

Liahona

POINTING US ALL TO JESUS CHRIST

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE AS WE JOIN HIM
IN HIS WORK? 2

HOW TO MAKE OUR WARDS UNITED IN CHRIST, 8

WE FOLLOW HIM AS HE FOLLOWED HIS FATHER

JUNE 2025



“Taking upon us the
name of Christ [means]
a **willingness** and
a **commitment** to
take upon us the work of
the **Savior** and **His**
kingdom.”

—President Dallin H. Oaks

His Holy Name (1998), 37



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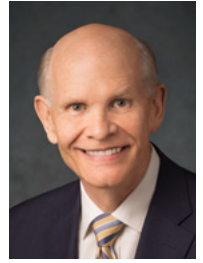
Look to God and Live, by Dan Wilson, may not be copied



DETAIL FROM CHRIST AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER, BY HEINRICH HORMANN

*We take part in the Savior's work
as we focus on His purposes,
keep His commandments, and
love one another.*

When we are baptized, we begin the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. Part of this process signifies that we join the Savior in His work. President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, wrote, "One of the most significant meanings of taking upon us the name of Christ



**By Elder
Dale G. Renlund**

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

We Follow Jesus Christ by **JOINING HIM IN HIS WORK**

[is] a willingness and a commitment to take upon us the work of the Savior and His kingdom.”¹

The Savior’s work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Immortality is an unconditional gift Jesus Christ has already guaranteed through His Resurrection. Eternal life, however, is not the

same as immortality. Eternal life is the greatest gift God can give to mankind (see Doctrine and Covenants 14:7). It is to live forever as families in His presence. For us to receive eternal life, we must become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This means we receive the restored gospel by having faith in the Savior and His Atonement, repenting,

being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, making and keeping temple covenants, and enduring to the end. Enduring to the end includes joining the Savior in His work.

ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

We take part in the Savior's work as we help God's children also become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This includes sharing His gospel, thereby gathering scattered Israel,² by fulfilling responsibilities in the Savior's Church and by striving to become like Him. Our "success [in His work] does not depend on how others choose to respond to [us], to [our] invitations, or to [our] sincere acts of kindness."³ President Russell M. Nelson affirmed, "*Anytime* you do *anything* that helps *anyone*—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel."⁴

To make the Savior's work our work, we focus on His purposes, keep His commandments, and love one another. While we do His work His way (see Doctrine and Covenants 51:2), some things are left for us to figure out on our own. The Savior told the Saints who gathered in Jackson County, Missouri:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28).

As we follow the Savior, join Him in His work, and help others become His faithful disciples, we teach what

He would teach. Because we are not authorized to teach anything else (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:9, 36), we focus undeviatingly on His doctrine (see Doctrine and Covenants 68:25). Additionally, we pay particular attention to those who are poor, in need, and vulnerable (see Doctrine and Covenants 52:40). These emphases were made clear when the Savior quoted from Isaiah in a synagogue in Nazareth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19; see also Isaiah 61:1–2).

The acceptable year of the Lord refers to the time when all the blessings of God's covenant will be heaped on His people. We follow Jesus Christ by inviting others to receive the blessings of making and keeping covenants with God and by caring for those who are poor or otherwise in need.

Joining Jesus Christ in His work is exhilarating because His works, designs, and purposes "cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (Doctrine and Covenants 3:1). For those who feel discouraged, the Lord counseled: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:33). We let the Lord worry about the harvest, and we simply do our part.

THE HEART AND A WILLING MIND

Doing our part is simpler than we might imagine because we need not bring extraordinary talents or abilities to the Lord's work. His requirement is simply commitment and willingness. The Lord said to the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, "Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). The Lord can make the

willing able, but He cannot or will not make the able willing. In other words, if we are committed and willing, He can use us. But no matter how talented we are, He will not use us unless we are committed to His work and willing to help Him.

Samuel and Anna-Maria Koivisto showed both commitment and willingness. Soon after their marriage, the Koivistos moved from Jyväskylä, Finland, to Göteborg, Sweden, to pursue career opportunities. After arriving, Brother Koivisto was invited to visit with President Leif G. Mattsson, a counselor in the Göteborg Sweden Stake presidency. Because Samuel did not speak Swedish, the interview was conducted in English.

Following a brief visit, President Mattsson asked Samuel to serve as the ward mission leader in the Utby Ward. Samuel pointed out the obvious: “But I don’t speak Swedish.”

President Mattsson leaned over his desk and pointedly asked, “Did I ask if you could speak Swedish, or are you willing to serve the Lord?”

Samuel answered, “You asked if I was willing to serve the Lord. And I am.”

Samuel accepted the calling. Anna-Maria also accepted callings. Both served faithfully and learned to speak beautiful Swedish along the way.

Commitment and willingness to serve the Lord have characterized the lives of Samuel and Anna-Maria. They are ordinary heroes in the Church. They have faithfully



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PRESIDENT RUSSELL M. NELSON

served every time they have been asked. They have taught me that when we serve, we use the talents we have (see Doctrine and Covenants 60:13), and the Lord then helps us accomplish His purposes.

When we are willing to serve, we strive not to complain or murmur, because we do not want to tarnish our service in any way. Complaining may be a sign of wavering commitment, or that our love for the Savior is not as it ought to be. Left unchecked, murmuring can progress to outright rebellion against the Lord. This progression is seen in the life of Ezra Booth, an early convert to the Church in Ohio who was called as a missionary to Missouri.

As he left Ohio in June 1831, Ezra was upset that some missionaries were able to travel by wagon while he had to walk in the summer heat, preaching along the way. He murmured. When he arrived in Missouri, he felt deflated. Missouri was not what he had expected. Instead, he looked around and noted that “the prospect appeared somewhat gloomy.”

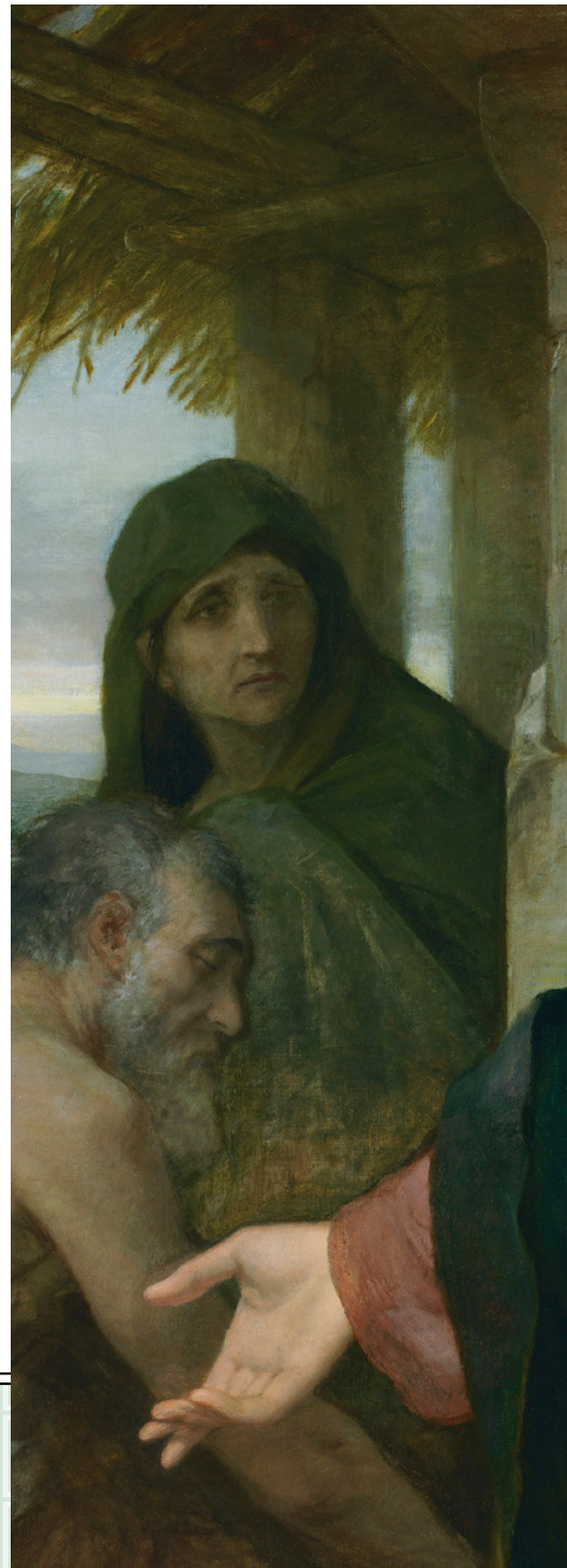
Ezra became increasingly cynical, sarcastic, and critical. Upon leaving Missouri, instead of preaching as he went, as he had been asked to do, he returned to Ohio as quickly as he could. His initial murmuring evolved into wavering and finally into losing confidence in his earlier spiritual experiences. Soon Ezra left the Church and “ultimately ‘abandoned Christianity and became an agnostic.’”⁵

The same can happen to us if we are not careful. If we do not maintain an eternal perspective, reminding ourselves whose work this really is, we might complain, waver, and eventually lose the faith we have.

I pray that we can choose to follow Jesus Christ by joining Him in His work. As we do, we are given “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4). These blessings include forgiveness of sin (see Doctrine and Covenants 60:7; 61:2, 34; 62:3; 64:3), salvation (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:13; 56:2), and exaltation (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:3–11; 59:23). Indeed, we are promised the greatest gift God can give—eternal life. ■

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, *His Holy Name* (1998), 37.
2. Gathering Israel signifies inviting all to become true believers in Jesus Christ.
3. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2023), 13, Gospel Library.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), Gospel Library.
5. See Matthew McBride, “Ezra Booth and Isaac Morley,” in *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants* (2016), 130–36.



No matter how talented we are, the Lord will not use us unless we are committed to His work and willing to help Him.



WHAT MAKES A WARD OR BRANCH UNITED?

By Olivia Grayson and Mabel Teerlink

Church Magazines

Three stories show ways to make your ward or branch more united in Jesus Christ.

In the early days of the restored Church, the Lord gave this important commandment to the Saints: “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27).

Each branch and ward around the world seeks to follow this direction and become one, with “hearts knit together in unity and in love” (Mosiah 18:21). Although the circumstances vary for different people and places, we all rely on



Jesus Christ to achieve unity. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has reminded us that “only in Jesus Christ can we truly become one.”¹

The following stories from a branch in Mozambique, a ward in the United States, and a ward in Northern Ireland demonstrate successful ways to become “one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28).

UNITY THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Less than a year after joining the Church, Ernesto Gabriel Manhique was called as the president of the newly created Homoine Branch in Inhambane, Mozambique. At the time, the branch was two years old and had about 20 members attending:

President Manhique wanted love to be the foundation of the branch. “Because of my experiences,” he said, “I decided to be a leader who cultivates friendship with the members and demonstrates my love for them.”

President Manhique said their branch council meetings focused on reaching those who had stopped attending church because they struggled to feel loved and valued. These discussions led to an activity they called “Friday night branch family evenings.”

“We plan it like this: We think about the brothers and sisters who haven’t been to church the previous Sunday or who haven’t been for a few Sundays,” said President Manhique. “Then we ask the person if we can have a branch family evening at their house that week.”

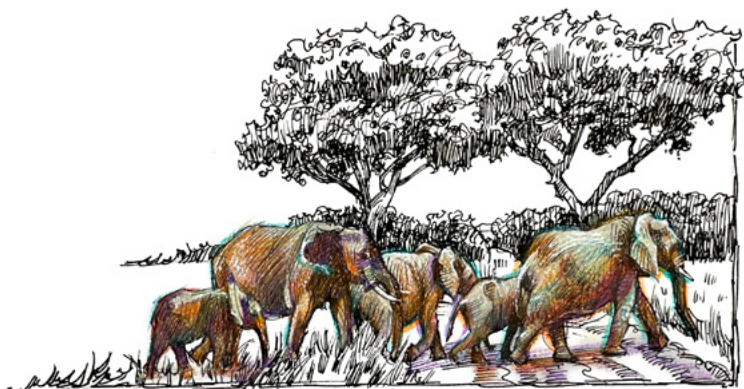
The branch gathers at the member’s home and invites the entire neighborhood. President Manhique explained that this helps the person or family to feel loved, valued, and wanted.

“Often, the member [who hosted] returns accompanied by neighbors, who enjoy the branch family evening and decide to attend church,” said President Manhique. The Homoine Branch now has over 250 members. Most attend church regularly.

As wards and branches plan and execute consistent, uplifting activities, their members will grow in unity and love. Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “In many places in the Church, a few more ward activities, of course planned and implemented with gospel purpose, could knit us together with even greater belonging and unity.”²

**“We think about the brothers
and sisters who haven’t been to church. . . .
Then we ask the person if we can have
a branch family evening at their house.”**

**— Ernesto Gabriel Manhique,
Homoine Branch president**



UNITY THROUGH MINISTERING

A few years ago, the Eagle Valley Ward in Colorado, USA, experienced many trials of faith. Multiple members of the ward were dying, and their families needed strength and support. The ward could have been overshadowed by feelings of sadness but instead found joy in ministering.

“We were carried through by serving others,” said Karie Grayson, the Relief Society president at the time. One day, while visiting the home of an ill sister, Sister Grayson received a revelation on how to uplift this sister with the love of her ward.

“As my presidency and I sat there in the room visiting with her, we were each thinking, ‘What more can we do?’” said Sister Grayson. “An idea came to me. I knew right then and there what we should do.”

This sister loved flowers, so the ward brought life to her overgrown flower garden. Every Tuesday morning, members of the ward showed up to care for the garden.

Excitement to serve grew not only in the Eagle Valley Ward but also in the community. Individuals and companies throughout the area helped provide dirt, flowers, and a watering system.

“I feel like what we did was directed by Heavenly Father,” said Sister Grayson. “There was a lot of work to be done, but there was a lot of laughter with everybody together. It was so fun.”

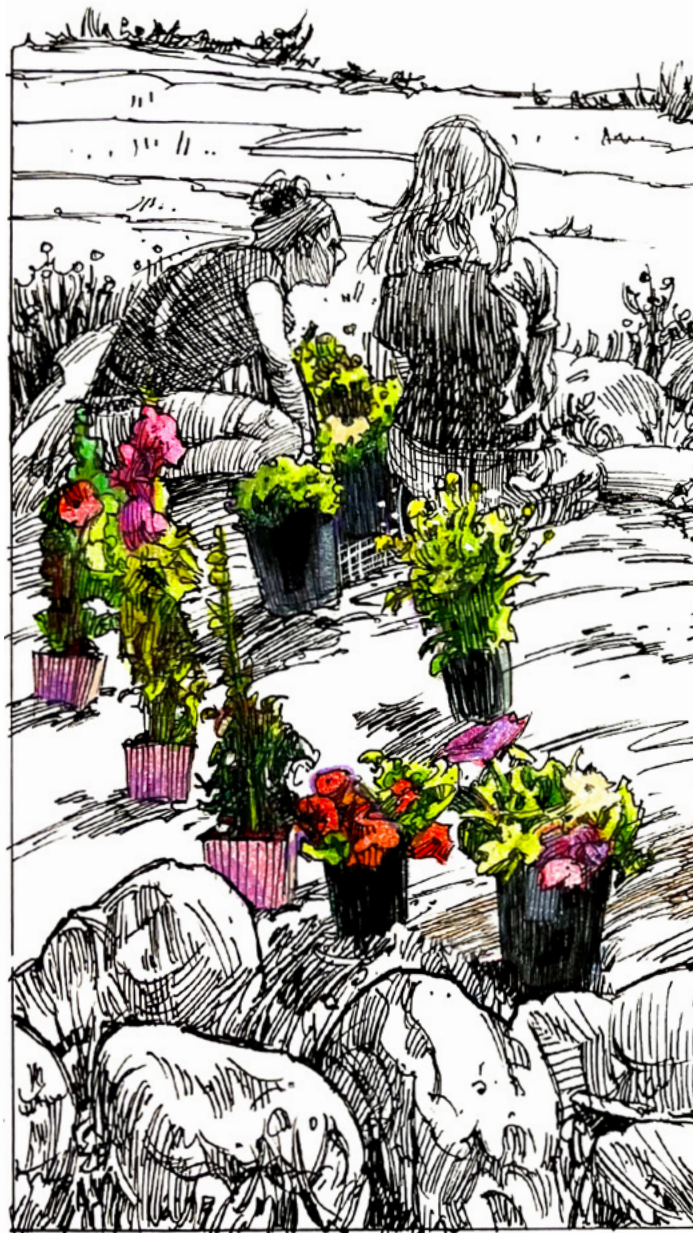
As they worked and served together, the feeling in the Eagle Valley Ward changed. Sadness faded as they found joy in service.

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Bishop Greg Adair said, “As we all participated together, the ward started to feel like a family. This period of time was a trial for our ward, but we came together and helped one another.”

Sister Grayson said the ward bonded through service not because they had to but because they wanted to. And as they did, they found healing in their own struggles. “There was a powerful



feeling in the ward,” she said. “When you change the hearts of individuals in the ward, you change the heart of the ward.”

Members of the Eagle Valley Ward were “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

“Serving together brings you closer,” said Bishop Adair. “It was easy to minister because we all knew each other well. Christ teaches us to love God and our neighbor, and as we try to do whatever calling we are asked to do, we knit ourselves together in love.”



UNITY THROUGH TEMPLE WORSHIP

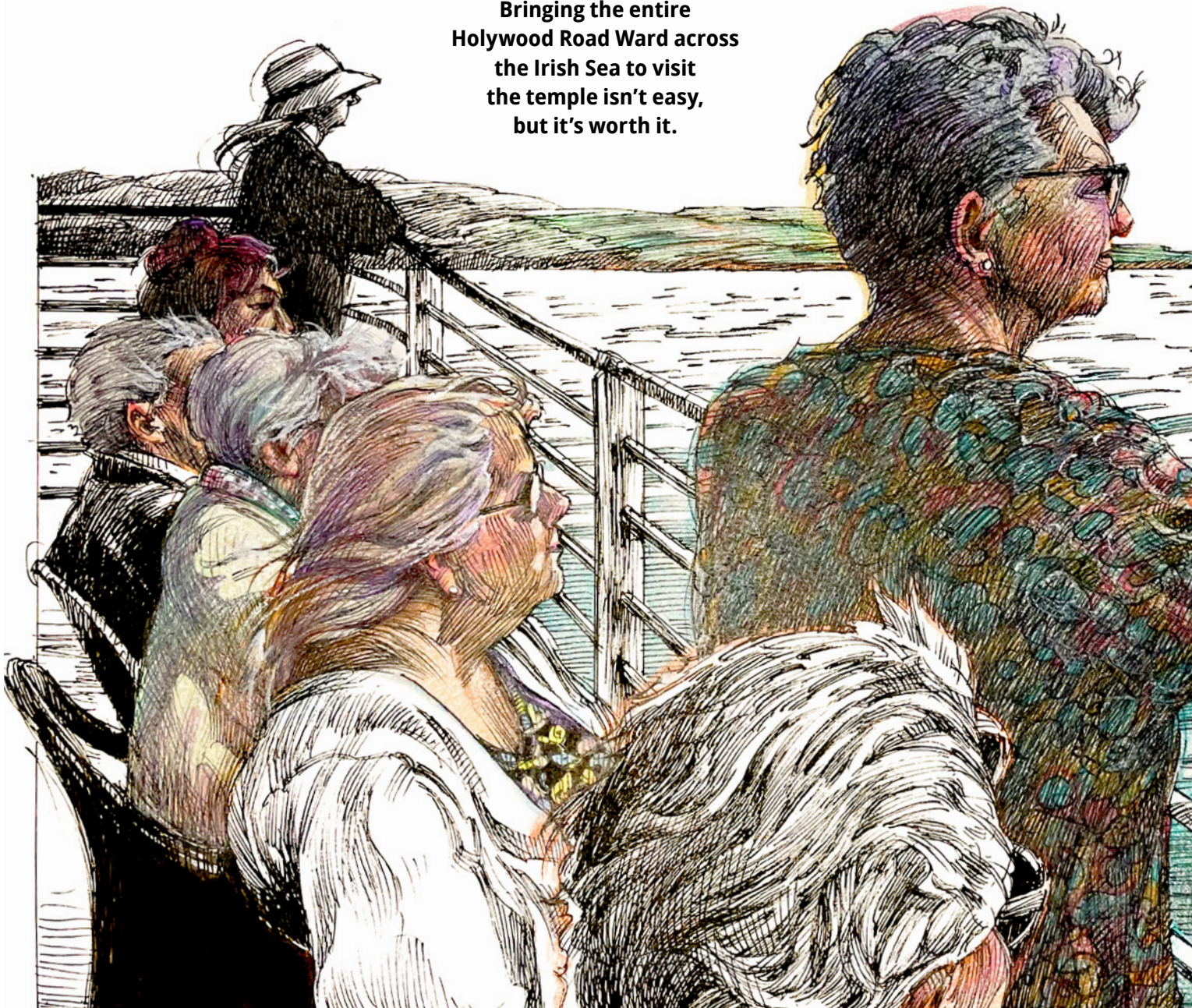
When Bishop Ernest White of the Holywood Road Ward in Belfast, Northern Ireland, watched his two sons run a marathon, he expected his son David, who had been training for months, to finish the race much faster than his less-prepared son Peter. Bishop White was surprised when David stayed by Peter's side all the way to the finish line.

"I'm holding you back. Go on without me," Peter told his brother.

"I'm not going to leave you," replied David.

This experience led Bishop White to think about the members of his ward. Many of them are elderly sisters, and it is difficult for them to travel to the nearest temple in Preston, England. Bishop White imagined each of these sisters saying, "Go on to the temple without me. I'm going to hold you back. Don't wait for me."

**Bringing the entire
Holywood Road Ward across
the Irish Sea to visit
the temple isn't easy,
but it's worth it.**



Despite the difficulties, Bishop White and other ward leaders didn't want to leave these sisters behind. They decided to organize an annual ward trip to the temple, helping each ward member who desired to attend to enjoy the blessings of the temple.

Bishop White recognizes that while the trip is expensive and difficult to plan, "it brings a great togetherness."

The annual trip involves everyone in the ward in different ways. Adults help schedule appointments and make travel arrangements. Youth help older members use technology to do family history research and prepare family name cards. The

generous donations of some members help cover accommodation costs for all the traveling temple patrons.

"The message we have successfully given to our members—every single one—is if they have committed to follow the covenant path and move forward, none of them will be left behind," Bishop White said. "They are needed, and they're loved, and they're not holding us back."

For the first two annual trips, ward members flew to England. However, in 2024 some members couldn't climb the stairs to the airplanes anymore, so the ward decided to drive instead. This required taking a ferry across the Irish Sea.

Over 30 members made the journey to attend the temple last August. For a week, they participated together in temple ordinances. These experiences reminded the members that they are each part of a loving ward family.

"When we walk through the doors of the temple together, it means so much to us," Bishop White said. "When we see each other—all of us in the celestial room together—that's like a little bit of heaven on earth."

Although bringing the entire Hollywood Road Ward across the Irish Sea to visit the temple isn't easy, it is worth it for the members and their loved ones. "That's what the Savior would have us do," Bishop White said. "He wouldn't have anybody be left behind. He wants all of us to move forward together, so that's what we're trying to do."

UNITY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

While each of these stories shows a different principle for developing unity, they all show how Jesus Christ helps us to become one with our wards and branches. He will lead Church members as they plan activities, minister to those in need, worship in temples, and make other efforts to be united. The Savior's love and teachings make it possible for each congregation to "be made perfect in one" (see John 17:23). ■

NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, "One in Christ," *Liahona*, May 2023, 78.
2. Gerrit W. Gong, "Love Is Spoken Here," *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 112.



WHAT JOY THE NEWS BROUGHT

In the 1960s, a man named Joseph William Billy Johnson learned about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and gained a testimony of the restored gospel. He could not join the Church, however, because he lived in Ghana, which had no congregations and no missions. At the time, the priesthood and temple restriction didn't allow men of African descent to be ordained to the priesthood, which made Church organization in Ghana impossible. Church leaders in Salt Lake City encouraged Billy in his testimony of the gospel and sent him Church literature to help him grow in his faith. For more than a decade, he led a congregation of believers while waiting for the Church to come to West Africa.

One evening in June 1978, Billy Johnson returned to his home in Cape Coast, Ghana. He and other members of his congregation had been fasting, as they often did, but the fast had done nothing to lift his spirits. He was tired and discouraged because more believers had stopped worshipping with him and returned to their old churches.¹

Billy longed to feel spiritually and emotionally strong again. A couple of months earlier, a member of his congregation had told him about a revelation she had had. “Very soon the missionaries will come,” she had said. “I have seen white men coming to our church. They embraced us and joined us in worship.” Another woman announced that she had received a similar revelation. Billy himself had dreamed of some white men entering his chapel and saying, “We are your brothers, and we have come to baptize you.” Afterward, he had dreamed of Black people coming from far and wide to join the Church.²

Still, Billy could not shake his discouragement.

It was getting late, but he couldn't sleep. A strong impression overtook him to listen to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on the radio—something he hadn't done in years.³

He found the radio, a brown model with four silver knobs near the base. The radio crackled to life as he turned it on. He fiddled with the knobs, and the red pointer glided back and forth across the dial. But he couldn't find the broadcast.

Then, after an hour of searching, Billy finally made out a newscast from the BBC. The reporter announced that the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had received a revelation. All worthy men in the Church, regardless of race, could now hold the priesthood.

Billy collapsed, bursting into tears of joy. Priesthood authority would finally come to Ghana, bringing all the blessings of the gospel to his people.⁴

Missionaries arrived in Cape Coast later that year, baptizing Billy Johnson and hundreds of other believers. Since that time, the Church has spread rapidly throughout Ghana and neighboring countries in West Africa. The Cape Coast Ghana Temple was announced in October 2023; it will be the third temple in the country. ■

To read more stories from modern Church history, see volume 4 of Saints, available in the Gospel Library and in print.

NOTES

1. Acquah and Acquah, Oral History Interview [2018], 16; E. Dale LeBaron, “Steadfast African Pioneer,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1999, 49.
2. Acquah and Acquah, Oral History Interview [2018], 16; Joseph Johnson, Oral History Interview [1988], 22–23, 43–45. Quotation edited for readability.
3. E. Dale LeBaron, “Steadfast African Pioneer,” 49; Joseph Johnson, Oral History Interview [1988], 22–23; Kissi, *Walking in the Sand*, 28.
4. Joseph Johnson, Oral History Interview [1988], 43; E. Dale LeBaron, “Steadfast African Pioneer,” 49; Kissi, *Walking in the Sand*, 27–28; “Race and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Gospel Topics Essays*, Gospel Library.



MINISTERING AS THE SAVIOR WOULD



By Sister J. Anette Dennis

First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The early practice of ministering visits started not long after the Relief Society was established in 1842. . . .

“Although the details of the process have changed since those early days, the principles remain the same—to minister as the Savior would minister.”¹

Ministering is not about checklists; it is about relationships—our relationship with others and our relationship with God. In the *General Handbook* we read: “Ministering means serving others as the Savior did (see Matthew 20:26–28). He loved, taught, prayed for, comforted, and blessed those around Him (see Acts 10:38). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to minister to God’s children.”²

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “When trials come, often what we most want is for someone to listen and *be* with us. . . . Sometimes we yearn for someone who will grieve, ache, and weep with us; let us express pain, frustration, sometimes even anger; and acknowledge with us there are things we do not know.”

He went on to say: “A father assigned with his teacher-age son as ministering companions explained, ‘Ministering is when we go from being neighbors who bring cookies to trusted friends [and] spiritual first responders.’”³

EACH INDIVIDUAL IS UNIQUE

A ministering sister in New Zealand was led to a unique way to help a sister in her ward. This

sister had recently gone through a separation from her husband. The ministering sister was up late with her baby and noticed that this sister seemed active online in the late hours of the night, so she decided to message her. After praying about how she could help, she was inspired to take some time to sleep during the day and set her alarm to wake up late at night to keep this sister company by messaging with her online because this was the time of the day the sister felt sad and lonely and especially missed her husband.

With regular interactions and invitations from both ministering sisters, over time this sister started coming back to church. Her ministering sisters would pick her up and accompany her to meetings and activities. She then had the desire to talk to her bishop about renewing her temple recommend.

The week after receiving her recommend, she and her ministering sisters attended the temple together. Through this time of inspired watchcare, she no longer felt lonely.

These ministering sisters truly became trusted friends and spiritual first responders for this dear sister going through a challenging time in her life. They provided temporal and spiritual relief. But it took time, patience, loving-kindness, and gentle invitations.

By seeking the Lord’s inspiration, this ministering sister was led to a unique way she could help. Ultimately, that inspired ministering led this sister back to the temple and the blessings of a covenant relationship with God.

MINISTERING WITH LOVE

For the efforts of these ministering sisters to be sustainable, however, it took their love of God and the love they had for this sister. We can pray for that love if we don’t feel it at first. Ministering to others only out of a sense of duty won’t be sustainable over the long term, especially if those we are assigned to are resistant at first.

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said that we should “love and minister in such a way that others are

*It is a sacred work to
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drawn to Jesus Christ.”⁴ To do that, we need to develop relationships of trust with those we are assigned to. That type of relationship will develop over time. It will take more than just sending an occasional text or connecting in the hall at church.

If we think about how the Savior ministered and pray to know how to minister to our sisters and brothers as we imagine *He* would, we’ll know what to do. We have the privilege of representing the Savior in our ministering efforts. Think about a person in your life you have now or have had in the past, or *wish* you had, who makes you feel loved and valued and motivates you to be a better person just by being with him or her, who motivates you to want to follow the Savior.

That’s what higher and holier ministering is all about. It’s not complicated; it’s simple, but it takes a desire to be that kind of person for others, the type of person the Savior was for those who came into contact with Him. Ministering is like an apprenticeship with the Savior because we are practicing becoming like Him and learning to love and care for others in the way He would.

Because each individual is unique, each will need something different, just as the sister from New Zealand did. As we pray for, spend time with, and sincerely listen to others, we will discover their individual needs and can receive inspiration to know how and when to serve them, both temporally and spiritually.

As we develop relationships of trust, we will be able to help strengthen others’ faith in the Savior through our service and through the individual messages we feel inspired to share. I have been blessed over the years with inspired ministering sisters who became some of my closest friends. Those relationships of trust strengthened me in many ways and helped me to feel the Savior’s love and care for me.

It is so important that those *we* minister to also feel the Savior’s love and care for *them*. This is how we bring the Savior’s relief to others and, in the process, find our *own* relief in Him.

BECOMING LIKE THE SAVIOR

The Savior’s example is one of individual ministering and love. As we practice ministering as the Savior would, we will be transformed to become more like Him. Ministering will become who we are, not

just what we do. Over time, ministering will become a part of us, and we will go about doing good, as the Savior did, with or without an assignment.

President Jeffrey R. Holland, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, invited us to be “more deeply committed to heartfelt care for one another, motivated only by the pure love of Christ to do so. In spite of what we all feel are our limitations and inadequacies—and we all have challenges—nevertheless, may we labor side by side with the Lord of the vineyard, giving the God and Father of us all a helping hand with His staggering task of answering prayers, providing comfort, drying tears, and strengthening feeble knees. If we will do that, we will be more like the true disciples of Christ we are meant to be. . . . May we love one another as He has loved us.”⁵

It is a sacred work to partner with Jesus Christ in blessing the lives of our Heavenly Father’s children. If we approach this with a spirit of love and gratitude for the *opportunity* to bless others’ lives, our own lives will be greatly blessed in the process. ■

From a Brigham Young University Education Week address given on August 19, 2024.

NOTES

1. Marianne Holman Prescott, “Learning How to Minister: Relief Society Leaders Explain Changes to Visiting Teaching,” Oct. 19, 2017, ChurchOfJesusChrist.org.
2. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 21.0, Gospel Library.
3. Gerrit W. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 42, 43; emphasis added.
4. Dale G. Renlund, “The Powerful, Virtuous Cycle of the Doctrine of Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 83.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” *Liahona*, May 2018, 103.

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MINISTERING AS FIRST RESPONDERS

Like first responders at the scene of a crisis, we can bring help and comfort, but we can't heal. We can, however, love and care for our brothers and sisters and lead them to Christ, the Master Healer.

By Krista Rogers Mortensen

My daughter Abby is a paramedic, and in her line of work no two days are the same. Each call she receives is unique and requires a different response. Her work is unpredictable and takes place in an uncontrolled environment. She doesn't treat people in a sterile hospital room surrounded by specialized equipment but can often be found manually pumping someone's heart on the side of the freeway, intubating a person on a bathroom floor, delivering a baby in the back of a car, bandaging wounds, splinting broken bones, or administering medication.

She immediately assesses what is needed and then does the best she can with the knowledge she has. When a situation is out of the ordinary and there is a question about what should be done, she calls to speak with a doctor for additional instructions.

Although Abby's job as a first responder is very important, she doesn't heal people and then send them home well and whole. Her job is to provide first aid, care, and comfort until people are stable enough to be transported to the hospital, where doctors can use their specialized skills to treat the injuries and illnesses and begin the healing process.

WE TOO ARE FIRST RESPONDERS

As I've thought about our role as members of God's Church in the gathering of Israel, it has occurred to me that, like Abby, we are first responders. Each person we encounter has unique challenges, and each requires a different response. Caring for our brothers and sisters doesn't take place in a predictable, controlled environment. We are working with real people and real-life situations, and it can be messy.

Like a first responder, we must assess needs and then respond the best we know how with the knowledge we have. When a situation is out of the ordinary and we're not sure what to do, we too can call for additional instructions by praying to receive guidance through the Spirit to know the course of action we should take. We can ask our leaders, like the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies, for help as well.

In Mosiah 18, Alma talks about the righteous desires of those who come into the fold of God: to bear one another's burdens, mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort,

and stand as witnesses of God (see verses 8–9). When I have been at a low point in my life, feeling abandoned and like the heavens were closed to me, and someone has shown up to sit with me, cry with me, or listen to me, I have felt God's love through that person and received a witness that He is aware of me and my situation.

We often think that standing as a witness means sharing our beliefs with others and testifying of the truth, and sometimes that's exactly what the Spirit leads us to do. But this isn't always the first thing people need when they are in difficult situations. When Abby comes upon someone in cardiac arrest, it's probably not the ideal time to begin a discussion on healthy eating habits and exercise. Her job isn't to judge how they ended up where they are or to determine who deserves her care. If a person is in need, she gives them aid.

Just as Abby doesn't heal people and send them on their way, neither can we make people whole, fix them, or save them. Our role is vitally important: it is to love and care for our brothers and sisters and lead them to Christ, the Master Healer, who can do the healing and saving.

It is easy to feel helpless in our ministering when we encounter those with burdens so heavy, complicated, or unfamiliar, or whose sins are so great, addictions so enslaving, pain and sorrow so intense, or faith so weak that we don't know how to help them. We will be frustrated when we try to fix or change people because it's not something we have the power to do for others.¹ As Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "The Savior's job is to heal. Our job is to love—to love and minister in such a way that others are drawn to Jesus Christ."²



OUR ROLE IS VITALLY IMPORTANT:
IT IS TO LOVE AND CARE FOR OUR
BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND LEAD
THEM TO CHRIST, THE MASTER
HEALER, WHO CAN DO THE HEALING
AND SAVING.

WE ARE FIRST RESPONDERS.

EACH PERSON WE ENCOUNTER HAS
UNIQUE CHALLENGES, AND EACH
REQUIRES A DIFFERENT RESPONSE.



OUR JOB IS TO LOVE OTHERS

When Alma talks about comforting those who stand in need of comfort, there is no asterisk, addendum, or qualifier that says, “Comfort those who stand in need of comfort as long as they share your beliefs, dress like you, are free of sin, or live a lifestyle you approve of.” As first responders, it is not our job to judge others or to determine if they are worthy of our love and care. Our instructions are very clear:

- “Love one another” (John 13:34).
- “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).
- “Let every man esteem his brother as himself” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:25).

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“The nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs. . . .

“If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another.”³

My parents exemplified this love in so many ways. They had a large family, with many grandchildren, some of whom chose to step away from the Church or follow paths that diverged from its teachings. Yet, to my knowledge, my parents never criticized, coerced, or tried to change their grandchildren in an effort to “save” them. They left judging and saving to the Savior and simply loved them. Their home was a place where everyone felt welcomed and safe, regardless of their religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or political or world views.

Grandchildren could tell them about anything and be themselves around them without fear of rejection. My parents spent time with them, listened to them, and built relationships with them.

In the days leading up to my mother’s passing, I witnessed her grandchildren—most now in their 20s and 30s—weeping as they gathered around the bed of their cherished grandmother. This small white-haired woman, along with my father, had ministered to them, valued them, welcomed them, and loved them without conditions. My parents were faithful Latter-day Saints who understood that loving others, even when their beliefs or choices differ from our own, doesn’t diminish our faith or change our beliefs. We lose nothing by loving all of God’s children.

This doesn’t mean that we ignore teaching the importance of obeying God’s commandments. As President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught: “To balance our commitments to love and law we must continually show love even as we continually honor and keep the commandments. We must strive to preserve precious relationships and at the same time not compromise

our responsibilities to be obedient to and supportive of gospel law.”⁴

As first responders and disciples of Christ, we can love as He loves and create safe places for those around us—in our relationships, our homes, our neighborhoods, and our church. These are places where people can find love, acceptance, and inclusion, and where they can become acquainted with the Savior, who has the power to heal, forgive, save, and make all things right. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

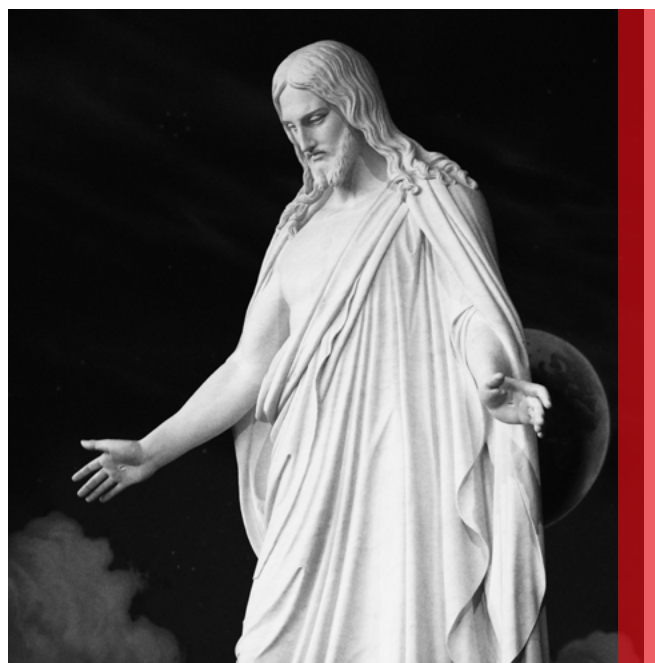
NOTES

1. I shared how I applied this idea with my own family in a July 2020 *Liahona* article, “You Love, He Saves.”
2. Dale G. Renlund, “The Powerful, Virtuous Cycle of the Doctrine of Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 83.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 428–29, 454.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Paradox of Love and Law” (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, Oct. 30, 2018), byui.edu.

LOVE AND COMPASSION

“We do need all our compassion, empathy, and love as we interact with those around us. Those who are struggling ‘need to experience the pure love of Jesus Christ reflected in [our] words and actions’ [Russell M. Nelson, “Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 100]. As we minister, we encourage others frequently and offer help. Even if someone is not receptive, we continue to minister as they allow.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Powerful, Virtuous Cycle of the Doctrine of Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 82.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL CHRISTINE PORTER



Ministering Angels on the Mountain

By Steven J. Ewing, New Mexico, USA

When I severed my right quadriceps tendon during a fall while hiking high in the Rocky Mountains, USA, our young men group turned to prayer and the priesthood as they worked together as one to help me.

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to read more



I Was Protected

By Brenda Crawford, Utah, USA

I tried to rationalize away the prompting, but I soon learned a valuable lesson about following the Holy Ghost.

One evening as I drove to a friend's birthday party, I turned down a secluded, dark two-lane road. Suddenly, I had a terrible feeling. The thought came to me that I should turn around. I rationalized that I was just being nervous.

The prompting, however, came again two more times. "Heavenly Father," I said out loud, "there is no place to turn around. If I need to do so, please show me where."

Immediately, I saw a driveway I had never noticed before during my many times driving this road. I quickly turned around and went home.

My friends were disappointed when I told them I wouldn't be coming to the party. Thinking I had turned around because I didn't want to be alone, they suggested that my husband join me on a return drive. My husband agreed. He dropped me off at the party and left for home.

Later, my husband called me. He sounded alarmed. He said that as he drove home, police officers stopped him to ask if he had seen anything suspicious. They said a truck had been forced off the road by gang members who then beat and robbed the driver. The police suspected that the gang had targeted the truck because no other cars were nearby at the time.

I was stunned! Earlier, I had been the lone vehicle on that same road. I realized that my prompting had been from the Holy Ghost and that I had been protected by the powers of heaven. As I contemplated what had happened, other incidents in my life came to my mind. I realized that what I had thought were mere coincidences were actually promptings from the Holy Ghost.

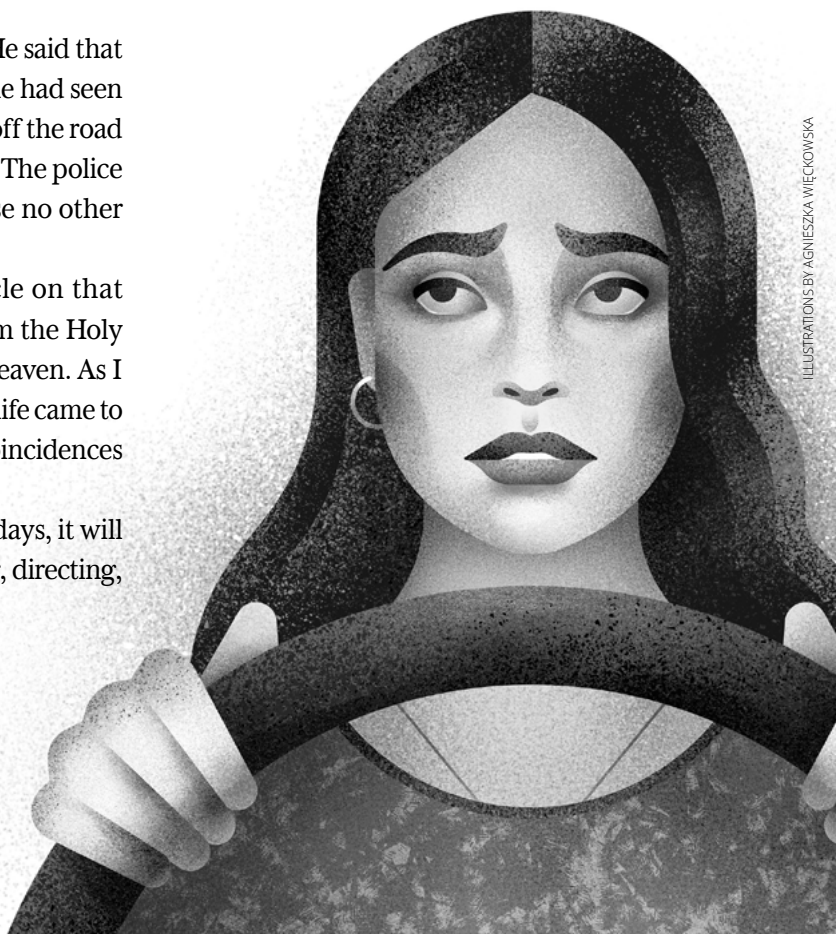
President Russell M. Nelson has taught, "In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing,

comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost."¹

That day, having the influence of the Holy Ghost did not just preserve me spiritually; it also protected me physically. I know that God is aware of us and that if we listen to Him, He will guide our footsteps. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY AGNIESZKA WIECKOWSKA



God Needed Me in Austria

By Heber Ferraz-Leite, Vienna, Austria

I was ready to leave my home to study abroad, but I had forgotten to pray first.

After returning from my mission to Spain, I felt ready for my next step in life. I wanted to experience the Church in a bigger way, beyond the borders of my home in Vienna, Austria, where members are devoted but relatively few.

I felt that I needed to be among like-minded young people at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA, and I hoped to meet a young woman there whom I could marry and with whom I could start a family. I passed the English language test and was soon admitted. My parents offered to help pay my expenses.

One nagging thought, however, troubled me. I hadn't consulted the Lord. "Why do I need to ask?" I reasoned. Was I not "engaged in a good cause," not needing to be directed in all things? (see Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–27). How could heaven possibly object?

But the Holy Ghost kept prompting me, "You need to pray before deciding." Fully expecting the Lord to approve, I thought, "OK."

An answer came swift and strong—one of the clearest answers I have ever received. I heard in my heart, "I need you here in Austria to build up the kingdom."

I put the BYU class schedule away and canceled my plans. I thought about my family, how the Lord had helped us immigrate to Austria from Uruguay when I was young. I realized that maybe the Lord did need me here. With a new spirit, I focused on building

the kingdom in Austria, which is drenched in beauty, rich in history, and home to many great musical masters, like Beethoven and Mozart.

Only a few weeks later, I met a young woman who, like me, had emigrated from South America with her family. We became close friends. She was not a Latter-day Saint but carefully studied my devotion to the Savior and His Church and eventually gained her own testimony. Two years later we got married.

Since being sealed in the temple, Katerin and I have raised three sons and a daughter, who are steady and devoted. We strive to let our light shine (see Matthew 5:16) by being friendly with all and open about our beliefs in our home in Austria. I am grateful for the gift of personal revelation to help guide our lives as we serve the Lord. ■

Heavenly Father's Divine Design

By Davis M. Smith, President, Brazil Recife North Mission

I was grateful for the donated shoes, but would they fit any of our missionaries?

As a mission leader in Brazil, I spent a week near the end of 2023 interviewing 60 of our 160 missionaries. One of them, a zone leader, asked to speak to me privately. When we met, he handed me a shoebox and told me his parents had bought an extra pair of shoes for someone in the mission who might need them.

Touched, I thanked him for his parents' generosity and thoughtfulness. I silently wished, however, that the small shoes, size 8.5, had been a larger, common size worn by most of our missionaries. I was grateful nonetheless and put the shoes in my car.



Two days later, I was interviewing more missionaries, when I invited a smiling missionary into my office. He had arrived just four weeks earlier from Guatemala. When I asked him how he was doing, his smile turned into sobs.

He tearfully spoke of his embarrassment when another missionary had innocently teased him for not buttoning the top button of his shirt. He was a recent convert and had grown up in a single-parent home. His mother barely made enough money to support him and his two siblings. His donated shirts were too small, so he used the knot of his well-worn tie to hide the unbuttoned top button.

I gave him some money a Church member had donated for missionaries who needed clothing and told him to buy new shirts. Then I noticed that his shoes were falling apart. Suddenly, I remembered the shoes in my car! I asked him what size shoe he wore, realizing he had small feet.

"I wear a size 8.5," he replied.

Tears filled my eyes as I explained that another missionary's parents had just donated a pair of shoes in his size. We took a picture together and sent it to the zone leader. His father, who coincidentally was also Guatemalan, felt touched that he had helped a missionary from his native country.

In our mission, these types of blessings happen daily. Some might say they are simply coincidences, but I agree with Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004), who attributed them to the "divine design" of a loving Heavenly Father.¹ ■

NOTE

1. Neal A. Maxwell, "Brim with Joy" (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 23, 1996), 2, speeches.byu.edu.

I Felt God's Love

By Joel Villagra, Buenos Aires, Argentina

As I kept my covenants, Heavenly Father cleared obstacles from my path.

When my mother was young, her mother abandoned her. A few years later, her father passed away, and she was given to a family that was unkind to her. This experience made her believe she could not find happiness in a family.

When she joined the Church, however, her attitude changed as she came to understand the importance of family in God's plan of happiness. She served a mission and eventually married my father. Together they formed a family full of faith in Jesus Christ and did their best to live according to their covenants with God. That's the kind of family I grew up in in a small Argentinian town called Lima.

After serving a full-time mission, I remember feeling sad and confused about what to do professionally. But Heavenly Father strengthened me to keep my faith and my covenants, and He blessed me with a mother who kept hers too. Her faith and determination became a source of inspiration to me.

As I contemplated college studies, I considered a major that wasn't really what I had dreamed of studying. Noticing my sadness, my mother said, "Hold on to your dreams. Choose the path you know in your heart is right."

When I was a child, I had dreams related to music and entertainment. I learned to play the piano, led Church choirs, and shared the gospel through music. For a time, life's challenges and distractions took me away from those dreams.

President Russell M. Nelson said those who make covenants with God "have access to a special kind of love and mercy" and that making such covenants "affects who we are and how God will help us become what we can become."¹

Our covenants offer us security. As I kept my covenants, I felt His special love for me. He removed obstacles from my path until my path became clear.

I came from a small town that offered little promise for an unknown boy. Today, I produce professional concerts and theater shows in Buenos Aires. My wife, children, and professional work are my dreams come true.

I believe that God wants us to succeed. If we persist, He will prepare a way for us to achieve all He wants us to achieve. Most important, He will help us become an instrument in His hands in bringing others to Him. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 5, 10.



EXPERIENCING THE “FULNESS OF JOY” GOD PROMISES US

Does living the gospel really make us happier?

By Rachel Garden

The gospel offers us a unique perspective on the pursuit of happiness. Having personal relationships with God and Jesus Christ deepens our understanding of what real happiness is and what it means to be joyful.

But for me, worldly happiness and enduring joy are two different things.¹

Wordly happiness is based on temporary pleasure and enjoyment and is influenced by our current circumstances. It can spark pure delight or cause us to laugh out loud. However, this kind of happiness can be fleeting and hard to keep.

Meanwhile, Christ-centered joy is a long-term state of contentment and peace that isn't based on our circumstances. Joy speaks to the heart and soul and can last much longer than wordly happiness.

Comparing these two feelings made me think about my own experiences and how the gospel of Jesus Christ brings deeper, more enduring joy into our lives.



JOY SPEAKS TO THE HEART AND SOUL AND CAN LAST
MUCH LONGER THAN WORLDLY HAPPINESS.

By following the Savior, keeping His commandments, and staying on the covenant path, we unlock a greater capacity for profound joy. It's important to understand that while worldly happiness is often a response to external factors, joy can be a profound, internal state that can exist even amid trials.

The Fleeting Pleasures of the World versus the Enduring Joy of the Gospel

I was happy even before I knew about the gospel. I had a good life, with parents who have always been the best examples I know of kindness, selflessness, and love. I believe that people can be happy without the gospel in their lives.

However, since joining the Church at age 18, I've learned that the gospel broadens our capacity to experience *lasting* joy. It's our knowledge of the gospel that allows us to feel joy beyond anything the world can offer.

While the world offers happiness through temporary pleasures, the gospel invites us to partake of a joy that transcends all circumstances. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "Worldly happiness . . . does not last. It cannot. It is the nature of all earthly things to grow old, decay, wear out, or become stale. But godly joy is eternal, because God is eternal."²

Over the last few years, I've had some particularly challenging times when I've struggled to feel cheerful. Despite the hardships, the sparks of joy I felt in moments of prayer, personal study, and serving others were profound. I found that my joy didn't manifest through big, obvious emotions; instead, it was often through a deep, abiding sense of peace and fulfillment in my heart.

During these moments, I truly understood what it means to experience the joy that our Savior promises.

True, lasting joy comes from aligning our lives with God's plan. As President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) testified: "Essential to the plan is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His atoning sacrifice, all would be lost."³ While the happiness the world offers usually comes from external circumstances, the happiness or joy the Lord offers is an eternal state that comes from living a Christ-centered life.

The Enduring Joy We Find in Christ

The joy of the gospel is contagious. It transforms not just our own lives but also the lives of those around us. The promise of everlasting joy is central to the message of the gospel. In 3 Nephi 28:10, we are promised a "fulness of joy" in the presence of the Father and the Son.

This eternal joy comes from fulfilling our divine purpose and becoming like God. It's a joy that transcends our earthly experiences, promising a future of eternal happiness with our loved ones.

Everyone will experience ups and downs, but the gospel of Jesus Christ provides a path to everlasting joy. By seeking to follow the Savior and live according to His teachings, we can experience a joy that is profound, enduring, and transformative.

As President Russell M. Nelson said, "The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives."⁴

The promise of everlasting joy is not just a distant hope. It is a present reality that we can experience here and now. By living the gospel, we can transform fleeting moments of happiness into lasting joy. So seek happiness and pursue joy. Embrace the gospel. Let the promise of everlasting joy guide your path. Everlasting joy emanates from having God's presence in our lives.

While worldly happiness may come and go, the joy we find in Christ is eternal! ■

The author lives in Glasgow, Scotland.

NOTES

1. See David A. Bednar, "That They Might Have Joy" (Brigham Young University devotional, Dec. 4, 2018), 1–7, speeches.byu.edu.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "A Higher Joy," *Liahona*, May 2024, 67.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "The Perfect Path to Happiness," *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 80.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.

IDEAS FOR INVITING JOY INTO YOUR LIFE

- Keep a daily gratitude journal.
- Serve someone! Sharing joy allows you to invite more joy into your life too.
- Spend quiet moments in prayer and scripture study, allowing the Spirit to fill your heart.
- Worship in the temple as often as you can, and if possible, consider doing your own ancestors' temple work.
- Engage in wholesome activities that allow you to connect with others and develop your talents.



**WHILE WORLDLY HAPPINESS
MAY COME AND GO, THE JOY WE
FIND IN CHRIST IS ETERNAL!**



ONE SIMPLE ANSWER TO FEELING HELPLESS IN A WAR-TORN WORLD

I was feeling helpless about all the conflict in the world. Then I got an unexpected answer from Heavenly Father.

By Jodian Grant

I have always felt peace from living the gospel of Jesus Christ, even without having many other members of the Church around me.

I've always been able to look to the gospel for direction when feeling overwhelmed. I can think of so many times when Heavenly Father has directed me toward hope and peace amid challenges.

However, I recently felt my trust in God's peace falter when a horrible war broke out in the country where my best friend lives. I felt helpless. Hot anger like I had never experienced before bubbled up inside me. I didn't know what I could do to help my friend or the other people being affected by this violence and hatred. The whole world felt dark, and I became fixated on the evil that was spreading chaos in so many places.

How could I feel peace knowing that so many people, including my closest friend, were suffering?

A Simple Prompting

I recognized that the anger I felt was starting to consume me. I needed to find peace again. So I went to Heavenly Father as I always had before. I poured out my heart in prayer and told Him that I felt helpless because there was so much violence going on in the world. I asked Him if there was anything I could do to find peace again.

I received a simple prompting from the Spirit:

Read the Book of Mormon.

I was already reading my scriptures often, so I wasn't sure why Heavenly Father would tell me to do something I was already doing. But I decided to trust the prompting. I began to pay closer attention to what I was reading in the Book of Mormon. I noticed how many times followers of Jesus Christ faced violence, wars, and evil and felt helpless against their challenges. But I also noticed that when they centered their lives on Jesus Christ during those turbulent moments, they seemed to feel peace—no matter what. (See 2 Nephi 4:16–35; Mosiah 24:8–25.) This scenario happens repeatedly in the Book of Mormon. The promises of finding peace in Christ are everywhere.

The prophet Ether taught: "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an

anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God" (Ether 12:4).

As I read truths like this during my study, I began to feel the peace of Christ again. And I understood that His peace is always available to all those who seek it, even those living through wars and conflicts.

Focusing on Him

The troubles in the world can make it difficult to stay focused on Jesus Christ. I still feel helpless and heartbroken at times. But despite this, I can always feel true peace when I keep my covenants and shift my focus to Him. For me, focusing on Him means saying a prayer before reaching for my phone in the morning, making time for the scriptures each day, and renewing my covenants by taking the sacrament every week.

When I make time for my Savior, I see that He and Heavenly Father will always help me through the good, the bad, and even the ugly parts of life.

Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified: "As [Jesus Christ's] followers, we are His peculiar people, called to proclaim His virtues, promoters of the peace so generously offered through Him and His atoning sacrifice. This peace is a gift promised to all who turn their hearts to the Savior and live righteously; such peace gives us the strength to enjoy mortal life and enables us to endure the painful trials of our journey."¹

Jesus Christ is "the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11). I know this is true now more than ever in this crazy world. Whether we feel scared, helpless, or uncertain, He can bring us light, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

His peace dissolves the fear and anger in my heart—every time I reach for Him. ■

The author lives in New Jersey, USA.

NOTE

1. Ulisses Soares, "Followers of the Prince of Peace," *Liahona*, May 2023, 85.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HOUSE OF THE LORD



TEMPLES:

A REFUGE FOR ZION



At 12:51 p.m. on February 22, 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake caused severe damage in Christchurch, New Zealand. One hundred eighty-five people were killed, and several thousand were injured. The fear and chaos in the city were palpable. It took me several hours of driving through rubble to collect my children from their schools and find my husband, who had been in the part of the city where the most damage occurred.

Once back at our home, we needed to decide what to do. It wasn't safe to stay, so that same afternoon we hurriedly packed a few belongings and started driving north. We didn't realize that we would experience many miracles along the way.

We gather in temples and find refuge from the storms of life.

By Melanie Riwai-Couch

Area Church History Manager, New Zealand



As we left the city, our van was nearly out of fuel, but we were able to get petrol at the first gas station to reopen. Our van was also struggling mechanically, so we dropped it off at a garage for repair. When we picked it up, the mechanic didn't charge us, saying he wanted to help those who had been impacted by the earthquake. Friends and family showed us kindness, helping to calm us and our children.

We eventually drove to Hamilton, over 500 miles (800 km) to the north of Christchurch. Our young family was able to stay in one of the student dorms of a decommissioned school next to the Hamilton New Zealand Temple. It was there at the foot of the temple that we tried to help our children heal from the trauma of being earthquake refugees.

I remember looking up at the spire of the temple and taking a deep breath before stepping inside, as it took courage to convince myself that it too wouldn't fall like the many buildings that had collapsed in our home city. In the temple lobby, the Spirit brought us peace as we planned our next steps: how we would start to make order out of chaos and move forward in our lives.

A REFUGE FROM THE STORM

Early in the Restoration, the Lord declared, "I command you to build a house unto me, for the gathering together of my saints, that they may worship me" (Doctrine and Covenants 115:8). The Lord explained that this gathering of the Saints would be "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm" (Doctrine and Covenants 115:6). In the aftermath of an earthquake, the Hamilton Temple was a gathering place of refuge for my family.

The Hamilton Temple was announced in 1954, followed by a call for assistance with the construction. The New Zealand Saints responded immediately. Some young men, young women, and married couples were formally called as labor missionaries. Others were recruited by family and friends. Some simply felt inspired to come and serve those who were involved in the construction by providing food or financial support.¹

After the temple was dedicated in 1958, many Saints gathered to the temple from across New Zealand and the Pacific Area to receive their endowment and sealing. For example, when Vaha'i and Sela Tonga of the country of

Tonga heard that a temple would be built in New Zealand, they made plans to attend the dedication. Despite financial hurdles to travel, Vaha'i and Sela were the first couple to be sealed in the Hamilton Temple.²

A REFUGE FROM THE WORLD

The Suva Fiji Temple has also provided refuge for Saints in the Pacific who have gathered there. The temple was dedicated on June 18, 2000, during a time of civil unrest.³ In the dedicatory prayer, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) prayed: "Thou hast favored us with a temple in this island nation. No longer will we have to travel far across the seas to do that work which Thou hast established as sacred and necessary for Thy Saints in this latter-day dispensation. Thou hast heard our prayers and hearkened to our entreaties that this blessing might come to us."⁴ During a tense time, Saints in Fiji found peace together within the walls of the temple, a literal refuge from conflict.

On February 20, 2016, Cyclone Winston destroyed thousands of homes. It was the largest recorded storm to ever hit Fiji. The next day, President Henry B. Eyring, then-First Counselor in the First Presidency, rededicated the Suva Fiji Temple after a 16-month renovation. He prayed: "We thank Thee for Thy faithful Saints in this beautiful land. We invoke Thy blessings upon them, that they may be blessed with love and peace, that their lands shall be productive, and that they shall be prospered and protected in their righteous undertakings. We ask that they be protected from the storms of nature and from the conflicts of men as they walk in obedience to Thy commandments."⁵

Temples provide spiritual refuge by pointing us to Jesus Christ. Staying connected to Him through our covenants can help us weather spiritual storms such as trials and temptations. President Russell M. Nelson has promised: "Nothing will help you *more* to hold fast to the iron rod than worshipping in the temple as regularly as your circumstances permit. Nothing will protect you *more* as you encounter the world's mists of darkness."⁶

With many more temples now announced, under construction, or operating around the world, it is becoming easier for Saints to gather and find refuge in temples. No matter the distance, the Lord's followers are drawn to His house when they need the refuge He promises to His

covenant people. As we are true to the covenants we have made inside the house of the Lord, we will always find our greatest peace and refuge through our Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. See Rachel Sterzer Gibson, "Sacrifice and Consecration: How the Labor Missionary Period Was the Nauvoo Experience of New Zealand," *Church News*, Aug. 9, 2021, thechurchnews.com.
2. See Gibson, "Sacrifice and Consecration."
3. See "Political Crisis Takes Center Stage in Fiji," *Deseret News*, July 17, 2000, deseret.com.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Dedicatory Prayer," Suva Fiji Temple, June 18, 2000, ChurchofJesusChrist.org/temples.
5. Henry B. Eyring, "Dedicatory Prayer," Suva Fiji Temple, Feb. 21, 2016, ChurchofJesusChrist.org/temples.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "Rejoice in the Gift of Priesthood Keys," *Liahona*, May 2024, 122.



BUILD A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION ON JESUS CHRIST

"Whenever any kind of upheaval occurs in your life, the safest place to be *spiritually* is living *inside* your temple covenants!

"Please believe me when I say that when your spiritual foundation is built solidly upon Jesus Christ, you have *no need to fear*. As you are true to your covenants made in the temple, you will be strengthened by His power. Then, when spiritual earthquakes occur, you will be able to stand *strong* because your spiritual foundation is solid and immovable."

President Russell M. Nelson, "The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation," *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 96.



The author and her family outside the Hamilton New Zealand Temple



SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL PRACTICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

God can help us find strength within to face mental health challenges.

Editors' note: This is the second of three articles about resources to support mental and emotional health. The first article, in the April 2025 issue, shared several resources that the Church provides. In the August 2025 issue, therapists will share how supportive relationships can help our mental health. We hope that all members will recognize that they are not alone and that help is available.

By Mabel Teerlink
Church Magazines

Where do we turn when we face mental health challenges? As disciples of Jesus Christ, we know that He is the ultimate source of help and healing. God has also blessed us with external resources, such as Church materials, supportive people, and professional counseling, as well as internal resources that strengthen us from within. This article will explore some inner resources and personal practices that can help us navigate mental health challenges.

THINKING PATTERNS

As we deal with mental health challenges, we may fall into harmful thinking patterns, such as fear, despair, or self-criticism. But the Lord wants to help us have thoughts of faith, hope, and self-compassion.

“Be aware of your own inner voice,” said Nicole De Klerk, a Family Services therapist in South Africa. “Many of us are our own worst critics. Speak to yourself as the Savior, who loves you deeply, would speak to you.” Instead of judging or blaming ourselves for our mental challenges, we can strive to show compassion, mercy, and kindness to ourselves. We can use our agency to choose thoughts that are kind, true, encouraging, and helpful.

We can also seek to cultivate other healthy thinking patterns, such as setting realistic expectations, focusing on gratitude, and pondering the life and love of Jesus Christ. He has said, “Look unto me in every thought” (Doctrine and Covenants 6:36).

Try this: The Church’s emotional-resilience course recommends recognizing inaccurate thinking patterns and seeking to replace them with “more accurate, truthful thoughts.”¹

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

We can also strengthen our mental health by finding simple practices that connect us to God. “Prayer is one of the best tools for our mental and spiritual well-being,” added Katarina Alhovuori, a Family Services therapist in Finland. “Prayer can help us articulate our emotions and examine them together with God.”

Other spiritual practices that can support mental health include church attendance and worship in the house of the Lord.

Mental health challenges can make it difficult to find the energy or motivation to engage in these uplifting activities, but even our “small and simple” efforts can gradually bring about “great things” (Alma 37:6). Susana Neiva, a Latter-day Saint therapist in Portugal, said, “I would suggest spiritual practices that may feel more accessible during times of emotional struggle, such as listening to uplifting music, listening to or reading comforting scriptures or inspirational literature, or participating in acts of service.”

While our challenges may not disappear, we can face them with more strength and hope as we draw nearer to God.

Try this: Plan an enjoyable activity you can do this week. Many people find strength in wholesome activities, such as spending time outdoors, socializing with loved ones, engaging in creative hobbies, researching one’s family history, eating nutritious food, and exercising.²

REST

Of the many personal practices that can help us, one of the most important may be getting adequate rest for our bodies and minds. President Jeffrey R. Holland, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught, “Fatigue is the common enemy of us all—so slow down, rest up, replenish, and refill.”³



What contributes to fatigue in your life? Whether you are exhausted by work demands, academic pressures, financial stress, internet content, or other factors, taking a break may help. As the Lord counseled, “Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength” (Doctrine and Covenants 10:4).

Carolina Perego, a Family Services therapist in Chile, said, “If we have anguish, sadness, exhaustion, or fatigue, we should consider resting.”

The Sabbath day provides a special opportunity every week to rest and to renew our spirits. The Lord has said, “This is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions

unto the Most High” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:10). The Sabbath is a day to worship, to renew covenants, “to elevate our vision from the things of the world to the blessings of eternity.”⁴

If you have a calling with heavy time demands on Sundays, you might not feel that the Sabbath is a day of physical or mental rest. You may want to set aside some time on other days to rest. And remember that while you’re busy with your calling, the Lord is pleased with your efforts to serve Him and His children. Remember the Lord’s promise to those who are weary: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”

(Matthew 11:28). President Russell M. Nelson has taught that our connection to the Lord through covenants helps us “overcome the spiritually and emotionally exhausting plagues of the world.”⁵

Try this: How might you improve your sleep schedule? The Lord promised blessings for adequate sleep: “Retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:124).

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Our faith in the Savior can be our greatest resource when we face mental health challenges. Although our struggles may not be instantly resolved, Jesus Christ can give us strength and healing as we exercise faith in Him.

Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Savior “intimately understands our every pain, affliction, sickness, sorrow, separation. . . . He helps heal the broken and disparaged, reconcile the angry and divided, comfort the lonely and isolated, encourage the uncertain and imperfect, and bring forth miracles possible only with God.”⁶

Jesus Christ also assures us that we are never alone. He knows us perfectly, understands all our pain, and stands ready to lift us up.

Sister Alhovuori said: “I have often thought of Peter, who took the courage to walk on the water towards Jesus [see Matthew 14:28–31]. . . . I testify that [Jesus Christ] wants to encourage us and take our hand every time, just as He did with Peter. He also delights in every step of faith we take.”

Mental health challenges are real and difficult, but they do not have to define or defeat us. And we don’t have to face them alone. The Lord has provided us with sources of strength to draw upon, such as resources from the Church, supportive relationships, and professional help. As we rely on Jesus Christ and these resources, we can face our challenges with strength and hope. ■

If you feel that therapy may be needed in your life, consider reading this article for guidance: “Finding a Mental Health Professional Who’s Right for You” (digital-only article), *Liahona*, Jan. 2019, Gospel Library.

NOTES

1. *Finding Strength in the Lord: Emotional Resilience* (2021), 29; see chapter 2 in the manual to learn more. The manual is available in the Gospel Library under “Books and Lessons,” “Self-Reliance Resources.”
2. See *Finding Strength in the Lord*, 45.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 41.
4. David A. Bednar, “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 92.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96.
6. Gerrit W. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 41.

GOD'S WORK BRINGS **PURPOSE AND PEACE**

*We can participate in God's work to bring
His children home to live with Him.*



A memory I cherish from growing up in New York City is spending Christmas with my family. My parents, three older brothers, younger sister, and I enjoyed sharing meals and exchanging gifts. Even with how busy both my working parents were, Christmas was our special time to spend together.

Christmas was never the same when my parents divorced. I was 11, and we never got together like that again.

At age 17, I first heard about the gospel of Jesus Christ and wanted to learn more when I heard that families can be together forever. I was amazed to discover that God has a plan of salvation and exaltation (see Moses 1:39).

God's plan, in the words of President Russell M. Nelson, is "fabulous."¹ God wants all His children to be guided safely home to live with Him again. He has said, "I am able to do mine own work" (2 Nephi 27:21), but we have the wonderful opportunity to participate in His work with Him. This has brought me a sense of direction, purpose, peace, and hope throughout my life.

SERVE WITH LOVE

In our day the Lord has revealed:

"O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength. . . .

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (Doctrine and Covenants 4:2-3).

God desires that we serve Him with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and that we



**By Elder
Peter M.
Johnson**
Of the Seventy

love Him with the same intensity (see Doctrine and Covenants 59:5). Our love for God enables, empowers, and enhances our desires to serve. As we act on those desires, our ability to serve and love Him and our neighbors is strengthened. God’s power then comes, and we can see His hand in our lives.

As I serve God—because I love Him—I can feel of His love and assurance that He loves all His children and wants us to return home to live with Him again. He also does not want us to return alone. He wants us to bring our families and others to the gospel as we serve with love for Him and His children.

WALK WITH GOD

We participate in God’s work more effectively when we have His help. As we do our part and seek inspiration, the Holy Ghost can guide us in the work.



When the Lord called Enoch to be a prophet, He said, “Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me” (Moses 6:34).

Additional help comes to us as we receive temple ordinances and make and keep the covenants. When we go from just attending the temple to *worshipping* in the house of the Lord, we come to understand that ordinances and covenants connect us to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in a powerful and intimate way.

President Nelson has taught that this covenant relationship “makes *everything* about life easier.”² It does not make life *easy*, but binding ourselves to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ grants us access to Their strength, which increases our ability to participate in Their work. As we go forth, we can walk side by side with Them and feel Their power and influence in our lives.

REMEMBER THE WHY

God’s work is not always easy. When I have days that I feel discouraged or disappointed, I remind myself of the “why” of doing His work, which is that I know that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. The Holy Spirit has witnessed and confirmed this to me again and again. I can never deny that. Because I love Heavenly Father and His Son, I seek to please Them by participating with Them in Their great work.

If you ever feel inadequate or that you don’t have the right skill set for this work, join the team! Most of us feel

that way from time to time. In those moments we need to be like Nephi and be “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [we] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6). If we go forward with faith and do what we can, the Lord will guide and assist us and multiply our efforts just as He did with the five loaves and two fishes (see Mark 6:41–44). Whatever we bring to the Lord, He will use to further His work of salvation and exaltation.

Another reason why we have been invited to participate in God’s work of salvation and exaltation is that He and His Son, Jesus Christ, want us to become holy, even as They are. As we work alongside Them, we learn more about how we can become like Them.

In this work we invite others to become like Jesus Christ by discovering the joy of repentance. President Nelson has said that repentance is a process “of doing and being a little better each day.” It is a chance to change, to grow spiritually, and “to become more like Jesus Christ!”³

We can help others make their homes feel like heaven so that someday heaven will feel like home and they can be prepared for the life to come.

FIND THE JOY

There is joy in this work! President Nelson has taught that “regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives,”⁴ we can find joy when we focus on Heavenly Father’s plan and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father’s plan is possible only through His Son. Jesus Christ was willing to do the will of His Father and sacrifice everything for us. If not, we would have been lost forever. He knew that it

was the only way for us to return home to live with Heavenly Father and to find joy. President Nelson has taught, “Joy comes from and because of [Jesus Christ]. He is the source of all joy.”⁵

What a wonderful blessing and opportunity it is for us to assist in this important work of salvation and exaltation and help others return safely home, where our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ long for us to be. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 117.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 97.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” 82.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Participating in God’s work of salvation and exaltation can give us a sense of direction, purpose, peace, and hope.
- Our love for God enables, empowers, and enhances our desires to serve.
- A covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ grants us access to Their strength, which increases our ability to participate in Their work.
- Repentance is a chance to change, to grow spiritually, and to become more like Jesus Christ.

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ARTIST'S DEPICTION OF THE WHITNEY HOME IN KIRTLAND, OHIO, USA.

In 1831, the Saints in New York followed the Lord's command to move to Kirtland, Ohio. The Whitney family—Kirtland residents who had been converted and baptized the previous year—immediately welcomed Joseph and Emma Smith into their home. Here, Joseph received several revelations now recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.

“Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27–28).

CARING FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

We serve as the Lord's
"first responders"

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Blessing the lives of God's
children

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JOY IN THE GOSPEL

Deeper and more enduring
than worldly happiness

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Three resources at your
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