saint from an LDS family and attending BYU-Idaho, the questions started coming. “Have you put your papers in?” “Are you excited about going on a mission?”

I had always thought I would serve a mission, but when the time came to serve, I just avoided the matter.

For a long weekend, I made the four- to five-hour drive from Rexburg to my family's home in Orem, Utah.

That weekend, home was filled with family and friends coming and going. Cousins, aunts, uncles, and friends added to an almost

holiday feel. I seemed to keep getting pulled aside by family members and asked the usual mission questions. It was usually followed by offers of encouragement and support.

My Uncle Rick talked about how, as the oldest boy in the family, I would be setting an important example for my younger brother by serving a mission.

Uncle Bob offered a fun anecdote from his mission to Sweden and said he was excited for me to get my call. My mom tenderly reminded me how much she loved me and how happy it makes her when I make correct choices.

I knew the word was getting around to “remind Rob about a mission.” I might have felt some resentment, but their promptings were delicate. I only felt love and concern when each of them approached me.

It was Sunday afternoon after church. I knew if I left at around 3:30 p.m., it would put me back home in Rexburg by 8:30. I was surprised having so much family around that there wasn't a big dinner planned after church. In any case, I made a sack lunch for the trip and packed my old blue car for the ride back to school. It hurt to leave so many loving people, and I felt a little guilty I hadn't come with news that I had put in my mission papers.

My car was dependable most of the time, but it had shown signs of unpredictability. Somewhere past the city

of Pocatello, surrounded by the flat farmlands of eastern Idaho, my car began to cough and sputter. I glanced down for a minute, scanning my dashboard for red lights or needles that pointed out perils. Everything seemed OK, but the car continued to hesitate and began to lose power. I looked in my rear view mirror—nothing but darkness.

Surveying the horizon in front of me also reminded me that there were some vast unoccupied areas in Idaho.

My car sputtered and jerked. I was lucky enough to be by a ranch exit. I pulled off and stopped the car under the lone streetlight on the exit. The car shuttered for a minute more before I turned the key off. It was deadly silent, and snow was beginning to fall, which made any traffic on the freeway seem distant.

From experience I knew that if I gave the car a few minutes, I might be able to start it and carry on my trip, but I would have some time to burn. I grabbed my coat and laid it over the top of me and pushed my seat back as



Mom had asked the family to join in a special fast for me, to ask that I would make the decision to go on a mission.

far as it would go.

As I lay in the quiet night, the first thing that came to my mind was the conversations I had had that day. The feelings of love and concern that had come from my family seemed to linger and to grow in me. Soon my heart began to swell as I remembered the warmth I had felt from family that day. Soon I knew that it was more than the love from my family I was reflecting on. The story of Alma the Younger came to me. He remembered his father preaching of the “the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world” (Alma 36:17).

My thoughts soon turned toward my Savior and how much He loved me and wanted good things for me. I began to pray and thank Heavenly Father for my family and the opportunities I had. My prayer was reciprocated with an even deeper awareness that Christ loves me and Heavenly Father knows me personally. I found myself having a meaningful spiritual experience I would never forget.

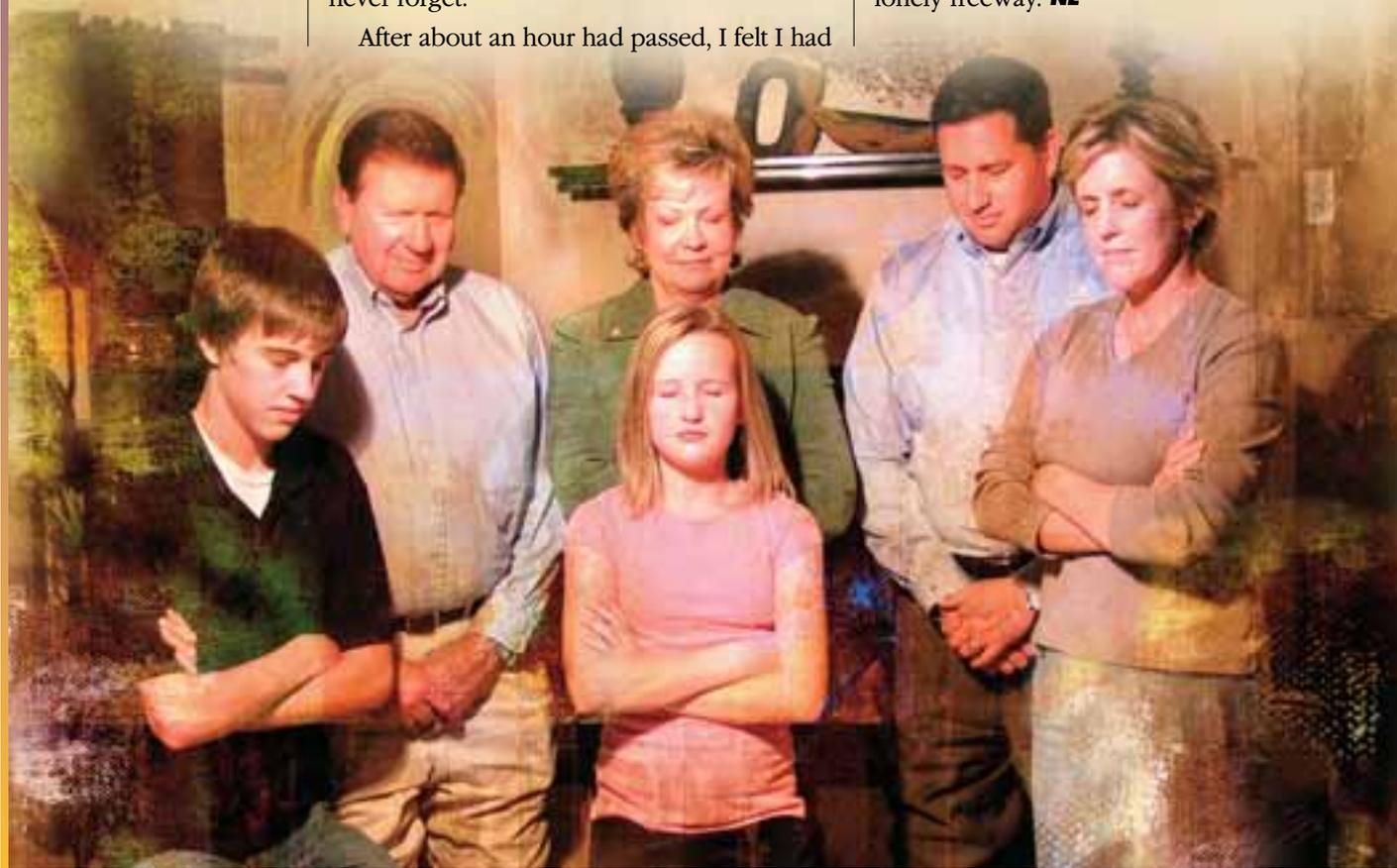
After about an hour had passed, I felt I had

restored myself enough to try to drive on. I turned the key, and the car came to life. I revved it a few times and pulled the car back onto the road and then onto the freeway. What was sure in my mind after getting back onto the road was that, first thing the next morning, I wanted to get a hold of my bishop and start getting my mission papers ready.

When I got home, I was eager to call my mom and let her know the news. She was more emotional than I thought she would be about the news, and I found out why a few months later, on the day I was leaving for the MTC.

Mom found a minute to tell me this story. On the day I left to go back to Rexburg, without telling me, Mom had asked the family to join in a special fast for me, to ask that my heart would be softened and that I would make the decision to go on a mission.

The family gladly participated, and they closed their fast with a family prayer at nearly the exact time my car died on that lonely freeway. **NE**



BY LAUREN HOLMAN

In January of 2007 I was home during Christmas break, and I was lonely. Then on the first Tuesday of the year, one of my friends from school who is not a Latter-day Saint called me and invited me to go to a botanical garden near our home in Arcadia, California. We were there for most of the day amongst beautiful flowers and trees with ponds, geese, and peacocks. After a while we got tired and decided to sit underneath a huge weeping willow to rest.

It was a sunny day, but you could hardly see daylight underneath the tree except for one small pillar of light that shone on the two of us. That place was so peaceful, and it reminded me of something.

“Do you know what this reminds me of?” I said. “This reminds me of Joseph Smith, when he went to the grove to pray about which religion was true.” She knew I was a member of the Church, so she sort of laughed. “No, I’m dead serious,” I continued. “There’s this sort of beauty to this place that fills me with a spirit of peace.”

We sat there in silence for about a minute or so. The whole time she had this look like she was debating whether or not to say something. Finally she asked, “How do you know? I mean, how do you know what you believe is true?”

This kind of caught me off guard, because she had asked me before what I believed but not how I knew it was true. I explained that I knew because I had prayed to know for myself. I had wanted to know if what I had studied and believed was true. So I had gone before the Lord with an open heart and mind and asked. Then I had been overcome by this feeling of happiness, as if no evil in the world could ever touch me. And all of those things that stress me out in life didn’t matter because the Lord was with me.

Before I knew it, she was in tears. She then said, “You don’t know how badly I want to believe in something, but everything I’ve ever believed in just disappointed me. How can I believe in something that isn’t tangible?”

At first I honestly didn’t know how to answer her. We let the question hang there for a moment as I thought of what to say.

“Faith,” I then said, “is so hard to develop and so easy to lose. Faith can only strengthen us, but we must have an open heart and mind to acquire it. It may be far-fetched, but I have never gone wrong with faith, and I know that’s how it’ll always be.”

With that, we just sat in silence, enjoying the peaceful feeling of the Spirit. **NE**

I
WANT
TO
BELIEVE



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DILEEN MARSH

THERE IS HOPE IN HAITI

The missionary spirit is alive and well in this island nation, and the rising generation is determined to keep it that way.

BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines





Editors' note: Because of political instability, all missionaries from other countries were evacuated from Haiti in 2005. Today all 67 missionaries serving in the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission are from Haiti, and the Church is thriving here.

Dieuveut Demosthène, 18, and Robenson Marcel Laroque Jean, 19, are the best of friends. And they intend to keep it that way. Forever.

“We were neighbors, and we played basketball together,” Robenson explains. “I joined the Church when I was 16, and after a while I suggested to Dieuveut that he should come too. I prayed a lot, and I persisted. Now look at him, a strong member of the Church. I’m proud of him.”

“Robenson invited me many times,” Dieuveut says, “and over time I accepted. He has always spoken with superb words, like he understands everything. So his invitation wasn’t worrisome; it was extraordinary. After a while I started having lessons with the missionaries, and I joined the Church when I was 17.”

The Ideal

That’s the ideal way for missionary

work to be done—friends sharing the gospel with friends and giving referrals to the missionaries to teach them. “From me—one person in the Church—now we are two, and we continue the same work together,” Robenson says. As a result of their efforts, one of Dieuveut’s big brothers and another friend have also joined the Church. One became two, and two became four.

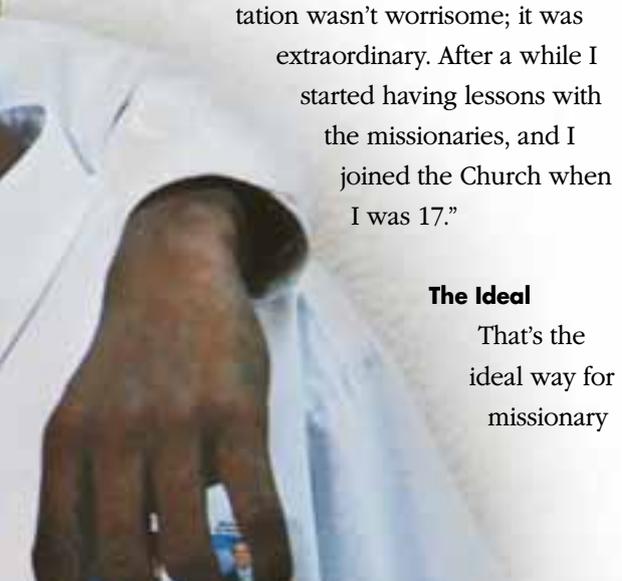
Robenson and Dieuveut, from the Centrale Ward, Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake, typify what is happening with missionary work in Haiti since missionaries from other countries were evacuated in 2005 because of political turmoil. The Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission has looked to itself for strength and found it. Today only Haitians serve missions in Haiti, and teens expect to serve when they come of age. Even before they’re called to full-time missions, they’re already reaching out to neighbors and friends.

“Everywhere that you see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Haiti, you know the members are Haitians,” says Farah Jean-Baptiste, 18, a young woman also in the Centrale Ward. “It’s a real motivation for the youth to see that we are responsible for the future of the Church here.”

“The young men and young women in the Church here are motivated to follow the Savior,” says Farah’s 17-year-old friend from the same ward, Nathalie LaGuerre. “We wish to walk in His path, to see His work advance.



Hope is blossoming for LDS youth like Robenson Jean, Dieuveut Demosthène, Nathalie LaGuerre, and Farah Jean-Baptiste, who believe the gospel can transform their lives as well as their country. Throughout the island nation, LDS Haitians are sharing smiles and preparing for the future.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY



Preparing the sacrament is a great honor for Aaronic Priesthood youth in Haiti, as it is throughout the world. Teens enjoy their experiences with their leaders and advisers in the Young Men program.

And so we are filled with joy when we see Haitian missionaries working in Haiti. They are enthusiastic and happy, and after their missions they tell us what a good experience they had. Then they invite us to have the same experience and to start today by sharing the gospel with our friends.”

She says that although young women don’t have the same priesthood obligation to serve a full-time mission as young men, “we also see that there are many blessings that come to those who serve. You are able to bless others, and it edifies you. It strengthens you for the challenges you will face in life, and it anchors you in the gospel. It shows that you are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, that you are a witness for Him, and that you follow His example.”

The Hope

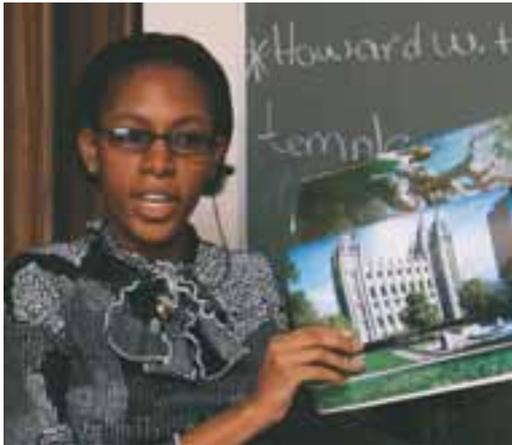
“There is much hope for the kingdom of God here in Haiti,”



says President Gh. Ghammald Francillon of the Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake. “The youth are truly motivated to serve missions. It is part of their natural growing up to include a mission in their priorities, even ahead of college. If you see the missionaries in the street, you only have to ask, and they will tell you they left their studies behind because they are called to the work of the Lord.”

He notes the blessings he feels in his own home because his wife is a returned missionary. He says that stronger families and stronger leaders are direct results of missionary service. “Imagine,” he says, “in 15 to 20 years, if so many Haitians serve missions in Haiti, the kind of





Church we're going to have here!" He says members "feel the love and support of so many, from the prophet and the General Authorities and from the returned missionaries from other countries who served here in the past. But right now it is 100 percent Haitian, including the mission president, Fouchard Pierre-Nau, a returned missionary who served in Haiti about 10 years ago."

The Future

Some people thought the Church here might have trouble without help from outside. "But I was never worried," says a missionary currently serving in the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission, Elder J. Henry Michel.

"The Church will never fail. It is the Church of Jesus Christ, and so it can't fail."

Rather, Dieuvent says, as people realize the happiness the gospel brings, the Church in Haiti will keep growing. "I am truly grateful to Robenson for sharing the gospel with

me," he says, "and that's why I want to share the gospel with others. Last week I asked myself, in the past did I know what joy was? Because today, even if I don't have everything materially that I want, I always feel at peace with myself. I have a great hope that I will be close to my Heavenly Father."

"I'm already trying to be a missionary," Robenson says. "Each day I carry my backpack with several copies of the Book of Mormon in it, just to share with others. Many of them know I'm a member of the Church, and I'm eager to share my testimony. To go on a full-time mission will be a great opportunity to serve God by serving His children. It is my great desire to go."

Dieuvent says he often talks with returned missionaries. "They have told me how the Lord was able to bless people through the missionaries, and I would like to share in such blessings. They have told me how they lived in the mission field, how much they enjoyed it. Also, after their missions, they are worthy, good examples. I want to be like that."

What will the future bring? "Heavenly Father has His plan for Haiti," Dieuvent says. "He is giving members here the opportunity to become strong. It is Haitians teaching Haitians, and that will bless us."

Robenson will soon receive his mission call, and he hopes it's to Haiti. Dieuvent won't be far behind and also hopes to serve in his native land. But whether they're called to Haiti or to some other country, they know that they will make many more friends in the Church and that their own friendship will continue. Because when you're friends in the gospel, you're friends for eternity. **NE**



Closely packed houses and hand-crafted art are typical in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, where in Young Women meetings LDS youth learn how temples can bless their lives.

NE more

For additional stories and photos about Haiti, visit newera.lds.org. Also see page 39 of this issue.



Discovering **GOD**

BY MARY WEENIG

When I was almost 18, I flew to a small town called Soldotna, Alaska, to work for the summer. This was my first experience living away from home. My parents had arranged for me to work for and live with their good friends the Wrights, who owned the local grocery store. I hoped to earn enough money for college. I also hoped to return home with an answer to a question that repeatedly entered my mind: Is there really a God?

I needed to obtain an answer for myself. So I resolved to pray every night and ask God if He was real. Somehow I felt that if God existed, He would answer my prayer. If I never received an answer, then I would know He didn't exist. Simple, I thought.

At the Wrights' home, I shared a bedroom with their daughter Lisa. She was home from Brigham Young University for the summer and worked at the grocery store with me. I admired Lisa from the start. She was beautiful, intelligent, confident, and enthusiastic about life. That summer we spent nearly every hour of every day together.

I loved listening to Lisa tell me about college life. Her life sounded fun and very independent. Lisa had her life organized and balanced, with the right priorities firmly in place.

My admiration for Lisa grew as I observed her reading the scriptures daily and praying each morning and night. I wanted to ask Lisa how she had obtained her faith in God but felt ashamed of my lack of faith. I remember lying in bed, wondering what Lisa talked to God about in her prayers.

Every night I knelt by my bed and said a quick prayer, asking God if He was there. Yet I didn't feel anything

special or spiritual. I did not hear a voice. I felt the same after my prayers as I did before them. This nightly routine went on for two months. Discouraged, I found my doubts in God increasing.

One night, when I was feeling deeply homesick, tears welled in my eyes. I desperately wanted to be near my family, friends, and familiar surroundings. Aching to talk to someone who knew and loved me, I knelt in prayer. "God, I really need You right now," I began. For the next several minutes, I released my true feelings to my Father in Heaven. I told Him everything. I talked with Him as though I believed He was there.

A warmth wrapped around me. I began to feel as though Heavenly Father had come down and taken me in His arms. I was no longer alone. Love and peace embraced me. I knew there was a God.

I wondered why receiving an answer to my prayer took more than two months. Jeremiah 29:13 gave me the answer: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

I finally received an answer to my prayer after I dug deep into my heart. I placed faith in God's existence. I searched high into the heavens with my words and tears.

My life has changed because of that one night. I served a mission and married in the temple. My faith in God's existence continues to increase.

I often think back to that summer in Alaska. Without Lisa's example, I might not have persevered through those months of praying. I might have quit and never discovered the love of my Heavenly Father. I will forever be grateful to Lisa and her example. She helped me come to know God and feel His love for me. **NE**

TO THE POINT

My nonmember friends
have talked to me
about things
that go on
in the temple.
How do they know
about them,
and what should I say
about them?

First of all, don't let your friends' questions bother you. Temple symbols and ordinances have reached the public in various ways over the years, primarily by people who have left the Church. But just because these things are known to people outside the Church does not mean that they are any less sacred. What's important is that we continue to hold them sacred and show our commitment to the Lord.

Secondly, if people ask you about temple ceremonies, you can truthfully say that you don't know much about them because you haven't experienced them yet. However, to clear up misunderstandings, you could explain that we go to the temple to make covenants with Heavenly Father and that it "helps us focus on the Savior, His role in our Heavenly Father's plan, and our commitment to follow Him" (*True to the Faith* [2004], 171). Temple symbols and ceremonies are sacred and should not be discussed publicly, nor can they be properly understood or appreciated outside the context of the temple.

To learn more, you can read the following resources, both of which are available in the Gospel Library on lds.org:

- The booklet *Preparing to Enter the Holy Temple* (2004).
- The entry on "Temples" in *True to the Faith*, pages 170–74. **NE**

I am being told
to prepare to be
a mother and wife
instead of
going on a mission.
Which is more important?

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, “We need some young women [on missions]. They perform a remarkable work. . . . [But] young sisters are not under obligation to go on missions. . . . Missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. . . . We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life’s program. . . . To the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission” (“Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

Serving a mission can be a rewarding and life-altering experience. If you feel the desire to go on a mission, pray about it. If that desire persists, talk to your parents and bishop about serving.

In terms of preparation, marriage and a mission are not mutually exclusive. Preparing for the one can help you prepare for the other. And, of course, you should prepare to enter the temple no matter what you decide. Ultimately, you should never feel pressured to go on a mission. The decision is between you and the Lord. **NE**

Whenever my dad and I talk
about music, we get into a fight.
How can I persuade him
that it’s sometimes not a
question of good or evil
but of personal taste?

It’s common for teens and their parents to disagree about music. One important thing, however, is that you not let it become a source of ill feelings between you. On that score, it may help for you to give your dad a fair hearing so that he knows you’re really listening. This simple act can go a long way toward preventing contention. Don’t immediately challenge or argue against his point of view, but ask him to explain it so that you can better understand it. Who knows? You may even find that he makes some good points.

When explaining your thoughts about music, focus on areas you know you and your dad can agree on—for instance, the counsel about music in *For the Strength of Youth*, which says: “Pay attention to how you feel when you are listening. Don’t listen to music that drives away the Spirit, encourages immorality, glorifies violence, uses foul or offensive language, or promotes Satanism or other evil practices” ([2001], 20). If you build on common ground, it’s easier to discuss the areas where you disagree.

In the end, remember that he is your father, and you should do your best to honor him, even if it is just a matter of taste. **NE**



I

COULDN'T

BY JENNY TONKS

I love reading and was looking for the next fun book. Little did I know where I would find my all-time favorite.

What am I going to read now?" my best friend Liz whined into the phone. "I just can't *believe* it's over!"

"I know," I said. "It doesn't seem real." We had been talking on the telephone for close to an hour, discussing our favorite series of books. After reading these best-selling books together for several years, we had just finished with the final book.

"Oh well," Liz sighed, "I guess I'll just start over again."

"Not me," I said. "I'm ready for something new."

"But what will you read?" Liz asked.

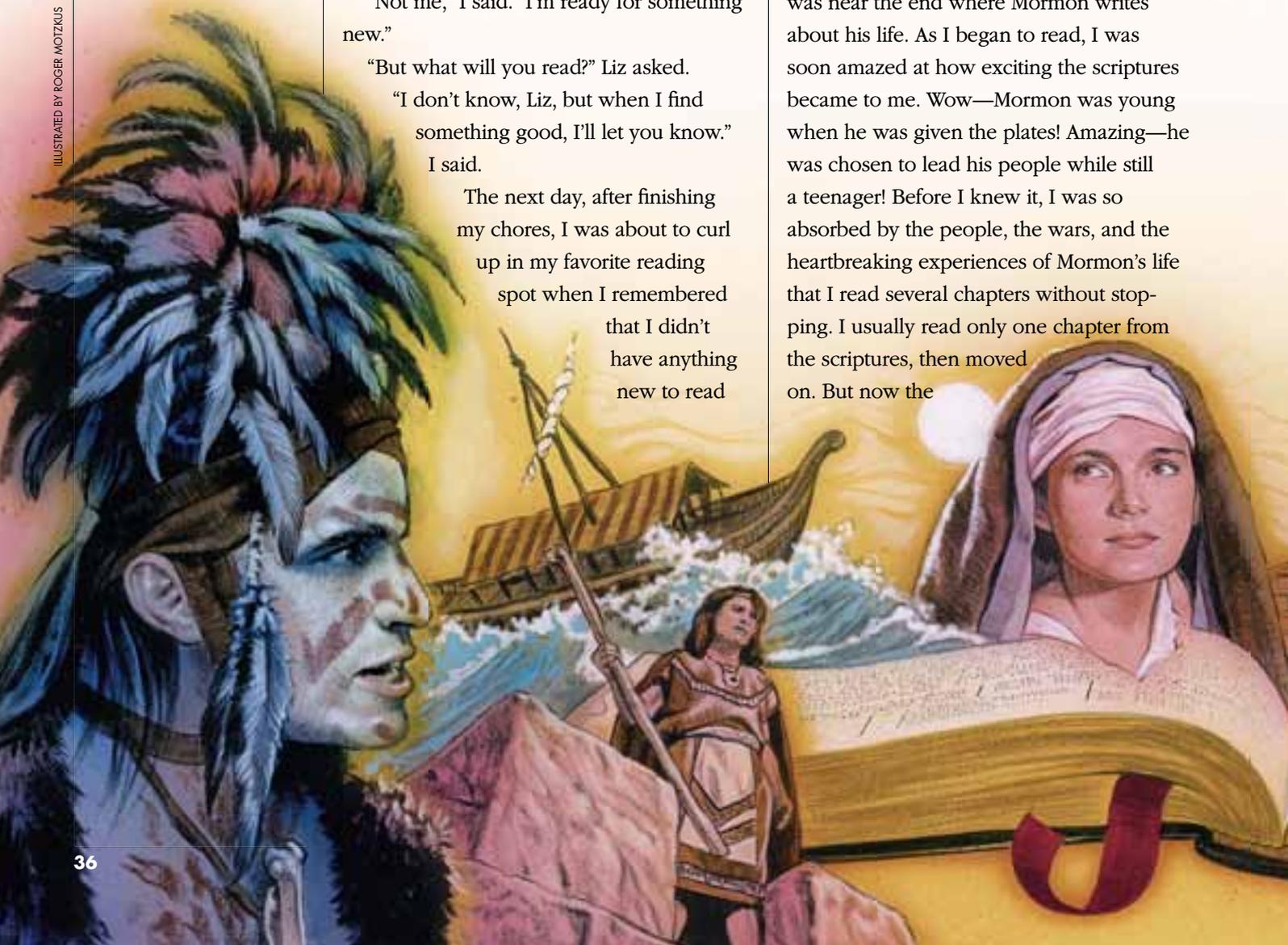
"I don't know, Liz, but when I find something good, I'll let you know."

I said.

The next day, after finishing my chores, I was about to curl up in my favorite reading spot when I remembered that I didn't have anything new to read

yet. The only thing left in my reading corner was the Book of Mormon. A couple of years earlier I had started putting my scriptures on top of whatever "fun" book I was reading at the time. I had felt guilty for spending so much time reading my fiction books when I hadn't so much as touched my scriptures. So I had made a rule that I was not allowed to read my fun book until I read my scriptures first.

I plopped down onto my reading corner and picked up the Book of Mormon. I was near the end where Mormon writes about his life. As I began to read, I was soon amazed at how exciting the scriptures became to me. Wow—Mormon was young when he was given the plates! Amazing—he was chosen to lead his people while still a teenager! Before I knew it, I was so absorbed by the people, the wars, and the heartbreaking experiences of Mormon's life that I read several chapters without stopping. I usually read only one chapter from the scriptures, then moved on. But now the



PUT IT DOWN

scriptures were becoming more interesting than my other books had been.

Why, I wondered, weren't the scriptures this interesting to me before? Maybe I needed to spend a lot of time reading this book to become emotionally involved in the lives of the characters. Maybe I needed to spend more time in the scriptures to understand the different writing styles of the prophets who wrote the Book of Mormon. Maybe I needed to remember that the stories in the Book of Mormon are true.

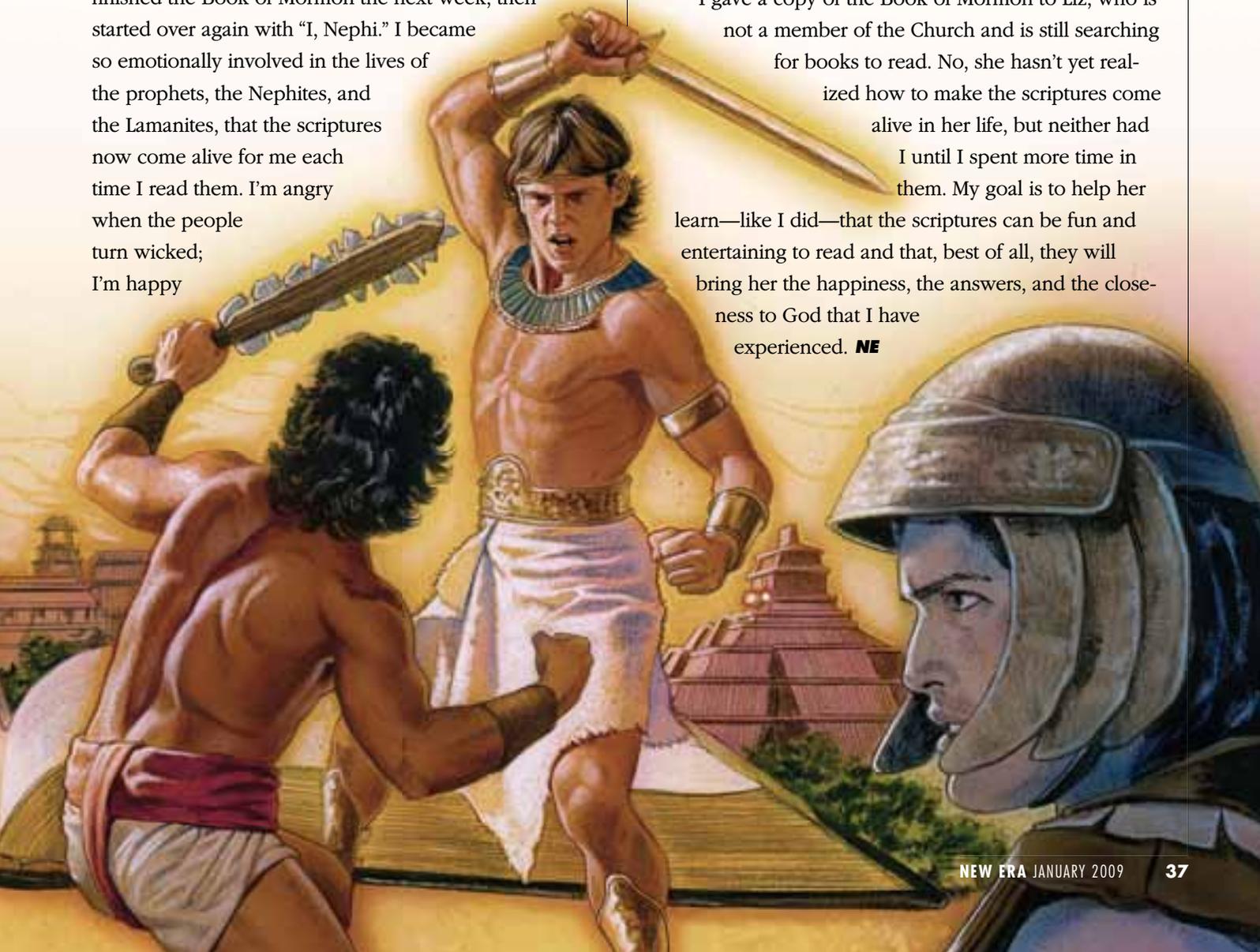
Whatever the reason, I am glad I kept reading. I finished the Book of Mormon the next week, then started over again with "I, Nephi." I became so emotionally involved in the lives of the prophets, the Nephites, and the Lamanites, that the scriptures now come alive for me each time I read them. I'm angry when the people turn wicked;

I'm happy

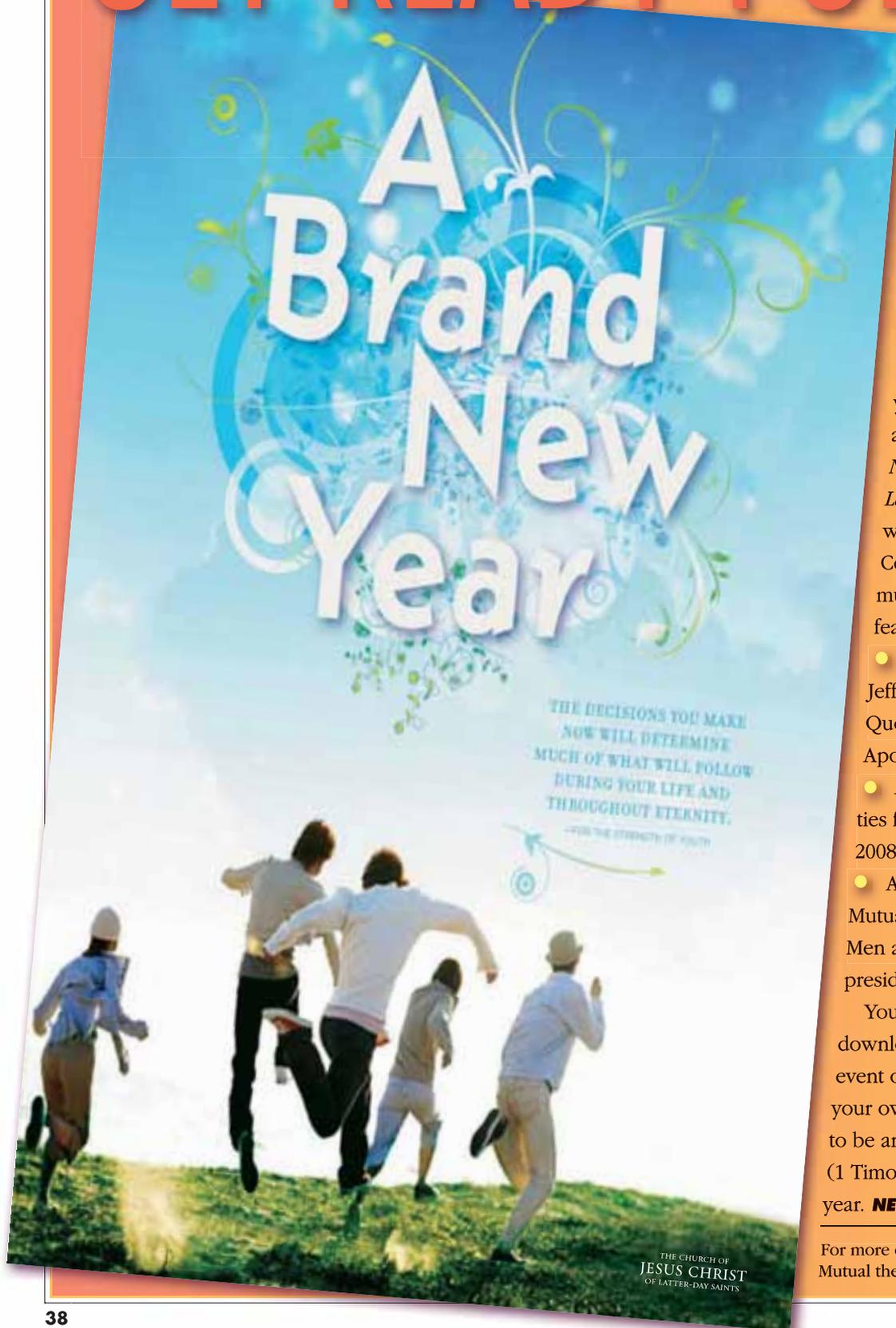
when they repent and witness miracles; I cry when their hearts are broken by tragedies, sins, and the choices of others. I often read more than one chapter at a time now, especially when there is a long voyage, a grueling war, or a visit from heavenly messengers in that particular section of the book.

Since that day in my reading corner, I have found other fiction books that I enjoy reading after my chores are finished. But I no longer need a scripture reading rule to make myself enjoy a closeness to God and the guidance of the Spirit like I never have before.

I gave a copy of the Book of Mormon to Liz, who is not a member of the Church and is still searching for books to read. No, she hasn't yet realized how to make the scriptures come alive in her life, but neither had I until I spent more time in them. My goal is to help her learn—like I did—that the scriptures can be fun and entertaining to read and that, best of all, they will bring her the happiness, the answers, and the closeness to God that I have experienced. **NE**



GET READY FOR . . .



Start the new year with a celebration!

Beginning on January 1, 2009, you can go to www.NewEra.lds.org to link to messages, music, and videos that will help you launch the new year in a great way.

At this link, you can feel like you were in the audience at the event called *A Brand New Year: A Celebration for Latter-day Saint Youth*, which was recorded at the Conference Center. This fun, musical, and inspiring program features:

- A message from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.
- A celebration of youth activities from around the world in 2008.
- An introduction of the 2009 Mutual theme by the Young Men and Young Women general presidencies.

You can watch the video and download the music from this event online, and you can make your own commitments and goals to be an “example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12) in the coming year. **NE**

For more on *A Brand New Year* and the 2009 Mutual theme, go to www.NewEra.lds.org.

CLEANING UP DOWN UNDER

Some 150 LDS youth spent the first day of autumn cleaning up Sydney's Centennial Parklands wearing gloves and the distinctive yellow Mormon Helping Hands vests. The youth and young adults gathered and disposed of cans, bottles, paper, clothes, and even a shopping cart.

The Sydney project was part of a wider national effort called Clean Up Australia Day. Starting in 1989, the initiative has expanded to include other programs, including Clean Up the World.

Australia Area Seventy Elder Terence M. Vinson thanked the young people and told them that service to the community not only makes where they live a better and more pleasant place, but it also builds personal character.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NEWSROOM AT WWW.LDS.ORG



WHAT'S UP?

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33.

THE CHURCH IN HAITI

The first Church member in Haiti was Alexandre Mourra, who, after reading the Book of Mormon, traveled to Florida from his home to be taught and baptized by the missionaries in 1977.

In July 1978, 22 Haitians were baptized in Hatte-Maree, and the first branch was created in October 1980 in nearby Port-au-Prince. Missionary work opened in Haiti in May 1980 under the direction of the West Indies Mission, and in 1982, 12 missionaries were serving in Haiti.

A branch was created in Petionville in March 1981, with Alexandre Mourra as president.

Here are a few facts about the Church today in Haiti:

Membership	14,493
Missions	1
Congregations	29
Family History Centers	1

Information from Newsroom at www.lds.org.

MY FAVORITE SCRIPTURE



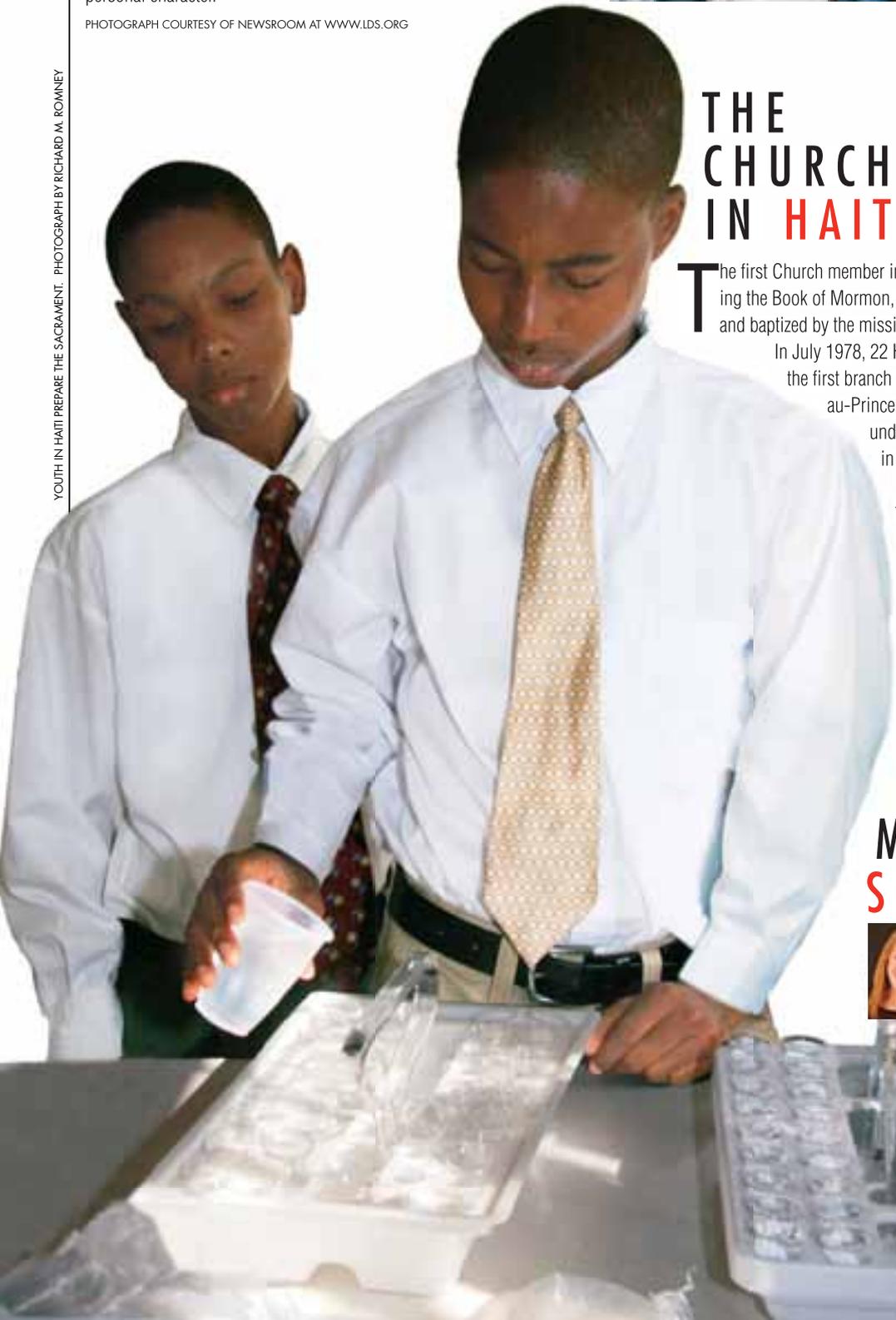
Job 19:25–26 is my favorite scripture because throughout the trials and tribulations Job went through, his testimony of Christ never failed. That is my goal, to have enough faith and understanding to never drift away, even through my trials.

Lesha L., 15, Utah, USA

Tell us about your favorite scripture in one or two sentences.

Send it to newera@ldschurch.org.

YOUTH IN HAITI PREPARE THE SACRAMENT. PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY



THE MOST USEFUL PIECE

BY ELDER CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN

Area Seventy
North America Northeast Area



Some of you who are familiar with Oxford University may know that it's the world's oldest university. The building that I lived in as a student was built in 1410—beautiful to look at, uncomfortable to live in. When I arrived at Oxford, I realized it was going to be difficult to be an active member of the Church. The Rhodes Scholarship Trust, which had given me my scholarship, had a lot of activities for the recipients of the scholarship.

As I looked at the extent to which I wanted to be involved in church, I realized that I didn't know the Book of Mormon was true. I had read it several times but usually as an assignment—from my parents or a Brigham Young University instructor. But this time I desperately needed to know if the Book of Mormon was true. So I decided that I would commit every evening from 11:00 to 12:00 to reading the Book of Mormon to find out if it was true.

I wondered if I dared spend that much time because I was in a very demanding academic program, studying applied econometrics. I was going to try to finish the program in two years, whereas most people in the program finished it in three. I didn't know if I could afford allocating an hour a day to this effort.

But nonetheless I did. I began at 11:00 by kneeling in prayer near a little heater in the stone wall, and I prayed out loud. I told God how desperate I was to find out if the Book of Mormon was true. I told Him that if He would reveal to me that it was true, I then



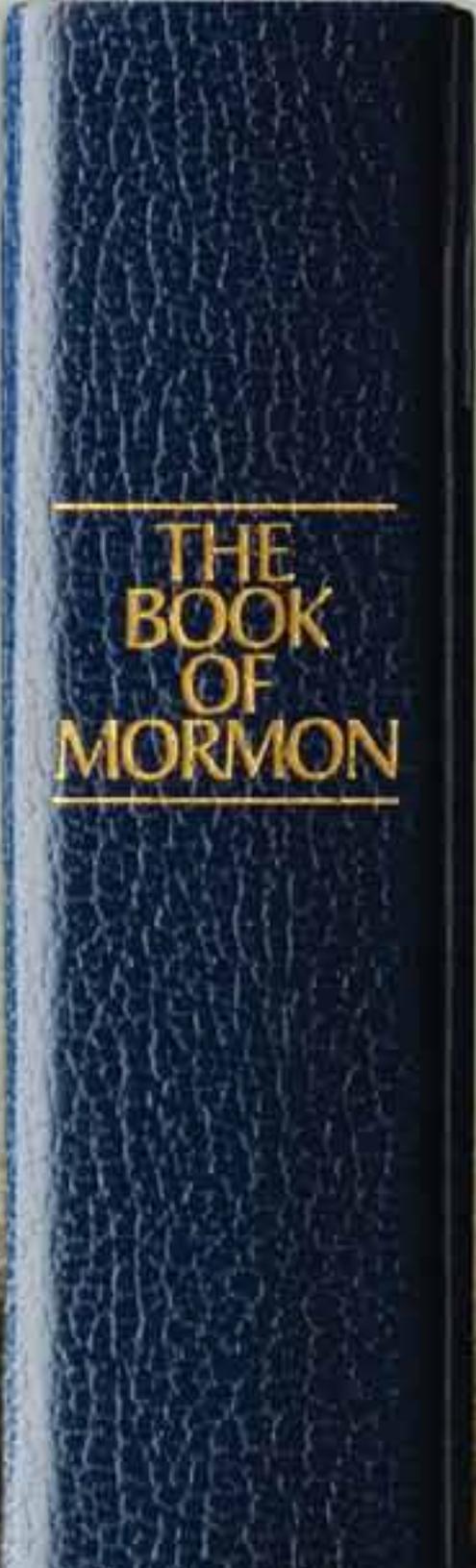
OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the most valuable things you can learn as you pursue your education is to find out for yourself that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.

intended to dedicate my life to building His kingdom. I told Him that if it wasn't true, I needed to know that for certain too because then I would dedicate my life to finding out what was true.

I read the first page of the Book of Mormon. When I got down to the bottom of the page, I stopped. I thought about what I had read on that page, and I asked myself, "Could this have been written by a charlatan who was trying to deceive people, or was this really written by a prophet of God? And what did it mean for me in my life?" Then I put the book down and knelt in prayer and asked God again, "Please tell me if this is a true book." Then I sat in the chair, picked up the book, turned the page, read it, paused at the bottom, and did the same thing. I did this for an hour every night, night after night, in that cold, damp room at Oxford.

One evening, by the time I got to the chapters at the end of 2 Nephi, I said my prayer, sat in my chair, and opened the book. All of a sudden there came into that room a beautiful, warm, loving Spirit that surrounded me and permeated my soul, enveloping me in a feeling of love that I had not imagined I could feel. I began to cry. As I looked through my tears at the words in the Book of Mormon, I could see truth in those words that I never imagined I could comprehend before. I could see the glories of eternity, and I could see what God had in store for me as one of His sons. That Spirit stayed with me the whole hour and every other evening as I prayed and read the Book of Mormon in my room. That same Spirit



THE
BOOK
OF
MORMON

*invite you to set
aside an hour
every day and find
out for yourself if the
Book of Mormon is
true, because it will
change your heart.*



would always return, and it changed my heart and my life forever.

I look back at the conflict I had experienced, wondering whether I could afford to spend an hour every day apart from the study of applied econometrics to find out if the Book of Mormon was true. I use applied econometrics maybe once a year, but I use my knowledge that the Book of Mormon is the word of God many times every day of my life. Of all the education I have ever pursued, that is the single most useful piece of knowledge I ever gained.

For those of you who may still be living on the testimonies of others, I invite you to set aside an hour every day and find out

for yourself if the Book of Mormon is true, because it will change your heart as it has changed mine. Then someday you'll be able to go to the place where you lived at the time that God revealed this to you and point at it for your children and spouse and say, "That's a sacred place because that's where I learned that Jesus is the Christ."

As I have sought to magnify my calling and to know Jesus Christ, I can testify that I know with a surety that He is the Son of God, that He lives. I know of a surety that He knows and loves every one of us. **NE**

From a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional address given on June 8, 2004. For the full text of the address, visit www.byui.edu/Presentations/transcripts/devotionals/2004_06_08_christensen.htm.

MISSIONARY SERVICE

The Prophet Joseph Smith knew the importance of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as how to do it.

From the earliest days of his ministry, the Prophet Joseph Smith preached the gospel of Jesus Christ as it was revealed to him by the Lord, and under the Lord's direction, he called others to do the same. The Lord revealed many things to the Prophet regarding the importance of preaching the gospel, as well as the way in

which it should be preached (see, for instance, D&C 4; 11; 33; 42:1–17; 50:10–22; 84:54–91; 100:1–8). Here are some of his teachings on these matters.*

WE PREACH OUT OF DUTY AND LOVE

“After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”

“Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”

TEACH SIMPLE TRUTHS WITH HUMILITY

“When you are sent into the world to preach, tell those things you are sent to tell. . . . Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. . . . Preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.”

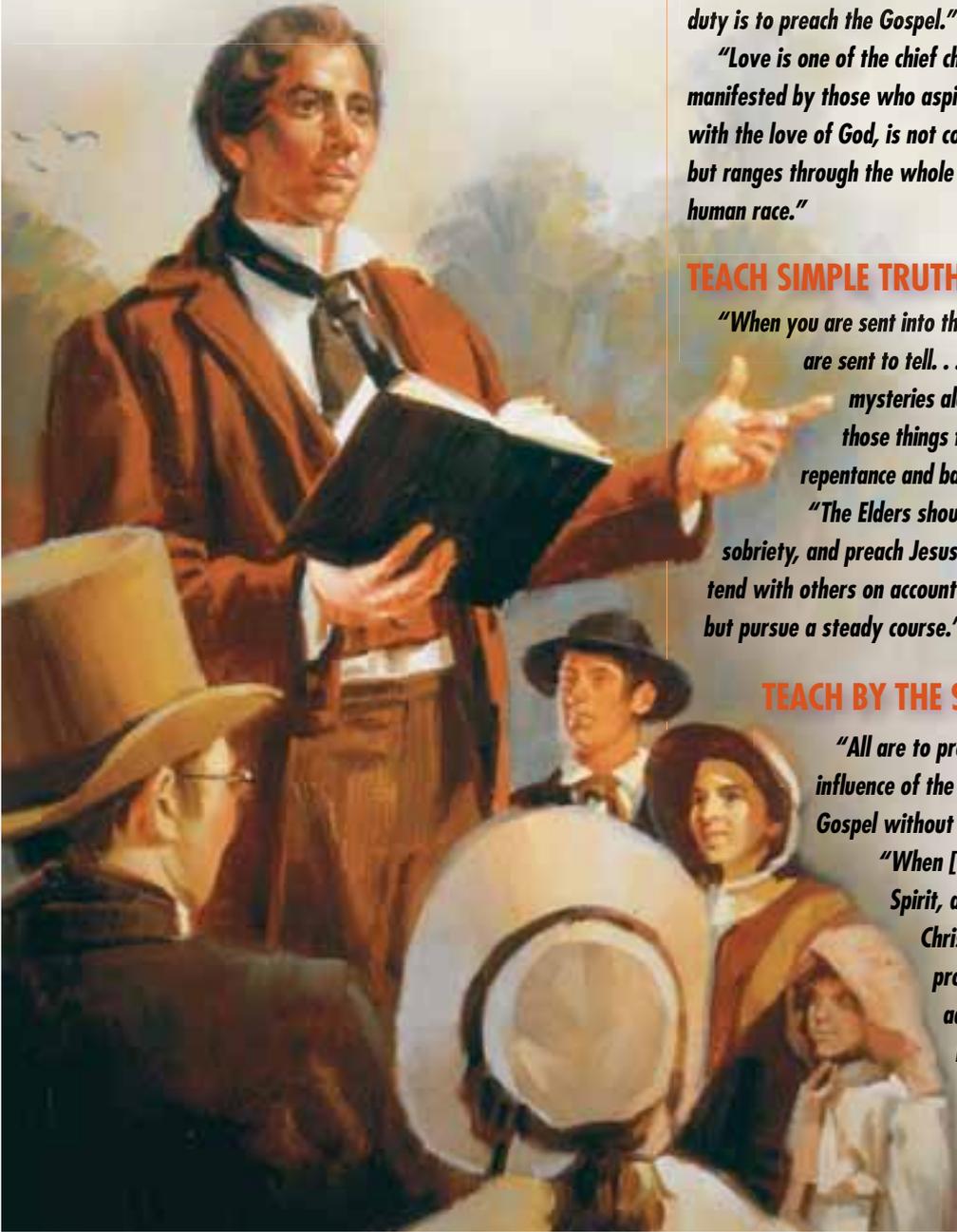
“The Elders should go forth . . . in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course.”

TEACH BY THE SPIRIT

“All are to preach the Gospel, by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost; and no man can preach the Gospel without the Holy Ghost.”

“When [the elders] teach as directed by the Spirit, according to the revelations of Jesus Christ, . . . they will preach the truth and prosper without complaint. Thus we . . . admonish elders and members to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God [see Matthew 4:4].”

* From *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330–33.





START THE YEAR RIGHT

BY BRITTANY WEISLER

I always look forward to the priesthood blessings my dad gives us before the school year because they give me strength and peace for the year ahead. I remember being scared when I was going into middle school for the first time because we had just moved. In my blessing I was promised that if I chose the right and was kind to everyone around me, the Lord would watch over me and bless me.

That year I tried to reach out to others and choose the right. I began reading the Book of Mormon, and throughout the year I was filled with peace.

I knew the Lord was keeping His promise because I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. At the end of the school year I knew it had been a hard year, but I had tried my best, and the Lord had kept his promise.

I am so thankful I have a dad who can give me priesthood blessings. Those blessings have strengthened my testimony because I have been able to feel and see them working in my life. Knowing that the Lord is able to work through my dad to speak and help me has strengthened my relationship with my Heavenly Father and my earthly father. **NE**

MY WAY OUT

BY KATIE HAFEN

Over the past school year, I've noticed more and more the immorality and profanity in the high school environment. When I went to school dances, the dress, the dancing, and the music were so vulgar that I never felt comfortable. Even in the classroom I heard swearing of equal vulgarity and could hardly wait to get away from it. When I borrowed music from my friends, there would be some really good songs that might swear once, and I would have to make a choice to get the song or not.

I felt a huge weight dragging down my spirit, making it hard to even feel happy. The only way that I was able to endure was to remember a scripture mastery from the New Testament. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). I realize that other people have the same problems to get through, and that no matter what trials are thrown at me, I can get through them all with God's help. If we are tempted, we can conquer it because we won't be given any temptation we can't handle. There is nothing we can't overcome if we rely on Heavenly Father's power and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. **NE**

TEMPLE SERVICE

BY ANNE PARSONS

One August I went to the Salt Lake Temple with my father and stepmother after spending a long summer in Oregon. I had been looking forward to the visit because I had been feeling overwhelmed about going back to school. I wasn't sure if I could meet all of the requirements of my upcoming junior year.

While my parents went in to participate in an endowment session, I went

to do baptisms. Going to the temple had always been a spiritual experience for me, but that day I didn't feel the Spirit, which increased my lonely feelings. I decided to say a prayer.

In my prayer, I admitted I didn't know how to feel better but asked for a chance to help someone else. When I opened my eyes, there was a girl my age by herself who appeared to be confused. When I asked if she needed some help, she said it was her first time in the Salt Lake Temple and didn't know where to go. As I helped her find her way around the temple, we enjoyed our time together doing baptisms. I know helping her was the answer to my prayer. **NE**

WELL SUITED

BY SPENCER COPE

I have always been thrifty with my money. My parents taught me to work hard for the things I wanted, and I learned quickly to save every penny, nickel, and dime that I earned.

They also taught me the importance of tithing. Though it was difficult at first to part with the money, I quickly learned that God always blesses us for the sacrifice.

When I received my mission call I was thrilled to go but quickly realized I was going to need a lot of supplies. I had saved my money for years, but the cost of each month in addition to the shoes, shirts, ties, belts, scriptures, and other various

articles I would need as a missionary quickly added up. As a college student, my finances were already strained.

I knew I needed to serve the Lord, and I knew that He would help me to do it, so I decided to "prove" Him as it says in Malachi 3:10. I always paid a full tithe. I knew God would provide a way, and He did.

With my parents' aid, I covered all of the expenses I would need, except for one suit. I went to a local second-hand store in hopes of finding one. I often have a difficult time finding clothes that fit because I am rather tall with long arms. After a few minutes of searching the racks I found just the suit I was looking for, and it fit perfectly!

It was a direct answer to a simple prayer. Even though it was a small need, I know that when we pay a full tithe, the Lord will provide a way. **NE**

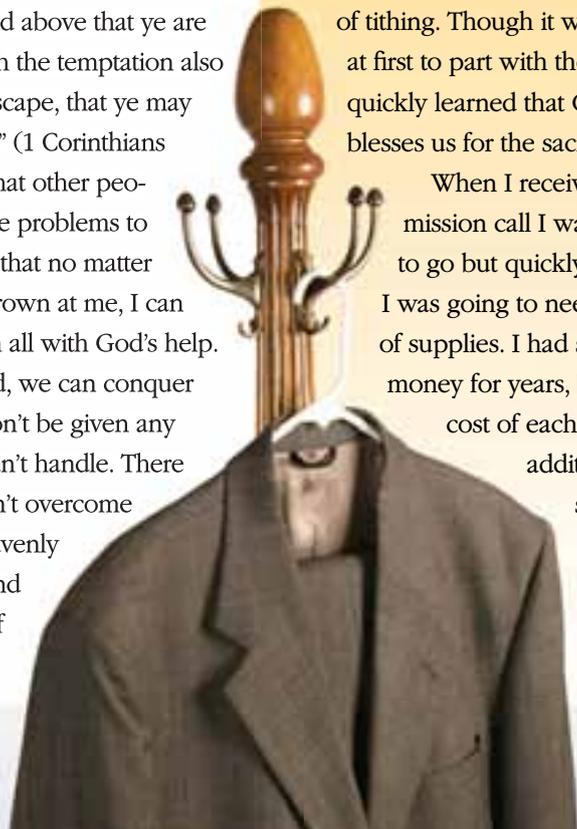


ILLUSTRATION BY GREGG THORKEISON, PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STOKER

SEARCHING FOR A FAVORITE HYMN

BY MICHAEL PAUL INYANG

Our mission president had been admonishing the missionaries in the Ghana Accra Mission to “stay focused.” He was famous for using this phrase. At one of our zone conferences, he suggested ways we could do this, and a key point in his list was having a favorite hymn.

He told us to select a favorite hymn, memorize it, and sing it at times we may be tempted or down. This statement echoed in my memory throughout the day.

I was homesick. Nobody in my family had written to me recently, and I felt depressed. I had been less focused. This was the moment I needed to select a hymn to uplift my spirit. I was familiar with many hymns in our green hymnbook, but which did I love the most?

That night, I took an old hymnbook and flipped through the dog-eared pages, searching for a hymn that had a comforting meaning to me.

Immediately, I had an idea. Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy, then Africa West Area President, had visited our group in the missionary training center and spoken about the Atonement. He

concluded, “If all you young missionaries understood the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, there would be no need of mission rules.”

That was the kind of hymn I needed. I was no longer confused. If I had a hymn about the Atonement, I would feel the love of my Savior, be comforted, and stay focused on what He wants me to do.

I finally chose hymn number 136, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.”

Today I am grateful to my mission president for his wise counsel. Now I have a favorite hymn memorized, which I ponder always and remember to sing in times of depression, trials, and difficulties. “I know that my Redeemer lives. What comfort this sweet sentence gives. . . . He lives to bless in time of need.” **NE**

A YOUNG MISSIONARY

BY LAUKAU MOKOFISI

It was my best friend’s birthday, and she was turning 13. I rushed to find a present for her before school, but I couldn’t find anything. Then I saw the Book of Mormon. I decided to challenge myself by giving it to her as a gift. I felt good inside but sort of scared because I had never given anyone the Book of Mormon before. I was afraid she might not accept it.

When I arrived at school, I looked for her and told her that I had a special book for her. She took the book and saw a picture of my family in the front. I told her that it was the Book of Mormon, a book that tells the truth of why we are here on earth. I also told her that I was sorry for not giving her a better gift.

She looked me in the eye and said it was the greatest thing I could have given her. Her words touched my heart, and I nearly cried. I felt like a missionary already! I can’t wait until I’m old enough to go on a mission so I can share the gospel with other people like my friend. **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 e-mail it to

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MUTUAL

I read "Mutual in the Dominican Republic" (Sept. 08). I liked learning about other wards' Mutual because I love going to Mutual in my own ward. I liked reading about what people from there had to say about it, and what they do during Mutual. Looking at this article made me think that Mutual there and where I live are a lot alike. It shows that wherever you are in the Church, it is still the same.

Ben R., Tennessee

FROM URUGUAY

I'm from Maldonado in Uruguay. I like so much the *New Era* magazine. I'm learning English in high school, but I can't speak and write very well. I like to read the articles (my mother helps me, of course). My favorite is "The Point" (Mar. 2008). I also like the Questions and Answers, too. It's great! *Gracias por una revista tan maravillosa y edificante.*

Sariah S., Uruguay

JUST DAVID

I want to thank you for publishing the article about David Archuleta (Aug. 2008). He is an amazing role model for teenagers and is a great member of the Church. It is great to see such a wholesome young man in the Hollywood spotlight, especially in these times. David has made me think about the way I live my life as a Church member and as a person, and has made me want to become the best I can be. It is so good to see someone using their talents for a good purpose.

Kim T., Utah

*Wherever I go,
I always pack
the New Era
in my bag to read
every day.
It helps me to choose
the right.*

PACK THEM IN A BAG

I really love the *New Era*. Wherever I go, I always pack them in my bag to read every day. It helps me to choose the right. Whenever I fall into temptation, I look at the *New Era* and think carefully. I personally liked the story "How Long Are You Going to Keep Me?" (Sept. 08). I remembered again that we can live with our family forever.

Heybin K., Korea

SCRIPTURES

I want to thank you for the article "Five Scriptures That Will Help You Get through Almost Anything" (Sept. 08). I felt so good reading this, and I know what it says is true. Several months ago when I was walking to church, I almost got hit by a car. Luckily, the side mirror only swiped my head. It hurt badly, and I felt it was so unfair for that to happen to me. At the ER I was told that I had no broken bones, no concussion. It was a miracle to have not been seriously hurt. I am reassured that I was spared because my work here is not finished, just like scripture #3 (Alma 14:13) says. This article has reminded me that I should live life to the fullest.

Mai Vang, Minnesota

ATTITUDES

I really enjoyed "My Attitude Transplant" in the September 2008 issue. It showed me just how important it is to take pride in your work. I'll be starting my Eagle project soon, and that story was a good example about how I should treat not just my Eagle project, but any form of work.

Caleb O., Arizona

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

New Era

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Or e-mail us at newera@ldschurch.org

Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.





FIRST DAY IN FINLAND

BY MELINA GOTTLING

The house is canopied in green,
and the rain doesn't fall to the
ground.

It sifts through the leaves,
making a hollow sound
as it falls on the ferns and goose-
berry bushes
that are under the eaves
and the dripline of the trees.
I can hear the roots drinking and
swelling,
grateful for the cool rain
that feeds them—
rain from the Baltic Sea that keeps
me inside
against Grandma's windowsill
with damp morning glory clinging
to the window panes
and a whole country waiting
outside.

I'm stuck in the white-washed
cottage,
filled with the warm breath of
blueberry tarts
and music from 1950s Hollywood
playing in the dining room.
Grandma is at the table, humming
and making cloth bodies
for the heads, hands, and feet
made of clay and spread out on
the table
like a doll's morgue.

The Finnish/English dictionary
sits open
on the table next to my Grandma.
I sit down across from her—
she smiles.

I relate to the gooseberry bushes
And love rain.



COMING NEXT MONTH

- *A baptismal site with a waterfall is sacred to teens in Guadeloupe.*
- *Dad's notes were one sure way to know I was loved.*
- *The Word of Wisdom is the best way to avoid getting trapped.*
- *I don't like to tell people no. What if I get talked into trying alcohol or drugs?*
- *Am I going to marry the guy I have a crush on?*
- *Special-needs Mutual holds a dance where everyone is king and queen.*

These are a few of the articles coming up in the February issue of the New Era.

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