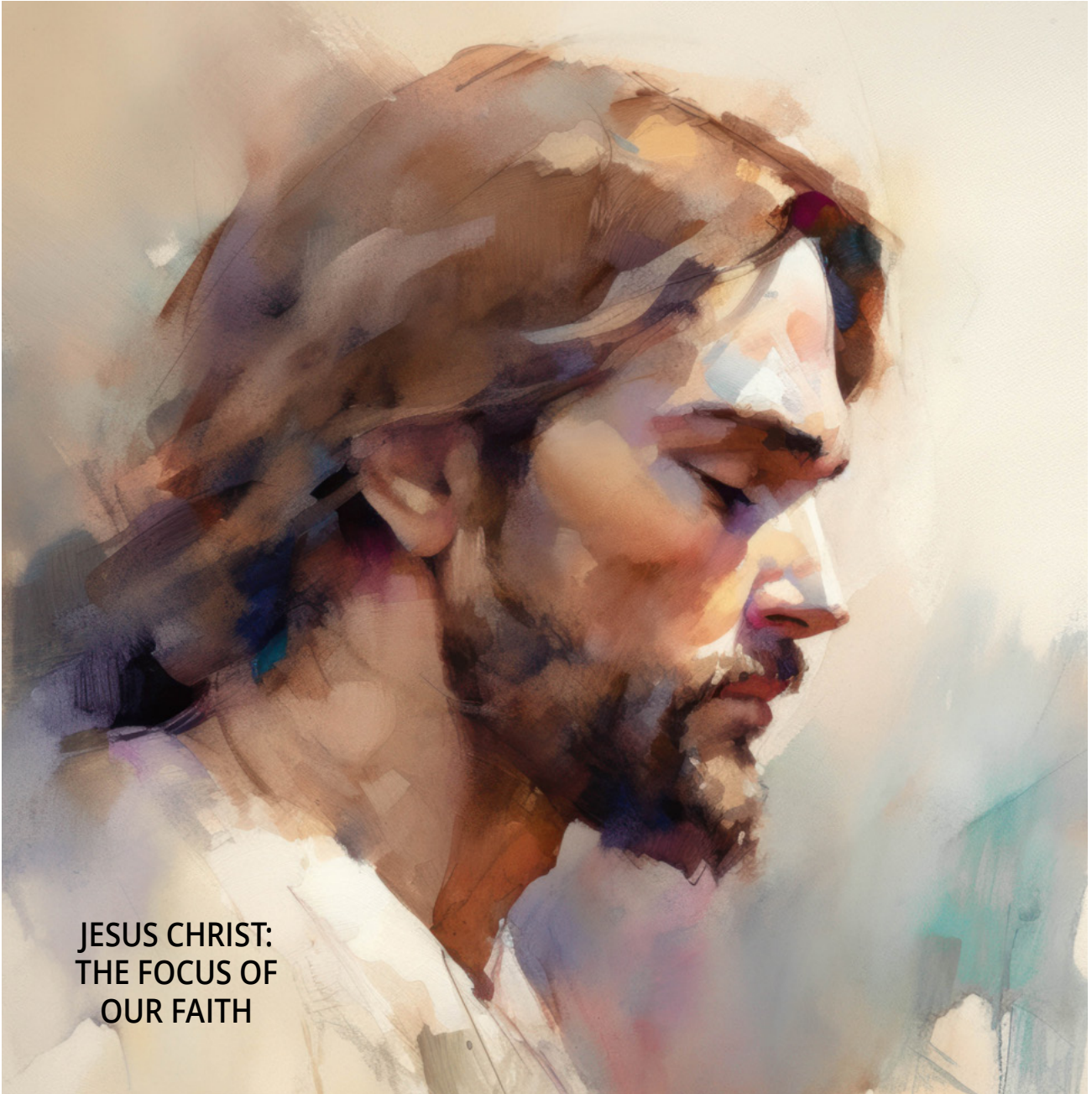


AUGUST 2024

Liahona

Pointing Us All to Jesus Christ



**JESUS CHRIST:
THE FOCUS OF
OUR FAITH**

LESSONS IN FAITH FROM CAPTAIN MORONI

How to Prepare for Our Spiritual Battles, 4

TEMPLE AND FAMILY HISTORY WORK

Why This Is an Unprecedented Time, 12

Moroni "bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land."

ALMA 46:13



Building Firm Faith through Spiritual Preparedness

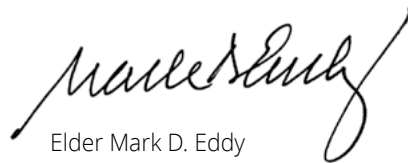
In a time filled with spiritual challenges, prophets and apostles teach how our preparation greatly determines the outcome of those challenges in our lives.

In this issue, Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shares how the faith, ingenuity, and tactics of Captain Moroni prepared his people so the Lord could bless them with success in the wars against the Lamanites.

To a defeated enemy leader, Moroni said, “The Lord . . . has delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is . . . because of our religion and our faith in Christ” (Alma 44:3).

Elder Renlund writes: “Moroni modeled principles that we can apply to help us meet the challenges of our modern lives. As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, . . . He will bless us with His power” (page 4).

Articles and stories in this issue demonstrate important ways we can do this. In my article, I write, “May we resolve—once and for all—to choose faith in Jesus Christ, a faith sufficient for all seasons of life” (page 44). As we do so, we will be better prepared to receive divine assistance in meeting our spiritual challenges.



Elder Mark D. Eddy
Of the Seventy



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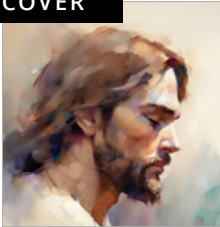
“Correctly understanding Heavenly Father’s plan will motivate us to keep fighting for our eternal salvation and for our freedom from spiritual bondage.”

—Elder Dale G. Renlund, page 4

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August 2024
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Liahona 19294

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In Humility, Our Savior, by Jay Bryant Ward, may not be copied

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YA WEEKLY

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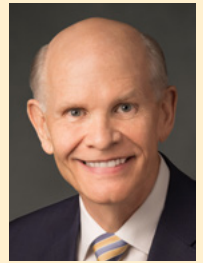
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By Elder Dale G. Renlund

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

GOD WILL SUPPORT AND PRESERVE US

*Like Captain Moroni, we can receive divine help
and power for the battles we face in life.*

When I first read the Book of Mormon, I enjoyed the history of wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites. I was fascinated by the faith, ingenuity, and tactics used by Captain Moroni, a military commander who was appointed the leader of all the Nephite armies when he was only 25 years old. He was wise, strong, and shrewd. He was totally committed to the freedom and welfare of his people. (See Alma 48:11–12.)

Instead of crediting military success to himself, Moroni attributed the success to God and to the sacred support his armies received from noncombatant women and children. He told a defeated enemy leader: “The Lord . . . has delivered you into our hands. And now I would that ye should understand that this is . . . because of our religion and our faith in Christ.” Moroni then shared this prophetic insight: “God will support, and keep, and preserve us, so long as we are faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion” (Alma 44:3,4).

Over time, I have come to realize that Moroni modeled principles that we can apply to help us meet the challenges of our modern lives. As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, He will bless us with His power. But for Him to do so and for us to recognize His blessings, we need to understand our purpose, strategize for success, and prepare for the metaphorical battles we face, just as Moroni prepared for and faced the real battles in his life. As we do so, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will support and preserve us.

Understanding Our Purpose

Moroni repeatedly reminded the people who they were (inheritors of the Abrahamic covenant), whose they were (beloved children of God), and the cause for which they fought (family, faith, and freedom). Moroni taught his people that they were fighting for their very survival and for freedom from oppression and bondage. In contrast, their enemies fought for personal aggrandizement and power by subjugating others.

When some Nephites sought to usurp authority for personal gain, Moroni ripped his coat and wrote on a piece of it the core elements of his message: “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.” He raised this flag, which he called “the title of liberty,” on the end of a pole and used it to remind the people what the

fight was all about and to rally them to the cause. (See Alma 46:12–13, 19–20.)

In life’s spiritual battles, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . rulers of the darkness . . . [and] against spiritual wickedness” (Ephesians 6:12). We, too, need to be reminded of what the fight is all about. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004), a former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, expressed this thought in an eloquent, albeit brief, conversation.

In 2004, I visited Elder Maxwell in his hospital room not long before he died. He was so kind to everyone who visited or helped him. Health-care workers went into his room and came out weeping. I said to him, “Elder Maxwell, this is really hard.” He chuckled and said, “Oh, Dale, we are eternal beings living in a mortal world. We are out of our element, like fish out of water. It is only when we have an eternal perspective that any of this will make any sense.”

We should never lose sight of the large composite of our divine nature and eternal destiny and the diabolical forces that oppose us. Correctly understanding Heavenly Father’s plan will motivate us to keep fighting for our eternal salvation and for our freedom from spiritual bondage.

Strategizing for Success

Throughout the battles his armies fought, Moroni strategized to ensure success. He used spies to discover the activities and intentions of his enemies. He sought direction from the prophet, Alma. Moroni then used that inspired input in his approach to battle. He deployed resources according to need, placing more soldiers in cities that were less fortified. He strategically set operational plans based on up-to-date information.

He thereby gained advantages over enemy armies. He was never content with past victories; rather, he continued to improve his and his armies’ capacities to deal with future challenges.

We can use similar approaches to deal with spiritual antagonists. We can start by recognizing what Satan is trying to do in our lives.



He tries to distract us from our purpose. When faced with temptation, we should ask ourselves:

- How does this action on my part stack up against the revealed word of God?
- What are the consequences of taking this action?
- Will this action help me fulfill my purpose on earth?

We should also recognize the eventual outcome of yielding to even small temptations. As we yield to temptation, we consume “poison by degrees” (Alma 47:18), a most effective strategy used by the powers of wickedness that can lead to spiritually fatal results.

We can fortify ourselves against Satan’s temptations by following the direction we receive from our latter-day prophet. Doing so helps us keep an eternal perspective through which to evaluate our actions. Strategizing how we will face the temptations that arise in various areas of our lives will help us make the more correct choices in the moment. Preplanned strategies and approaches will help us defend against distractions from our eternal purpose.

An example is that of technology. Technology can be a double-edged sword, both useful and detrimental, depending on how we use it. To help us make wise choices about our devices, young and old can refer to “Taking Charge of Technology”¹ and *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*.² These remind us of our purpose, point us to Jesus Christ, and help us invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. Planning how, when, and where we will use technology will fortify us against baser, worldly tactics.





Preparing for Metaphorical Battles


Anticipating upcoming battles, Moroni prepared his people individually with breastplates, shields, helmets, and thick clothing. He prepared his people collectively by encircling cities with forts, throwing up banks of earth around them.

Spiritually, we prepare individually by keeping the commandments of God. We make and keep covenants with God that draw the power of Jesus Christ into our lives. We engage in personal, private acts of devotion, such as praying, fasting, and searching the scriptures. We also act in faith, responding to the spiritual direction we receive. We conscientiously prepare for and worthily

partake of the sacrament. As we do so, the Savior becomes more real in our lives, just as He was real to Moroni, who was firm in his faith in Jesus Christ. Moroni knew he could rely on the Savior for direction and deliverance (see Alma 48:16). We, too, can rely on Jesus Christ for direction and deliverance.

We can further prepare by strengthening our families. Our Heavenly Father organized us into families to help us be happy and learn how to return to Him. Our families can be a source of help for us. We can all feel joy and love by remembering that we are part of God's great family, regardless of the individual circumstances of our families.

We can collectively gain strength and



prepare for our spiritual battles as we join in communities of Saints. Our stakes and districts provide such a place of refuge and defense. We can nourish each other spiritually, help each other to keep the commandments of God, and encourage each other to rely on Christ, always and especially in times of challenge. When we gather, we realize that we do not fight our battles alone. We have friends, teachers, and leaders who can help and protect us. We are all stronger when we prepare together.

Remarkably, Moroni attributed *all* the happiness of his people to being true to their faith in God and their religion. Like Moroni, we should realize that joy comes because of

Heavenly Father and His plan and because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.³ As we come to understand our purpose, strategize for success, and prepare for metaphorical battles, we receive divine help and power.

Like Moroni, I know that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ bring the ultimate freedom from bondage—freedom from death and sin. They bless us with Their power when we look to Them in all things. ■

NOTES

1. “Taking Charge of Technology,” Gospel Library.
2. *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* (2022), Gospel Library.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.





THE CHURCH IS HERE

Trinidad and Tobago



On June 5, 1980, the first branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Trinidad and Tobago was organized in the capital city, Port of Spain. Over the last 40 years, the Church there has grown to include:



3,400 members (approximately)



1 stake, 10 wards and branches



1 FamilySearch center

There is not yet a temple in Trinidad and Tobago, so the Saints faithfully travel to other countries, such as the Dominican Republic, for temple worship. Rouann Johnson, a member in the Arima Branch, shares a blessing of attending the temple: "The peace I feel while I am in the temple can't be found in any other place on earth."



RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ROUANN JOHNSON

By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton of the Seventy, Executive Director of the Family History Department, **and Stephen T. Rockwood**, Managing Director of the Family History Department and President and CEO of FamilySearch



AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME FOR TEMPLE AND FAMILY HISTORY WORK

Never before in the history of the world have there been so many temples and, thanks to the latest technology, so many people (including those not of our faith) adding to their family trees.

The Liahona staff asked Elder Hamilton and Brother Rockwood about temple and family history work and how it blesses Heavenly Father's children—in a time when temples and technology are coming together to bring forth the Lord's work of salvation and exaltation as never before.



What inspires you about temple and family history work?

Elder Hamilton: God’s hand is clearly in this work. When President Russell M. Nelson invited us to “strengthen our *personal spiritual* foundations,” he then said, “Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures.”¹ We’ve never before seen the kind of growth we are seeing now. We’re in an era of temple building that’s unknown in human history, with nearly 180 temples in operation, dozens under construction, and dozens more being announced every year.

And with that growth, the need to build the family tree of humanity grows as well. President Nelson has taught that the temple is “nourished by names.”² It’s up to us to make sure our temples are well nourished with the names needed so our ancestors can receive their ordinances and members can enjoy the blessings of the temple throughout their lifetime.





Can you share your thoughts on how we can put the Savior first in family history work?

Elder Hamilton: Ofttimes, we focus first on genealogy, which leads us to our ancestors, which leads us to participating in ordinances and making covenants in the temple, which then binds us to the Savior. That is wonderful, but we should flip that script. The Savior comes first. We seek a closer relationship with Him, so we go to the house of the Lord and receive ordinances and make covenants with Him, binding us to Him. Then we enable that for our deceased ancestors by seeking them out and performing temple ordinances for them.

We start with the Savior and say, “I’d like to help my ancestors bind themselves to the Savior through temple ordinances.” With a couple of taps on a smartphone, the Ordinances Ready tool in FamilySearch searches for members of your family who need ordinances performed so they can have the opportunity to bind themselves to the Savior. The sequence is correct: Jesus Christ, then covenants and ordinances that culminate in the temple—the house of the Lord.

Brother Rockwood: FamilySearch is a service organization dedicated to helping the people of the world find and connect to their families. That’s the core of what we do and have been doing for over 100 years. The Church is bringing temples and FamilySearch closer and closer to people around the world. Our goal is the same: to provide means for people to come unto Christ.

What surprises you most about this part of God’s work of salvation and exaltation?

Brother Rockwood: One of the most surprising things I’ve seen in my 20 years working in the Family History Department is how many people from all over the world are building their family trees. In fact, today most of the people who use FamilySearch aren’t members of our faith. They come from nearly every country on earth. In 2023, 6 million people signed up for a FamilySearch account—and a stunning 97 percent of them aren’t members of our faith. We had 4.1 million people participate in our RootsTech conference last year from 243 countries and territories, and the majority weren’t members of our faith.

Elder Hamilton: It’s a pretty bold statement to say we’re building the family tree of humanity, with only 17 million members of the Church. But with the help of millions more of Heavenly Father’s children across the globe, the tree is being built one family at a time. Latter-day Saints then can perform the temple ordinance work and provide the way for their ancestors to bind themselves to Jesus Christ. This is really the great miracle of our day. The whole world is invited to come and gather names to the family tree and help us identify and document these family relationships across all time and all space.

Is this what people call the spirit of Elijah?

Elder Hamilton: Elijah did indeed come and commit the keys for this work (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–15). But President Nelson has taught that what we often call “the spirit of Elijah” is simply the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.³ It’s inspiring to watch. It’s a powerful emotion. Almost every time a person begins to learn more about their ancestors, a powerful spirit comes. It’s the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost’s witness transcends ethnic lines, political boundaries, and language boundaries. This

Spirit is sweeping the earth as millions of people come to FamilySearch.

Sometimes we ask people not of our faith, “Why do you do this?” People typically struggle to explain it. They say, “I just want to connect and know how I belong. I want to feel part of a family.” That’s why they keep coming back to FamilySearch again and again—because they feel something. All of this is the hand of the Lord helping to build the family tree of humanity.

What would you say to people who have the notion that family history work is difficult?

Elder Hamilton: I would love people to lose their preconceptions that this is hard work. This is not a clerical work. It's a spiritual work. It's a joyful work. You can see that again and again in the history of it.

Brother Rockwood: When the early Saints learned they could do baptisms for their ancestors, they felt an incredible joy and couldn't wait to begin. In our day we witness the joy people feel when they hear that a temple is announced in their area. This is joy in a time when the world is getting darker and darker. The Lord is bringing this joy to everyone with more and more temples. He's opening up opportunities for people to discover their ancestors in ways that are totally unprecedented, with technology developed under His inspiration. It's all because He's flooding the earth with joy.

And then there is that notion that family history work is best done (or is already done) by someone else in our family.

Elder Hamilton: Some people tune out when they hear "family history" because of a preconceived notion about who should do this work or who would be good at it. Yet there are many ways to do this work. There are experienced family historians who have a great passion for genealogy and spend hours and hours of their time pursuing it, learning about it, and acquiring specialized skills. But there are also people who just want to have a family name at their next temple appointment. There are busy parents, retired people, youth, and even Primary children who are doing family history. We need all of these people, in whatever way they can help.





How can youth and young adults help?

Elder Hamilton: It's incredible to see the increase in our youth who are participating in family history. In 2011, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a talk in general conference in which he invited the youth of the Church to engage in this work. He said, "Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord."⁴ Most young people are comfortable with technology. They love the problem-solving nature of family history—it's kind of a treasure hunt. You have to figure out where to go next and what to do next.

President Nelson has taught the youth—and the rest of us—that the gathering of Israel is the greatest cause on earth.⁵ The youth and young adults are not only engaging in this opportunity but truly leading out in it. It's amazing to watch these digital natives become part of a great convergence—unprecedented temple building, unprecedented technology, unprecedented numbers of people participating.

These young people love the temple, and they love the Savior. It's one of the great manifestations of the gathering—the coming forth of the rising generation as they engage in this work.

Brother Rockwood: It's so wonderful that young children learn that they are children of God as they prepare for their baptismal covenants and later go to the temple. They learn they can participate as children of the covenant in helping to gather Israel, and as they do, they become stronger disciples of Jesus Christ.⁶ It's a tremendous opportunity for the young people to learn who they are and what the Lord's purpose is for them—and that they truly were saved for this day, "armed with righteousness" (1 Nephi 14:14).

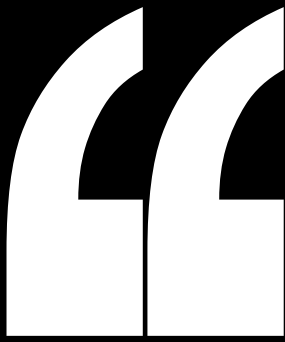


How has family history work blessed your own family?

Elder Hamilton: We ran into a dead end while searching the ancestry of my French great-great-grandfather, Adolph Cuny, for as long as we have been working on it—decades. We were not able to find his parents, no matter how hard we looked. But last year some wonderful French genealogists working with FamilySearch looked at our records and, using their skills and local knowledge, were able to find Adolph's parents and even his grandparents.

Our family has now been able to do all of their ordinances in the temple, and we are now working on their extended families and descendants. A doorway was opened to so many people from this part of my family tree. This blessing was provided by FamilySearch and its network of dedicated and skilled researchers and consultants. This type of help is available to any FamilySearch patron—member of the Church or not.





What improvements have you seen in this work?

Brother Rockwood: For many years, paper records were kept by churches or governments. Most western records start in the AD 1500–1600 time period. In the 1930s we began to photograph records using microfilm. By the time that ended in 2006, we had 2.6 million rolls of microfilm in our collection. We decided to digitize those images, which looked like it would be a multi-decade project. But divine inspiration brought us new technology that shortened that dramatically to a fraction of the time, completed in 2022. The greatest part of that is what used to be only available on microfilm is now mostly available on the internet, through FamilySearch. You can access it through a smartphone, tablet, or computer. The internet has been a game changer.

FamilySearch made a bold decision to move to a public tree—kind of like Wikipedia, which can be viewed and edited by everyone. Changes are carefully tracked, and with a kind of crowdsource approach, the family tree of humanity can be built with greater participation and fewer errors.

Elder Hamilton: Today, billions of people have access to the internet. To take advantage of smartphone technology, the Church has developed mobile apps to bring FamilySearch to people everywhere. The Memories app, the Family Tree app, and the Get Involved app are all available for smartphones, which has really opened doors to advance the Lord’s work.

Brother Rockwood: We’re in the midst of miracles, with so many temples being built and so much data gathered by the masses. And at the very moment we need it, the technology to organize it and make it

widely accessible is developed. Artificial intelligence is now allowing us to organize data in a way that makes it searchable and translated into any language.

Elder Hamilton: Today we are seeing the fulfillment of Ephesians 1:10, which says that “in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” One way we see that being fulfilled is in the temples, the names, and the technology all coming together by the hand of the Lord so that we can do the temple work for as many of our Heavenly Father’s children who are willing to receive it. And that really is the story of the temple and family history effort in a nutshell. The Lord is in this work, and miraculous things are happening. They are happening because He directs it. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 93.
2. Russell M. Nelson, address given at the temple leadership seminar, Oct. 15, 2019; see also Sarah Jane Weaver, “Despite Temple Closures, Blessings Are Readily Available during COVID-19 Pandemic, Elder Bednar Says” (digital-only article), *Liahona*, 2020 (“COVID-19: Messages of Faith”), Gospel Library.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34.
4. David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 26.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library.
6. President Nelson taught that our three most important identifiers are as “a child of God, a child of the covenant, and a disciple of Jesus Christ” (“Choices for Eternity” [worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022], Gospel Library).







PHOTOGRAPH OF TEGUCIGALPA HONDURAS TEMPLE BY CODY BELL

WHAT CAN I SAY TO OTHERS ABOUT THE TEMPLE?

By **Jessica Anne Lawrence**
Church Magazines

The way we discuss the temple matters.

I remember being excited to receive my endowment when I was getting ready to leave for my mission. I also remember having that excitement turn to worry and confusion after some family members gave me veiled warnings about attending for the first time.

I knew their intentions were genuine in trying to help me have a good experience. But I wish that instead of focusing on *warning* me that the temple was unfamiliar, people had helped *prepare* me for the temple in uplifting and correct ways.

With that in mind, here are four things to consider as you talk to those preparing to go to the temple for the first time:

1. Focus on Truths over Opinions

When someone we love is attending the temple for the first time, we naturally want to share our own experiences with him or her. But we need to make sure what we're sharing is focused on gospel truths rather than our own opinions.

Correct information allows our loved ones to focus on the Savior and not be swayed into feeling a certain way about their temple



experiences. President Russell M. Nelson said, “Good inspiration is based upon good information.”¹

You can share correct information (and even pictures!) about the temple from the temple preparation course, the scriptures, and temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Sometimes we might get nervous about what to share, but by turning to resources rather than our opinions, we don’t have to worry about oversharing.

By giving correct information about the temple, we offer a more enlightened view about the temple. Opinions are often focused on feelings and experiences we’ve had, while gospel information is focused on allowing your loved one to have their own experience in the temple.

2. Consider the Words You Use

What descriptions of the temple have stuck with you? For example, President Nelson said, “Your service and worship in the temple will help you to think celestial.”² And President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) said, “Each [temple] stands as a beacon to the world.”³

We can choose words that will offer hope and enlightenment to those we love who are preparing for their temple

experience. We can avoid negative descriptors of the temple (like “weird” or “strange”), and we can choose to use positive, Christ-centered descriptions (like “peace” and “hope”).

I find it helpful to think about the many beautiful pictures I’ve seen of the inside of the temple, and often I will share those pictures with friends or family members who are preparing to go.⁴ What feelings and emotions and words come to mind when you see those images? Try to be uplifting in how you speak about the temple.

3. Find Answers from Gospel Resources

Out of our love and deep respect for the temple, it can be easy to feel afraid of talking about it. We can get flustered and wonder what is OK to say. I know I got caught up in the culture of telling curious friends and family members that we can’t talk about what happens in the temple.

However, as I served in and studied more about the temple, I came to see that we can share more than I realized!⁵

For example, we can share that “an *endowment* is literally a ‘gift.’”⁶ The temple endowment is a gift of sacred



blessings from God to each of us, and some of those blessings include:

1. “Greater knowledge of the Lord’s purposes and teachings.
2. “Power to do all that God wants us to do.
3. “Divine guidance and protection as we serve the Lord, our families, and others.
4. “Increased hope, comfort, and peace.
5. “Promised blessings now and forever.”⁷

We can also talk about the covenants we make in the temple. The beautiful thing about the temple is that it allows us to draw closer to God and strengthen our relationship with Him by making additional promises with Him. These covenants are:

- “Law of Obedience, which includes striving to keep God’s commandments.
- “Law of Sacrifice, which means doing all we can to support the Lord’s work and repenting with a broken heart and contrite spirit.
- “Law of the Gospel, which is the higher law that He taught while He was on the earth.



INSPIRED TEACHINGS ABOUT THE TEMPLE

What *can* you say to others about temple work? Visit temples.ChurchofJesusChrist.org for more information. It answers questions about topics such as the endowment, garments, and covenants.

These messages from Church leaders will help others learn more about the temple:

- Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” Apr. 2011 general conference.
- Boyd K. Packer, “Come to the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2007.
- Russell M. Nelson, “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” Apr. 2001 general conference.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF ROME ITALY TEMPLE BY CODY BELL AND MATTHEW REIER

- “Law of Chastity, which means that we have sexual relations only with the person to whom we are legally and lawfully wedded according to God’s law.
- “Law of Consecration, which means dedicating our time, talents, and everything with which the Lord has blessed us to building up Jesus Christ’s Church on the earth.”⁸

As we share positive messages about the temple, we help our loved ones feel more welcome and ready to attend for the first time. We can help them look forward to deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ through temple covenants.

4. Share Positive Experiences

What I learned most about the temple is that with correct information, it’s not strange at all. In fact, most—if not all—of the information and blessings we receive in the temple are familiar to what we are taught every day in the gospel.

Through my experiences, I’ve learned that fear is not of the Lord. When we avoid talking about the temple or try talking about it with veiled warnings or worries, it gives the adversary greater power to skew the beauty of the temple. Instead of cutting our conversations short by saying, “Just keep going back and it will get better eventually,” we can share the positive experiences we have from attending the temple.

When we find ourselves fearful of answering questions about the temple, that may be an invitation from the Lord to study *more* about the temple. This will bless not only us but also those around us. The Lord intended for the temple to bless us, not scare us.

Remember President Nelson’s words: “Making covenants and receiving essential ordinances in the temple, as well as seeking to draw closer to Him there, will bless your life in ways no other kind of worship can.”⁹ And the more we speak positively about the Lord’s house, the more we will keep guiding each other to return and invite those blessings into our lives. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 94.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 119.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Liahona*, May 2011, 94.
4. See “Photos of Temples,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
5. For more guidance on what is appropriate to share about the temple, see David A. Bednar, “Prepared to Obtain Every Needful Thing,” *Liahona*, May 2019, 101–4.
6. “About the Temple Endowment,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
7. “About the Temple Endowment,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
8. “About the Temple Endowment,” [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).
9. Russell M. Nelson, “The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 128.



People Need to Know

By Inaê Leandro, São Paulo, Brazil

The knowledge that families can be eternal changed my life forever.

Scan the code
to read more



I Love That Song

By Don S. Candland, California, USA

The words to a favorite hymn reminded my mother that we need to reach out to those in need.

My mother, Dorothy Candland Woodruff (now deceased), was supposed to arrive in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, one afternoon, but she missed her flight. So she was rerouted, with layovers in Colorado, USA, and Calgary, Alberta. She wouldn't arrive until midnight. Frustrated, she started her journey.

Her second flight was crowded and noisy. She was trying to do some work, when a little girl across the aisle began crying. She was impatient with her mother, who was holding a small baby. The girl's father was sitting in front of my mother with another child, about five.



The girl's mother talked softly to her daughter, but the child's crying grew louder.

"This family clearly had not prepared their children for the trip," my mother said when later sharing her experience with our family. For the lesson that followed, I use her words:

"Finally, the mother carried her crying daughter back to the bathroom. A short time later, the mother returned with the little girl, who was still in tears—silent tears, I noted thankfully. She sat down and held her daughter in her arms, tenderly rocking her back and forth. Then I heard her singing softly 'I Am a Child of God.'¹

"Startled, I looked up from my work as I recognized the song. I saw the family in a new light. After the mother had finished the song, I put my hand on her shoulder and said, 'I love that song.'

"Tearfully, she said, 'It was my seven-year-old son's favorite song. We are taking him home to our family cemetery in Montana. We lost him yesterday in a terrible accident. We all miss him so much.'

"Shame swept over me. I had been passing judgment on this sweet family, insensitive to how I could have helped. The words of the song sharpened my awareness that even if they had not been Latter-day Saints, they were still children of God, and I should have reached out to them in their need.

"I was humbled. The rest of our journey together was full of a tearful sharing of feelings, emotions, and experiences precious to both of us. We parted as good friends who would keep in touch through letters in years to come." ■

NOTE

1. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.



Blessed for My Honesty

By Solomon Oladapo Sonola, Lagos, Nigeria

I was tempted to keep the extra money, but then I remembered counsel from my bishop.

In 2012, I became unemployed. My efforts to search for a job proved futile. Eventually, I had to reach out for a loan of about \$28 in Nigerian currency to meet my temporal needs.

The amount was sent to my account at a local bank. Once I received a transaction alert, I went to the bank. I filled out a bank slip and handed it to the cashier. The cashier checked the transaction details on her computer and politely told me to have a seat.

About five minutes later she called me and used a currency counting machine to count out my money. Then she handed me \$280—not \$28! Confused, I paused for a minute with many thoughts racing through my mind.

Noticing my hesitation, the cashier said, “I will need to attend to another customer now.” Smiling, I said, “You have given me \$252 too much.” Then I handed over the excess money.

She was very grateful. She explained that had I left with the money, the extra amount she had given me would come out of her own salary.

I bade her farewell, but as I left the bank, a

thought came to my mind: “You are a big fool. The money you returned could have assisted you to pay some of your outstanding bills.”

But then I remembered counsel from my bishop. He said, “Whenever you are challenged or tempted, sing your favorite hymns.” So I began to sing “Redeemer of Israel,”¹ “Praise to the Man,”² and “I Am a Child of God.”³

Some weeks later, I received a letter from an organization I had interviewed with three months prior for the post of warehouse officer. They had decided to hire me. With the new job, I was able to settle my outstanding bills and take care of my temporal needs.

Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). I testify that persistence, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and integrity qualify us to receive abundant blessings. ■

NOTES

1. “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6.
2. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
3. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.

A Kilo of Love

By Marianni Iguaran Martinez, Zulia, Venezuela

Times of crisis, scarcity, and tribulation can bring out the best in each of us.

To provide for our family, my husband works hard offering taxi service on his motorcycle. He was recently in a traffic accident but miraculously did not suffer serious injury. He did, however, have to recuperate while his motorcycle was being repaired.

Because my husband was unable to work, we were worried. We had no other income, and our nation's economic crisis further heightened our concern.

During sacrament meeting the Sunday following my husband's accident, two of the talks centered on compassion and how we could develop this Christlike attribute. Afterward, one of our ward members approached me to say that a branch member was in dire need of food. She wondered if we could

donate "a kilo of love"—a kilo (2.2 lbs.) of whatever kind of food we had on hand at home. I told her she could count on our support.

When our family arrived at home after church, I discussed the conversation with my husband. We were going through our own trial, but we felt blessed nevertheless.

"We are going through difficult days," he said, "but we have enough to make it from day to day, with maybe even a little extra to share."

That afternoon, a neighbor who had heard of my husband's accident, asked us to come visit. When we arrived, the neighbor gave us a box filled with 7 kilos (15 lbs.) of food, along with other items we needed.

We were astonished. Neither of us had expected that kind of blessing.

As I talked to my husband about this experience, I could not help but recognize God's hand and thank Him for His immense love for us. He had seen our willingness to share what we could—a single kilo of love—and had blessed us with seven times our offering.

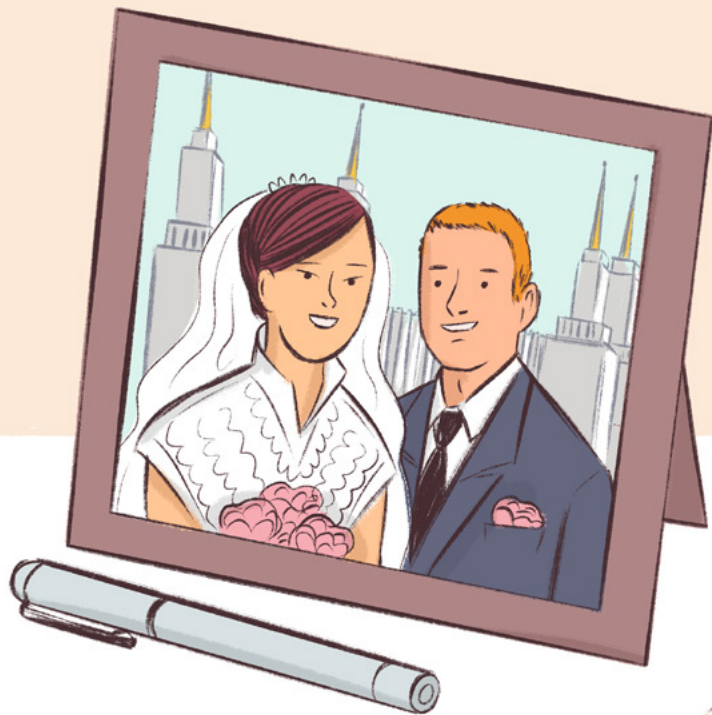
Times of trial and scarcity can bring out the best in each of us. They offer us opportunities to develop and show Christlike attributes. I know that not all acts of love generate immediate blessings in return, but I know that the Lord watches over His children. He will answer our prayers as we answer the prayers of others by serving and sharing—even when all we have to give is a single kilo of love. ■



A Picture, a Book, and a Baptism

By Brenda Hosaflook Wells, West Virginia, USA

I'm grateful a small act made a big difference.



At least once a year, an environmental inspector visits our school district. Typically, the inspector is cordial and small talk is common. Such was the case with Ryan Pethtel. Ryan noticed pictures of my family in my office, so during each visit we exchanged family stories.

During one visit, Ryan noticed a new wedding picture of my son and his wife at the Washington D.C. Temple. Our conversation turned to the temple, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Book of Mormon.

“My wife and I have been looking for a church,” he said. “I hope to give my children what you’ve given yours.”

In preparation for Ryan’s next visit, I wrote my testimony inside a copy of the Book of Mormon and took it to my office. But the next year a different environmental inspector came. Ryan no longer worked for the department. My heart sank, but I kept the book in my office in case I felt impressed to give it to someone else.

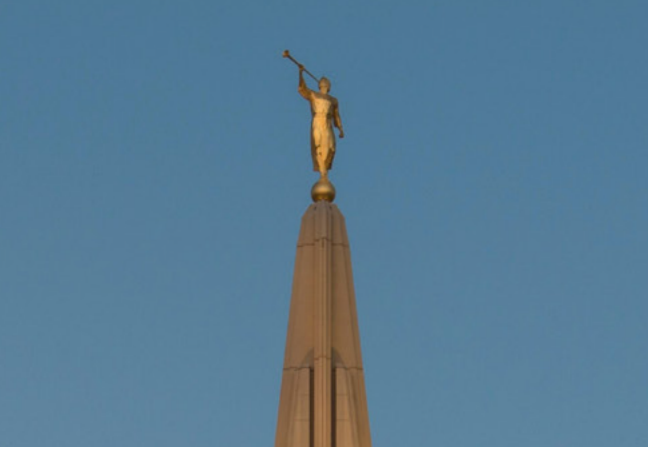
A year later, however, I received an email from Ryan to set up a visit. He had returned to his old job. When he arrived, our conversation eventually shifted to the Church. When I handed Ryan the copy of the Book of Mormon, he excitedly flipped through it.

A few months later, I joined my husband, Bill, on a high council speaking assignment in Mannington, West Virginia—Ryan’s hometown. Afterward, a sister in the chapel asked me if I knew Ryan and if I had given him a Book of Mormon. She was Ryan’s wife, Stephanie.

Stephanie said she and Ryan had planned to be baptized the night before, but Ryan was sick. What a blessing in disguise! Bill and I were able to attend their rescheduled baptism three weeks later. At their baptism, Ryan mentioned that the Book of Mormon I had given him remained untouched until his wife contacted the missionaries.

My part in their conversion began with placing a picture of the temple in my office. The picture led to a conversation. The conversation led to the Book of Mormon.

Each act was small, but the consequence was great (see Doctrine and Covenants 64:33). My heart swells with gratitude that my small actions made a big difference and led someone to the Savior. ■



YOUNG ADULTS

When Spiritual Experiences Are Different from What You Expected



Advice from my temple preparation teachers changed the way I thought about feeling the Spirit.

By Abby Larkins
Church Magazines

My younger sister and I received our endowment together, just a few days before she left on her mission. I was excited to attend the temple with her, and I was ready to take the next step on the covenant path.

But that day, my emotions were everywhere. It was the end of summer. A daunting school semester loomed before me. In anticipation of moving back to college, leaving my family, and saying goodbye to my sister, I felt suddenly inconsolable.

And although the endowment ceremony was beautiful, it was a lot to take in. I understood very little and was ready to leave the moment the session ended.

My sister had a different experience. In the celestial room, she calmly and curiously asked my parents questions about the endowment and seemed to have grasped much more than I had. Meanwhile, I sat in a stupor of silence. I remember holding back tears of frustration and embarrassment that my experience was playing out so differently from hers.

I was momentarily tempted to feel bitter that I hadn't had the experience I'd hoped for. But then I remembered two specific things that my temple preparation teachers had told me:

1. I would likely not understand everything that happened during my first endowment session. They told me that instead of trying to make sense of it all in the moment, I should try to focus on the peaceful feeling inside the temple.
2. I might leave the temple feeling spiritually tired and overwhelmed. And that was OK.

Their wise words slowed my spiraling thoughts and have stuck with me over the years. I believe the same counsel can help us as we reckon with expectations we have about other spiritual experiences, both inside and outside the temple.

Adjust Your Expectations

I'm happy to say that I enjoy attending the temple now, and my understanding of the endowment has grown over the past few years. But I also relate to the desire to have specific expectations for spiritual events, like receiving your endowment or going on a mission. I've even caught myself expecting a significant "spiritual experience" every time I visit the temple or read my scriptures.

But I've come to learn that always having remarkable spiritual experiences just isn't realistic. For instance, some of my temple visits have been enlightening and uplifting, but in others I've struggled to concentrate or stay awake.

As Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recently testified: "Spiritual matters cannot be

forced. You can cultivate an attitude and an environment that invite the Spirit, and you can prepare yourself, but you cannot dictate how or when inspiration comes."¹

If you're frustrated about receiving revelation or feeling the Spirit for whatever reason, here are some reminders that have helped me feel connected to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and move forward with faith.

Remember That the Spirit Communicates in Many Ways

While it can be inspiring to hear about others' spiritual experiences, sometimes it's easy to feel disappointed when our experiences aren't like other people's.

Comparing my temple experience to my sister's was discouraging for me. Because I didn't want that first experience to get in the way of my enjoying the blessings of temple worship, I had to consciously decide to move past the differences in what my sister and I felt and understood that day.

Maybe you wish you cried when you felt the Spirit. Maybe you wish you didn't! Perhaps you feel a pang of envy when you hear stories of people who have revelatory dreams and visions. Maybe you've never experienced a burning in your bosom (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:8). Or maybe someone said they felt the Spirit in a situation when you just *didn't*.

The good news is that the Spirit speaks to us in many ways. If your ways are different from another's, that doesn't mean that they're wrong or that the Spirit isn't communicating with you.

As we turn to Heavenly Father for help, we can learn how to recognize how the Spirit communicates with us and more fully enjoy our personal spiritual experiences. Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "We have the sacred responsibility to learn to recognize [the Holy Ghost's] influence in our lives and respond."²

Record Your Spiritual Experiences

One way to recognize the Spirit's influence is by recording your spiritual experiences. Whether that be in a physical journal, on an electronic note, or as a voice memo, recording your positive experiences is a powerful way to not only remember

the good things you've felt but also become better at recognizing how the Spirit speaks to you.

If you don't know where to start, try being mindful of moments when you feel peace, gratitude, inspiration, or joy. Elder Craig C. Christensen of the Seventy said: "To be filled with the Holy Ghost means to be filled with joy. And to be filled with joy means to be filled with the Holy Ghost [see Acts 13:52; Mosiah 4:3]."³

As you do this, you may realize that you are feeling the Spirit more than you initially thought.

Prioritize Sincere Communication with God

Because we've been told to seek and expect both miracles⁴ and personal revelation (see Matthew 7:7–8), it can be especially discouraging when we feel like we aren't receiving either. I've sometimes

wondered why I should keep asking God questions when it doesn't seem to me like He's answering them. With this mindset, I become anxious and demanding in my attitude toward Him.


But the scriptures tell us, "Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand" (Jacob 4:10). I notice a shift when I stop looking at revelation as my only motivation to pray and instead prioritize sincere communication with Heavenly Father. I explain my feelings to Him, describe my worries, express my gratitude, and then meekly ask for the things I lack. I feel actual connection with God when I stop looking at Him as a "cosmic vending machine,"⁵ as Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained.

And though I don't always receive an immediate or clear answer, I do know that He always listens to me. And that's enough for me to keep moving forward.

Follow Guiding Principles

When seeking the Spirit and personal revelation, it's important to do so within the correct framework. Quoting *Preach My Gospel*, Elder Stevenson said: "Having the guidance of the Holy Ghost in your life requires spiritual work. This work includes fervent prayer and consistent scripture study. It also includes keeping your covenants and God's commandments. . . . It includes worthily partaking of the sacrament each week' [*Preach My Gospel*, 101]."⁶

He then provided four additional guiding principles for "inviting and recognizing the promptings of the Spirit":



**“Seek not to
counsel the Lord,
but to take counsel
from his hand.”**

Jacob 4:10



1. **Stand in Holy Places:** “Our temples and homes are the most sacred of these dedicated spaces.”⁷
2. **Stand with Holy People:** “If you hope to feel the Spirit, be with people with whom the Spirit can easily dwell.”⁸
3. **Testify of Holy Truths:** “The Comforter always shares his voice when we testify with our voice.”⁹
4. **Listen to the Holy Spirit:** “He speaks in subtle, quiet tones. . . . Find a quiet place, a holy space where you can seek to receive direction from the Spirit.”¹⁰

Though it may not be dramatic or happen in the way you expect, the Spirit will accompany and guide you as you do these things.

A New Perspective

As my temple preparation teachers reminded me, it’s OK to not perfectly understand the gospel or, in my case, the temple. And sometimes our spiritual seeking might leave us feeling a little worn out. It’s moments like these that can help us learn patience and reassess our relationship with Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost.

I’ve noticed that when I’ve used those feelings to propel me to slow down, act in faith, and turn to Heavenly Father for help, my expectations of spiritual experiences have become faithful instead of anxious and restful instead of frustrating. In these moments, I feel Heavenly Father’s love for me. And as I wait for answers, that love is somehow always enough. ■

NOTES

1. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 45.
2. Ronald A. Rasband, “Let the Holy Spirit Guide,” *Liahona*, May 2017, 93.
3. Craig C. Christensen, “There Can Be Nothing So Exquisite and Sweet as Was My Joy,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 46.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 99–100.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Our Relationship with God,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 78.
6. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” 42.
7. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” 43.
8. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” 44.
9. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” 44.
10. Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” 44, 45.



CHOOSING THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

A spiritual experience reminded me of the significant blessings I was missing because I wasn't taking the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously.

By David Danev

I used to be a very different person than I am now.

Although I was born into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I never took it seriously. I didn't really consider what the truths of the gospel could mean for my life.

In Bulgaria, I'm one of few members of the Church. Each day, I'm surrounded by a lot of worldly behaviors and influences. Lots of young people here don't have good morals or values, and sometimes the world can feel dark.

A few years ago, when I was 17, I was depressed and aimless. I wasn't hanging out with good friends or doing good things. One day my dad told me that he had signed me up to attend a For the Strength of Youth conference in a nearby country. I didn't want to go, but knowing that he wanted me to, I reluctantly went.

Surprisingly, the spiritual experiences I had at that conference changed my life completely.

At FSJ I really saw what it means to be a disciple of Christ—to live differently than the world. All these faithful young people were such a contrast to the negative influences I was usually surrounded by. I felt like I actually saw the light these disciples were carrying. Each day, I felt the Spirit so strongly as I spent time with good people, studied the scriptures, learned more about the gospel, and got to know Heavenly Father and the Savior better.

Making Changes

I realized I needed to change my behaviors and really start to understand what the gospel of Jesus Christ could bring to my life.

After I went home, I didn't want to lose the connection to the Spirit that I had felt during the conference, so I made a goal to do what was necessary to keep my newfound foundation in the gospel firm and keep the Spirit with me.

OVER THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD

Making changes was a little hard at first. I had to stop spending time with certain friends because they were not a good influence on me. I worked to give up some bad habits. I started taking church seriously. Making these decisions helped me fill my life with goodness. What has helped me stay consistently connected to the Spirit is setting aside time each day to study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.

Reminders of the Blessings of the Gospel

The teachings in the scriptures remind me what is really important in my life. When I feel lonely in my faith, especially with so few members here in Bulgaria, I allow the truths of ancient prophets to deepen my faith in Jesus Christ.

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

It’s scriptures like this one that remind me of the light the gospel offers and keep me strong when I’m having a hard time. The scriptures always strengthen my foundation of faith.

Right now, I’m preparing to serve a mission, and I still face unknowns and challenges (like recently being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes). But prioritizing spiritual habits helps me feel Heavenly Father’s love more than ever.

President Russell M. Nelson recently reminded us that “thinking celestial means being spiritually minded.”¹

Striving to do the things that keep the Spirit with me each day really helps me to think celestial—to be spiritually minded. I’ve felt myself become more like Christ as I think about what He would do. Keeping the Spirit with me helps me have hope and remember the blessings Heavenly Father has in store for all who choose to follow Him.

Clinging to the Light

Living in a wicked world where things feel dark can be hard at times. But it also helps me better realize the bright, contrasting warmth and light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was missing the significance of this amazing blessing in my life for years. I’m so grateful for the spiritual experiences Heavenly Father can lead us to, because now, I cling to the light and joy of the gospel more than ever.


I testify that if you trust the Lord and study from the Book of Mormon every day, your life will become much easier. You will begin to see the blessings our loving Heavenly Father gives us every day, and you will realize who you can become with the help of the Lord. ■

The author lives in Varna, Bulgaria.

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 117.





How to **COMMUNICATE SUPPORT** to Your Missionary Son or Daughter

The following principles from Church leaders can help as you seek to offer your missionary support.

By London Brimhall
Church Magazines

When your child embarks on a mission, whether for a service or a teaching mission, it comes with a mix of emotions. You might be feeling excitement, sadness, pride, and worry—all at once. Your missionary too may feel discouraged or disappointed from time to time but will also feel joy, love, and hope. As parents and family members, you have a special opportunity to uplift and strengthen your missionary as you communicate with him or her. Understanding some principles for engaging in this kind of communication can be useful

not only to the missionary’s parents but also to relatives, friends, and leaders.

Remind Them of Their Purpose

Remind your missionary of the great work he or she was called to do. President Russell M. Nelson emphasized the importance of this sacred work:

“Every child of our Heavenly Father deserves the opportunity to *choose* to follow Jesus Christ, to accept and receive His gospel with all of its blessings. . . .

“ . . . You were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. There is *nothing* happening on this earth right now that is more important than that.”¹

Missionaries learn that their purpose is to “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”²

Help your children remember their divine identity. They are children of God, sent here at this time because Heavenly Father trusted them with His work. Highlight ways they can use their gifts to bless the lives of others. As disciples of Jesus Christ, they are capable of things they may think are beyond their ability.

“Every child of our Heavenly Father deserves the opportunity to *choose* to follow Jesus Christ, to accept and receive His gospel with all of its blessings.”

Focus on the Spiritual

While you may want updates on every aspect of the mission, don’t let the trivial overpower the conversation. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Focus on the spiritual dimension of your child’s service. A missionary’s phone calls home are wonderful; they can change the dimension from ‘What did you have for breakfast?’ to . . . ‘Which family or individual are you teaching now and what lesson? What has strengthened you most?’ The danger is sometimes that we focus on the trivial and neglect the spiritual.”³

Focus on the spiritual by prompting your missionary to share experiences about those he or she is serving or teaching. Consider praying for those individuals in your personal or family prayers. Listen carefully as your missionary shares ways the Spirit touched his or her heart that week.

Rather than giving updates on TV shows or sporting events, share pivotal moments from your life where the Lord guided, comforted, or instructed you. As you do so, your conversations will leave both you and your missionary spiritually refreshed.

Share in the Spiritual Journey

Your conversations with your missionary will be blessed as you seek to also participate in the work of gathering Israel. Sister Bonnie H. Cordon, former Young Women General President, shared:

“You may not be able to walk side-by-side with [your missionary], but you can still share the spiritual journey. . . .

“Join your missionary in the work—study, serve, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ! As you do so, you will both reap the promised blessings of missionary service.”

Sister Cordon also gave three suggestions:

- “Increase your own scripture study and share your insights in your next email.
- “Attend the temple and join them in the glorious work of bringing families unto Christ.
- “Seek your own missionary experiences so together you can discover the joy of sharing the gospel.”⁴

However you choose to join in the spiritual journey, your joy will increase as you both seek to help others come unto Christ.

In all your communication with your missionary, remember to look to the Lord. He will inspire you to know what your missionary needs to hear and when. You and your missionary will be blessed as you learn, grow, and serve together. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 1.
3. “Parents Can Best Support Their Missionaries by Having Spiritual Experiences with Them, 3 Leaders Say,” Church news story, Mar. 5, 2019, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. “Parents Can Best Support Their Missionaries,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

DISCOVER MORE

The Savior loved, shared, and invited. What does that look like in our everyday lives? Watch the video “Simple Ways to Love, Share, and Invite” at ChurchofJesusChrist.org/serve/share.





JESUS CHRIST:

THE CENTER OF OUR FAITH



In Hebrew texts, chiasmus is a poetic structure in which words or ideas are presented and then repeated in reverse order, with the center being the focal and most crucial point. The repetition intensifies in the latter half, emphasizing the main message. An example is found in Alma 36, illustrating the beauty of this pattern.

Keep the commandments (verse 1)

He surely did deliver them (verse 2)

Support in trials, troubles, and afflictions (verse 3)

I know this not of myself but of God (verse 4)

Pains of a damned soul (verse 16)

I remembered Jesus Christ (verse 17)

I cried, “O Jesus, thou Son of God” (verse 18)

Joy as exceeding as was the pain (verse 20)

My knowledge is of God (verse 26)

Supported under trials, troubles, and afflictions (verse 27)

He will deliver me (verse 27)

Keep the commandments (verse 30)

Notice that the Savior is at the center of this example of chiasmus. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the blessings of centering our lives on Jesus Christ: “Enduring happiness, with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the greatest difficulties, will come as you center your life in Jesus Christ.”¹

We know that having faith in the Savior will bless us eternally. But sometimes we forget how having faith can bless us right *now*. Through its display of chiasmus, Alma 36 shows us the power of faith and how it all points to Jesus Christ.

The following scriptures—from different lessons in August’s *Come, Follow Me*—show how faith in Christ gives us power:

He Will Deliver Us

If we are trapped by harmful thoughts, feelings, or situations, faith in Christ can help us break free.

“Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually. . . .

“And behold, we are again delivered out of the hands of our enemies. And blessed is the name of our God; for behold, it is he that has delivered us.”

Alma 57:27, 35

We Can Seek and Find Answers

Having faith in Christ can lead us to find answers if there is something we don’t understand or don’t know.

“There are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself. But I show unto you one thing which I have inquired diligently of God that I might know.”

Alma 40:3

Our Souls Will Be Filled with Joy

Faith in Jesus Christ can clear the dark clouds from our minds and brighten our hearts with joy.

“They did . . . wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation.”

Helaman 3:35

We Can Overcome Fear and Afflictions

If we have faith in in the Lord, He will support us during the hard times in our lives.

“We were grieved and also filled with fear. . . .

“Therefore we did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us. . . .

“. . . The Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.”

Alma 58:9–11

NOTE

1. Richard G. Scott, “The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 41.

Come, Follow Me



Alma 37



The Power of Conscious, Consistent Effort

Our small, simple, consistent decisions affect the course of our lives.

Consider, for instance, the power of a consistent drip of water. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once illustrated the principle of small and simple spiritual nourishment by explaining the function of a drip irrigation system: “The steady drips of water sink deep into the ground and provide a high moisture level in the soil wherein plants can flourish. In like manner, if you and I are focused and frequent in receiving consistent drops of spiritual nourishment, then gospel roots can sink deep into our soul, can become firmly established and grounded, and can produce extraordinary and delicious fruit.”¹

A “mighty change in [our] hearts” (Alma 5:14) can be a product of small, consistent decisions. The decision to read the Book of Mormon each day, say a prayer, or do a kind deed to lighten someone’s load may seem insignificant. But “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

While small drops of water can nourish, they can also erode. Similarly, small decisions in our

lives can lead to growth—toward the Savior—or to erosion of our testimonies, away from Him. Consistently neglecting the small actions that connect us to Jesus Christ can slowly cause faith to falter and commitment to waver.

President Russell M. Nelson has taught, “As we seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our efforts to *hear Him* need to be ever more intentional. It takes conscious and consistent effort to fill our daily lives with His words, His teachings, His truths.”² Coming to Jesus Christ involves intentionally making small changes in our lives.

Of course, there are times when more dramatic change is required. “If we are involved in grievous sins, the Lord is clear and unequivocal; we need to stop, get help from our bishop, and turn away from such practices immediately.”³ For the most part, however, we can look to our seemingly small actions to change our behavior.

When you reflect back on your life, you can see that your small, Christ-centered choices have added up to real change. It often doesn’t take a dramatic overhaul—it takes one small decision, and then another, and then another, to turn toward Christ. ■

PONDER

Prayerfully consider what your next “drop of water” could be. What could you do today to “hear Him”?

NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, “By Small and Simple Things Are Great Things Brought to Pass” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference, Apr. 29, 2011), womensconference.byu.edu.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Liahona*, May 2020, 89.
3. Michael A. Dunn, “One Percent Better,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 107.



Helaman 3

Firmer in the Faith of Christ

How do we develop faith in Jesus Christ sufficient for all seasons of life?

By Elder Mark D. Eddy

Of the Seventy

In the third chapter of Helaman, we read of a period of “continual peace” (Helaman 3:23) and “exceedingly great prosperity in the church” (Helaman 3:24). Thousands were baptized, and “the blessings which were poured out upon the people” were so numerous “that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure” (Helaman 3:25).

Sadly, some “of the people who professed to belong to the church of God” (Helaman 3:33) became prideful and began to persecute their fellow Church members (see Helaman 3:34). “Now this . . . did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction” (Helaman 3:34).

I imagine this was particularly painful for the humble members of the Church. After all, just a few years earlier, the people had fought side by side to thwart a Lamanite attack (see Helaman 1). This time, however, the afflictions came from within. The persecutors were those with whom they had met and prayed and learned and worshipped.

In the midst of such suffering, how did the “more humble part of the people” respond? What helped them endure the irony of being persecuted by those who had once professed to be fellow disciples of Christ?

Helaman 3:35 provides the answer: “They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and *firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ*, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (emphasis added).

Let us consider how we, like the Saints in Helaman’s day, might become “firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ” as we face together what President Russell M. Nelson has described as “a most complicated time in the history of the world,”¹ a time of “unprecedented challenges.”²







Two Examples of Nephi's Faith

The scriptures are full of experiences of men and women who became firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ while facing the challenges of their day. For example, please ponder Nephi's faithful response to two soul-stretching experiences that were nearly identical initially and yet challengingly different in the end.

As Nephi and his brothers returned from Jerusalem with Ishmael and his family, Laman and Lemuel and several others rebelled (see 1 Nephi 7:6–7). Nephi called them to repentance and pleaded with them to remember the Lord (see 1 Nephi 7:8–15). Laman and Lemuel became angry with Nephi and bound his hands and feet with cords and left him to die in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 7:16).

As heartbreaking as his brothers' actions must have been, and regardless of the fear he might have felt, Nephi chose to remain firm in the faith of Christ. He “prayed unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even give me strength that I may burst these bands with which I am bound” (1 Nephi 7:17).

Nephi's prayer was immediately and miraculously answered! “The bands were loosed from off [his] hands and feet, and [he] stood before [his] brethren, and . . . spake unto them” (1 Nephi 7:18). Nephi's heart must have swelled with gratitude to the Lord for delivering him.

This would not, however, be the last time Laman and

Lemuel would bind their brother with cords. And the next time, Nephi's deliverance would differ significantly from the first time and would prove, once again, the firmness of Nephi's faith in Christ.

Many years later, while crossing the sea to the promised land, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael began to act with "exceeding rudeness" and to forget the Lord's power that had blessed their journey (see 1 Nephi 18:9). Nephi again called them to repentance, and Laman and Lemuel again became angry with him (see 1 Nephi 18:10). Just as they had done before, they took Nephi and bound him with strong cords (see 1 Nephi 18:11–12).

What did Nephi think when he was bound with cords for a second time? What would you or I have thought had we found ourselves in this predicament again? Perhaps we would have thought, "I have experienced this before! I know what to do. If I pray to the Lord, He will immediately and miraculously deliver me." We do not know what Nephi thought, but we know that while these two experiences were similar, the immediate results were not. This time, Nephi would not be instantaneously delivered from his brothers, but instead he would endure four days of suffering at their hands (see 1 Nephi 18:14–15).

Remembering his prior experience, Nephi might have prayed with great confidence for immediate deliverance. When no such deliverance came, Nephi could have become discouraged, his faith weakened by doubt. As the hours and days dragged on, and his pain increased, the growing weight of that discouragement and doubt could have crushed Nephi's faith. He could have murmured, "Why have I not been delivered?" Was his faith not greater now—more mature and full-fledged—than it had been the first time he was bound? Had his faith

not increased through powerful experiences with the Liahona, his broken bow, and a ship built under the direction of the Lord Himself?

Rather than becoming discouraged or doubtful, Nephi remained firm in his faith. His faith was not centered on the timing or method of his deliverance, nor was his faith dependent on an anticipated outcome. His was not a conditional faith. Nephi's faith was firmly centered in Jesus Christ—come what may. Because of that faith, he could write, "I did look unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long; and I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions" (1 Nephi 18:16).

Please note that the firmness of Nephi's faith in Christ allowed him to find comfort amid his afflictions and to be filled with love for God notwithstanding his pain. He was the personification of what his brother Jacob would later teach:

"Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause. . . .

". . . Lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, *if your minds are firm*, forever" (Jacob 3:1–2; emphasis added).

We Can Continue in Faith

Both Nephi and the Saints in Helaman's day provide us with hope that, with the Lord's help, we *can* become firmer in our faith in Christ. As you read this, you may wonder if this hope applies to you. Let us all take comfort and courage from these words from our beloved prophet, President Nelson:

"The Lord does not require *perfect* faith for us to have access to His *perfect* power. But He does ask us to believe. . . .

“ . . . The Savior is never closer to you than when you are facing or climbing a mountain *with faith*.”³

In the end, as Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “most of us find ourselves at this moment on a continuum between a socially motivated participation in gospel rituals on the one hand and a fully developed, Christlike commitment to the will of God on the other. Somewhere along that continuum, the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ enters into our heart and takes possession of our soul. It may not happen in an instant, but we should all be moving toward that blessed state.”⁴

So, amidst the unique trials and tribulations of our day, may we resolve—once and for all—to choose faith in Jesus Christ, a faith sufficient for all seasons of life. May we work and fast and pray to wax firmer in the faith of Christ and, with firm minds, receive His consolation in our afflictions and feast upon His love forever.

To that end, I testify of the truthfulness of President Nelson’s special witness: “Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.”⁵ ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 95.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 94.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 102, 103.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “Firm and Steadfast in the Faith of Christ,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 31–32.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “The Answer Is Always Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 127.



Prepared for Battle

“While Amalickiah had thus been obtaining power by fraud and deceit, Moroni, on the other hand, had been preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God.

“Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up banks of earth round about to enclose his armies, and also building walls of stone to encircle them about.”

Alma 48:7–8



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MISSIONARIES

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