

# Liahona

POINTING US ALL TO JESUS CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST: SENT TO HEAL THE  
BROKENHEARTED, 2

COVENANTS WITH GOD: LIBERATING, NOT  
LIMITING, 40

THE HOPE AND PROMISE OF EASTER

APRIL 2025





## *First Presidency Easter Message*

During this joyful Easter season, we join with faithful followers of the Savior in celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Resurrection is a gift to all of Heavenly Father's children who have ever lived on this earth.

We testify that Jesus Christ gives rest to those who are "heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28). He knows "how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12) because He took upon Himself our pains and sins. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Those who exercise faith in Him, keep His commandments, and receive the saving and exalting ordinances "shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal" (Moroni 7:41).

We invite all to come unto Jesus "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Binding ourselves to Him through making and keeping covenants enriches our lives now and eternally. May you find hope, healing, and happiness as you draw nearer to the Savior of the world this Easter season.

*Russell M. Nelson*  
*Colin H. Carter*  
*Henry B. Eyring*

The First Presidency



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Art glass from Paris France Temple Visitors' Center





**By Elder Gerrit W. Gong**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# JESUS CHRIST: THE HOPE AND PROMISE OF EASTER

*Through the hope and promise of Easter, Jesus Christ fills the longings of our hearts and answers the questions of our souls.*

*Please create a quiet moment and place of spiritual sanctuary as you read this message.*

**T**oo often, our world is noisy, cluttered with pretense and pride. But when we are open, honest, and vulnerable with ourselves and God, Easter’s hope and promise in Jesus Christ become real. In such moments, we plead:

“How can I see my family member, my friend, my loved one again?”

“In a world of often-fleeting ‘I choose me’ relationships, where do I find and feel peace, hope, and communion with God (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:19), those around me, and myself?”

“Is there someone I can love—and who will really love me? Can covenant relationships grow and last, not as a fairy tale but with bonds stronger than the cords of death, truly happy and forever?”

“Where there is much pain, suffering, and unfairness, how can I contribute to peace, harmony, and understanding in Jesus Christ and in His restored gospel and Church?”

At this Easter season, I share my testimony of Jesus Christ and of His promise and hope.

## THE PROMISE OF COVENANT BELONGING AND PURPOSE

God, our Eternal Father in Heaven; Jesus Christ, His Beloved Son; and the Holy Ghost are personally close to us. Their infinite and eternal light, compassion, and redeeming love are interwoven in the purpose of creation and the fabric of our existence (see Alma 30:44; Moses 6:62–63).

In the premortal Council in Heaven, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons [and daughters] of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). We chose choice. Now we walk by faith. Through our own experience, we discover God’s promised beauty, clarity, joy, and purpose amidst mortality’s uncertainties, discouragements, and challenges.

We are not meant to wander alone in existential uncertainty. We can commune with heaven, build faith and belonging in family and in the household and community of the Saints, and become our truest, freest, most authentic, joyful selves through willing and joyful obedience to God’s commandments. Atonement—*at-one-ment*—in and through Jesus Christ brings this covenant belonging.

## THE HOPE OF JESUS CHRIST'S LIFE AND MISSION

Each day, Easter's hope and promise include the blessings and teachings Jesus Christ shared during His perfect mortal ministry. Preordained in the beginning, Jesus Christ was born the Only Begotten Son of God (see Jacob 4:5; Alma 12:33–34; Moses 5:7, 9). He grew in wisdom and stature, finding favor with God and man (see Luke 2:52). Seeking only to do the will of His Father, Jesus Christ forgave sins, healed infirmities, raised the dead, and comforted the sick and lonely.

Once, after fasting 40 days, He testified, “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” (Luke 4:18; see also Isaiah 61:1).

That's each of us.

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet (see John 13:4–8). In both the Old and New Worlds, the “living water” and “the bread of life” Himself<sup>1</sup> instituted the sacrament.<sup>2</sup> In the sacred sacramental ordinance, we call upon the Father and we covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us (see Luke 22:19–20; 3 Nephi 18:7, 10–11).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus suffered more than man can suffer to redeem and atone for us. Blood came from every pore. He suffered these pains for all, that we might not suffer if we would repent (see Doctrine and Covenants 18:11; 19:16).

Betrayed and falsely accused, Jesus Christ was mocked and scourged, and a crown of thorns was thrust upon His humble head (see Matthew 27:26, 29; Mark 15:15, 17, 20, 31; Luke 22:63; John 19:1–2). “Bruised for our iniquities . . . with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). He was “lifted up upon the cross” to draw us to Him (see 3 Nephi 27:14–15). Yet, even on the cross, Jesus Christ forgave (see Luke 23:34). He asked John to care for His mother (see John 19:26–27). He felt forsaken (see Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). That scripture might be fulfilled, He said He thirsted (see John 19:28).

When all was accomplished, He of Himself “gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:46; see also John 10:17–18).

Jesus Christ knows how to succor us in our sicknesses, infirmities, loneliness, isolation, and hardships (see Alma 7:12). Such afflictions often come as the consequence of others' choices. He also knows how to rejoice with us in our delights and gratitude, how to weep with us when our joy is full. Tenderly, He calls us in His name, by His voice, into His fold. He calls to every person everywhere. He invites us to see and understand mortal life through an eternal perspective. As we walk uprightly and keep our covenants, He promises that all things can work together for our good (see Doctrine and Covenants 90:24; Romans 8:28).

In His time and way, restoration comes—not only to how things were but also to what they can become. Truly, Jesus Christ can free us from bondage and sin, from death and hell, and can help us fulfill our divine identity as we become more than we ever imagined, through faith and repentance.

## THE PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE

Because of Jesus Christ, death is not the end. At Easter we declare:

*Death is conquered; man is free.*

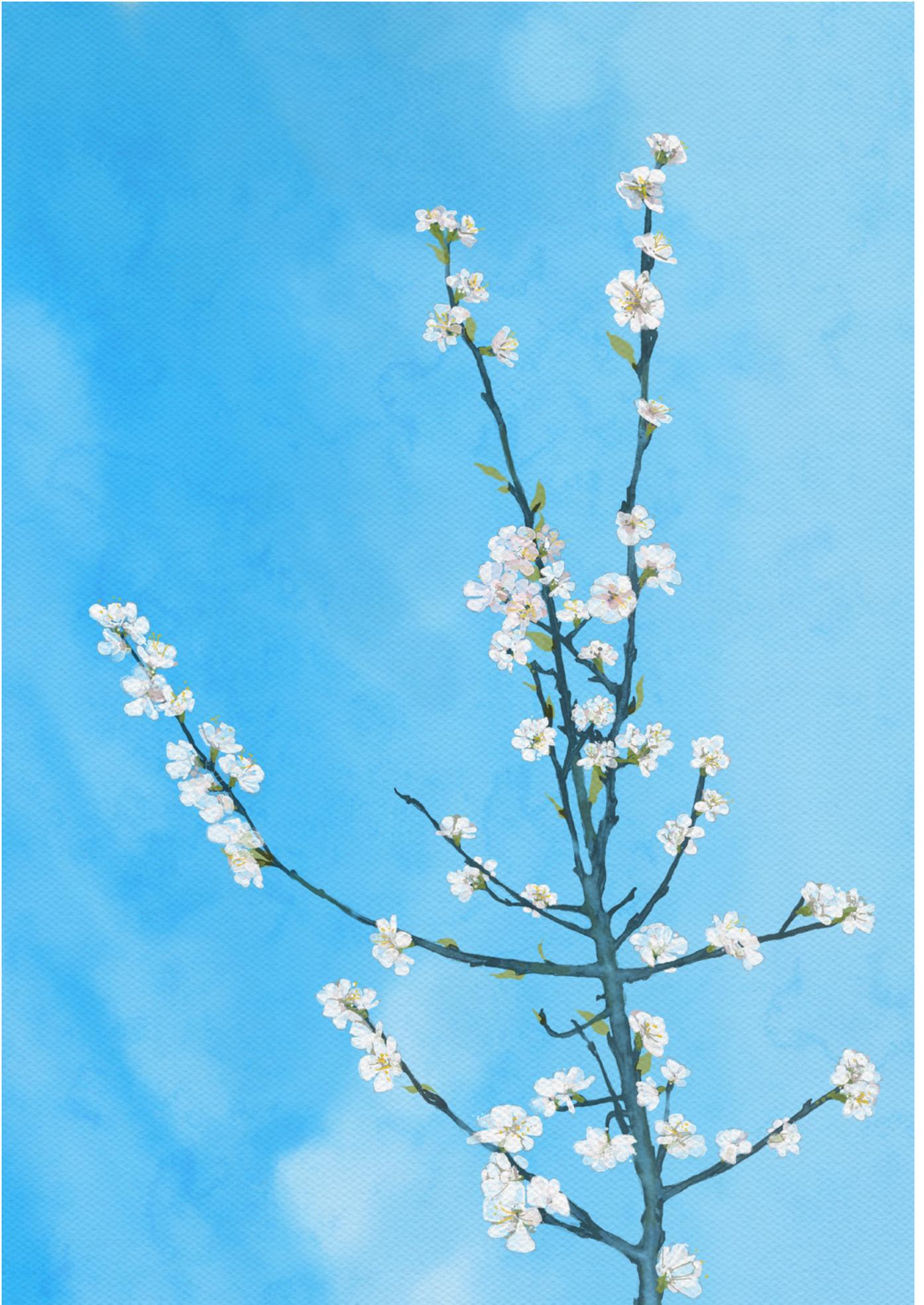
*Christ has won the victory.*<sup>3</sup>

By commandment and power from His Father, Jesus could lay down His life and take it up again (see John 10:17). While His body lay in the tomb, Jesus Christ ministered and organized in the world of spirits, declaring “their redemption from the bands of death” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:16).

On the morning of the third day, He rose from the tomb. He spoke to Mary. He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, His Apostles, and others. (See Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.)

In chiasmatic testimony, He invited His disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the ship; this time, though again full of fish, the nets did not break (see John 21:6–11; Luke 5:3–7). He fed the disciples and pleaded with Peter





three times to feed His sheep and lambs (see John 21:12–17). He ascended into heaven, declaring that His disciples then and all of us now should share Easter’s glorious news and His gospel with every nation, kindred, and people (see Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15).

Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God. He gave His life for, and gives His life to, His sheep. In the garden and on the cross, He bore the unbearable and atoned for us. In time and eternity, He shows us by example how “death unlocks the passageway into eternity.”<sup>4</sup>

Through the power of Christ’s Atonement and Resurrection, our bodies and spirits will be reunited in physical resurrection. We will be glorious, restored in countenance and physical frame, limb to limb. Even the hairs of our heads will be restored. We will be free from ailments of time, disease, physical accident, and mental incapacity. Christ’s Atonement can bless us to overcome every kind of spiritual separation and spiritual death. On condition of repentance, we are freed from every sin and sorrow and opened to an eternal fulness of love and joy. Pure, clean, free, we can return in our most cherished family relationships to the glorious, celestial presence of God our Father and Jesus Christ.

We will see our loved ones again. When we are reunited with those we love, we will see one another with an eternal perspective—with greater love, understanding, and kindness. Jesus Christ’s Atonement can help us remember what matters and forget what does not. Seeing our Savior and relationships with greater faith and gratitude brings peace, lifts burdens, reconciles hearts, and unites families in time and eternity.

## THE HOPE OF ABUNDANCE AND JOY

Easter in Jesus Christ includes windows of heaven opening, fruit of the vine multiplying, and lands becoming delightful. Easter in Jesus Christ includes comforting and caring for widows and orphans, the hungry and helpless, those

who are afraid, abused, or innocently caught in harm’s way. Mindful of each, Jesus Christ invites us to see and minister with love and compassion, as He does.

In all good things, Jesus Christ restores abundantly (see John 10:10; Alma 40:20–24). He promises that “the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare” (Doctrine and Covenants 104:17). His restoration of all things includes the fulness of His gospel, His priesthood authority and power, and the sacred ordinances and covenants found in His Church, called in His name, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

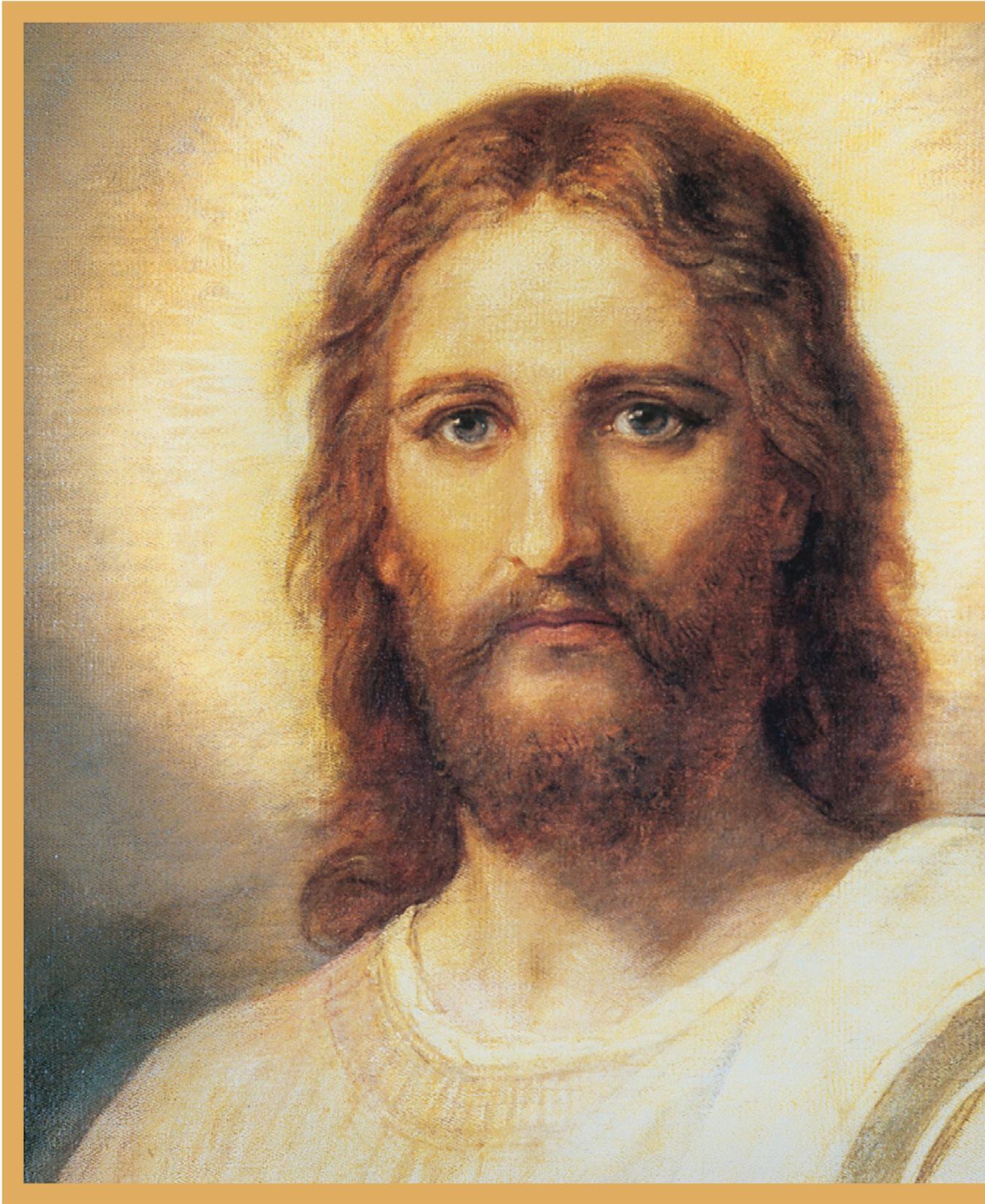
Easter in Jesus Christ includes more holy houses of the Lord coming closer to God’s children in many places, bringing into our hearts the doctrine of “saviors on Mount Zion” (see Obadiah 1:21).<sup>5</sup> The Lord provides a sanctifying, unselfish way for us to offer on earth what departed loved ones need and desire in eternity that they cannot obtain for themselves.

Such is my hope, promise, and testimony. I witness God our Father; our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. At Easter and every day, may we find eternal hope and promise in God’s divine plan of happiness, with its covenant path of divine transformation from mortality into immortality and eternal life. Each day may the certainty of Jesus Christ’s Atonement lift our burdens, help us comfort others in their sorrows, and free our souls to receive His full joy.

Through the hope and promise of Easter, Jesus Christ fills the longings of our hearts and answers the questions of our souls. ■

### NOTES

1. John 4:10, 14; 6:35; 7:37; see also Isaiah 49:10.
2. See Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:17–20; 3 Nephi 18:1–11.
3. “He Is Risen!,” *Hymns*, no. 199.
4. “Upon the Cross of Calvary,” *Hymns*, no. 184.
5. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 473, Gospel Library.





# THE MAIN CHARACTER IN CHURCH HISTORY

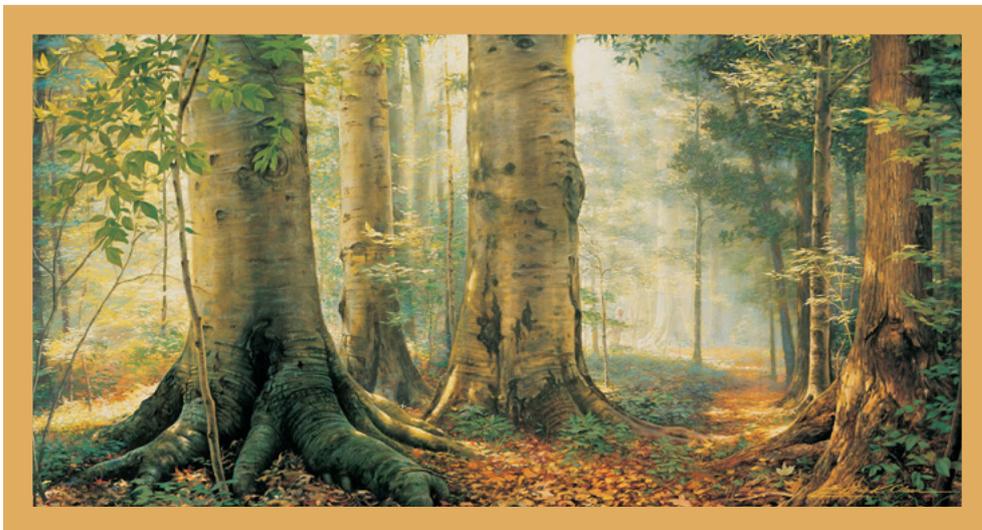
**By Keith A. Erikson**  
Church History Department

*Church history  
is not just names  
and dates. If we  
look for the Lord's  
hand, Church  
history reveals the  
modern ministry of  
the living Christ.*

**W**hat comes to mind when you think about the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Perhaps you remember an inspiring story about someone who lived long ago. Or possibly you think about some names and dates and places. Others may focus on the experiences of their own ancestors. For some, Church history can seem confusing or even challenging.

When you think of Church history, how often do you think about Jesus Christ?

Our living Redeemer is the central figure of the ongoing Restoration, but sometimes we overlook Him there. When we have eyes to see the Savior and His work, we can see Him at the center of Church history and learn about His dealings with the children of God.



**Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ guided the events of the Restoration, including the First Vision in 1820.**

### **CHURCH HISTORY IS HIS HISTORY**

I work with Church history records and stories every day, but an experience I had a few years ago helped me see our history in a different light. When President Russell M. Nelson read “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World” at the April 2020 general conference, I listened like a student in a history classroom. I heard him refer to a series of events: the First Vision in 1820, the visits of heavenly messengers, the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the organization of the Church in 1830.

A few months later, as part of my daily study of the gospel, I sat down to read a printed copy of the proclamation. In my mind, I expected to review a history timeline, so I was startled by what I saw. A flash of insight, almost like lightning, filled my mind and illuminated something totally new to me. I was so surprised that I began to write on the

paper, underlining and circling words in astonishment.

What stood out so brightly that day was that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ were the subjects of nearly every sentence and primary participants in each event:

- In 1820, “God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph.”
- Heavenly messengers did not come on their own but “under the direction of the Father and the Son.”
- The Lord blessed Joseph Smith with “the gift and power of God” to translate a record of His own “personal ministry” in the Americas.
- The Lord authorized Joseph Smith to organize His Church.
- “Jesus Christ has once again called Apostles and has given them priesthood authority.”
- “God is making known His will for His beloved sons and daughters.”<sup>1</sup>



**Thousands of people living in the 1800s found a deeper relationship with the Lord, traversing seas and plains to gather to Zion.**

As I reflected, I began to see the Savior at the center of other Restoration events. Jesus Christ forgave Joseph Smith's sins (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:5). The Savior's voice is heard in the revelations now preserved in the Doctrine and Covenants. Thousands of people living in the 1800s found a deeper relationship with Him, made covenants with Him, and followed Him, including by leaving their countries, traversing the seas and plains, and gathering to Zion.

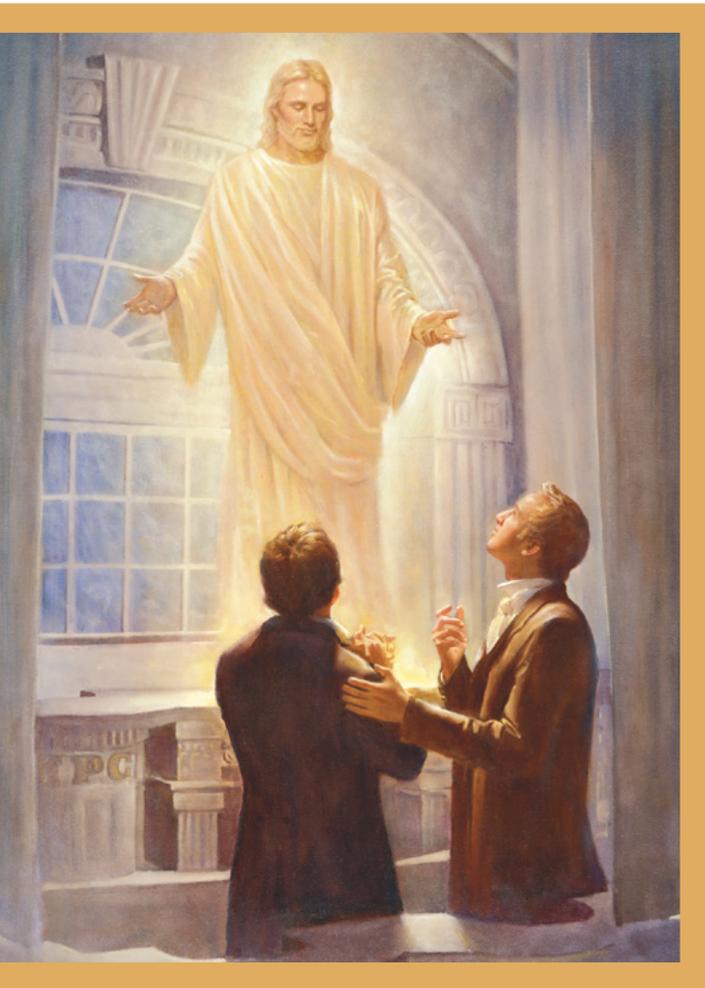
Millions more all over the world today continue to draw closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior through conversion, covenant making, and following Them amid adversity.

Seeing the Lord as the focus of these events can help when we have questions about things said or done by people in the past. For example, in the New Testament Gospels, we sometimes see that the disciples don't know everything, they fail to cast out evil spirits, and they even deny their faith (see, for example, Matthew 17:16, 19–20; Mark 9:10). But some modern

readers may be less troubled by these human shortcomings partly because we can see that Jesus of Nazareth is the main character in the center of the narrative and He makes things right.

By contrast, sometimes when we talk about modern Church history, we leave Jesus Christ out of the center of the story by beginning with names and dates and places. Then, when questions arise, some feel a need to push somebody to the center who can make things right. When this happens, we need to remember that the Lord is also the main character in modern Church history. It is OK that Joseph Smith or Brigham Young—or any of us—are not flawless and don't know everything, because that is not our role. We are the disciples and the learners, and the Lord is the main character.

Jesus Christ has been ministering to God's children for thousands of years, including the past 200 years. He is at the center of the story. Church history is His history.



**We see the dealings of God in the scriptures and in modern Church history, such as when the Savior appeared in the Kirtland Temple.**

## **KNOW THE DEALINGS OF GOD**

In the opening scenes of the Book of Mormon, Nephi makes a brief comment about why his brothers failed. Long before Laman and Lemuel tied up Nephi or sought to take away their father’s life, they murmured. Nephi explains, “They did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them” (1 Nephi 2:12).

Four hundred years later, the descendants of Laman and Lemuel had become “a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people,” which traced back, in part, to Laman and Lemuel being “wroth with [Nephi] because they understood not the dealings of the Lord” (Mosiah 10:12, 14). Failing to understand the dealings of God bears tremendous consequences!

To understand His dealings, we need to know who He is, what He expects of us, and how He treats His children. The history of the Savior’s modern ministry teaches us these things. Joseph Smith taught that we each, individually, need to understand “the designs and purposes of God in our coming into the world.”<sup>2</sup> As we come to understand the dealings of God, we come to know Him, and knowing Him leads to eternal life (see John 17:3). Indeed, “the salvation of Zion” comes in part as we “obtain a knowledge of history” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:53).

The record of God’s dealings is found in the scriptures and the modern history of the restored Church. There we see times in history when God directly interacted with humankind, such as when the Father and the Son answered Joseph Smith’s prayer in the Sacred Grove (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17–20) and when the Savior appeared in the Kirtland Temple (see Doctrine and Covenants 110:1–10).

God also touches our lives in less obvious ways. He describes His indirect dealings with humans through a metaphor of doing His work “without hands” (see Daniel 2:34–35; Doctrine and Covenants 65:2; 109:72). This indirect involvement can occur in many ways. In this light, we can see the dealings of God in “small means” (Alma 37:7), such as when we partake of the sacrament to remember the Lord and renew our covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79).

God also helps us through tender mercies that deliver and preserve us in “personal and individualized blessings.”<sup>3</sup> One example from Church history is when



**Members of the Church all around the world are loving and serving each other, acting as the Lord's hands to fulfill His modern ministry.**

participants in the Camp of Israel (Zion's Camp) witnessed healings of the sick, were protected from the elements, and experienced the tender mercies of individuals who volunteered, donated money, and provided food and water.<sup>4</sup>

### **THE MODERN MINISTRY OF THE LIVING CHRIST**

Modern Church history offers insight into the dealings of God among His children for the last 200 years. Seeing divine dealings can reduce concerns, help us repent, strengthen unity, and prepare us for ongoing personal revelation.

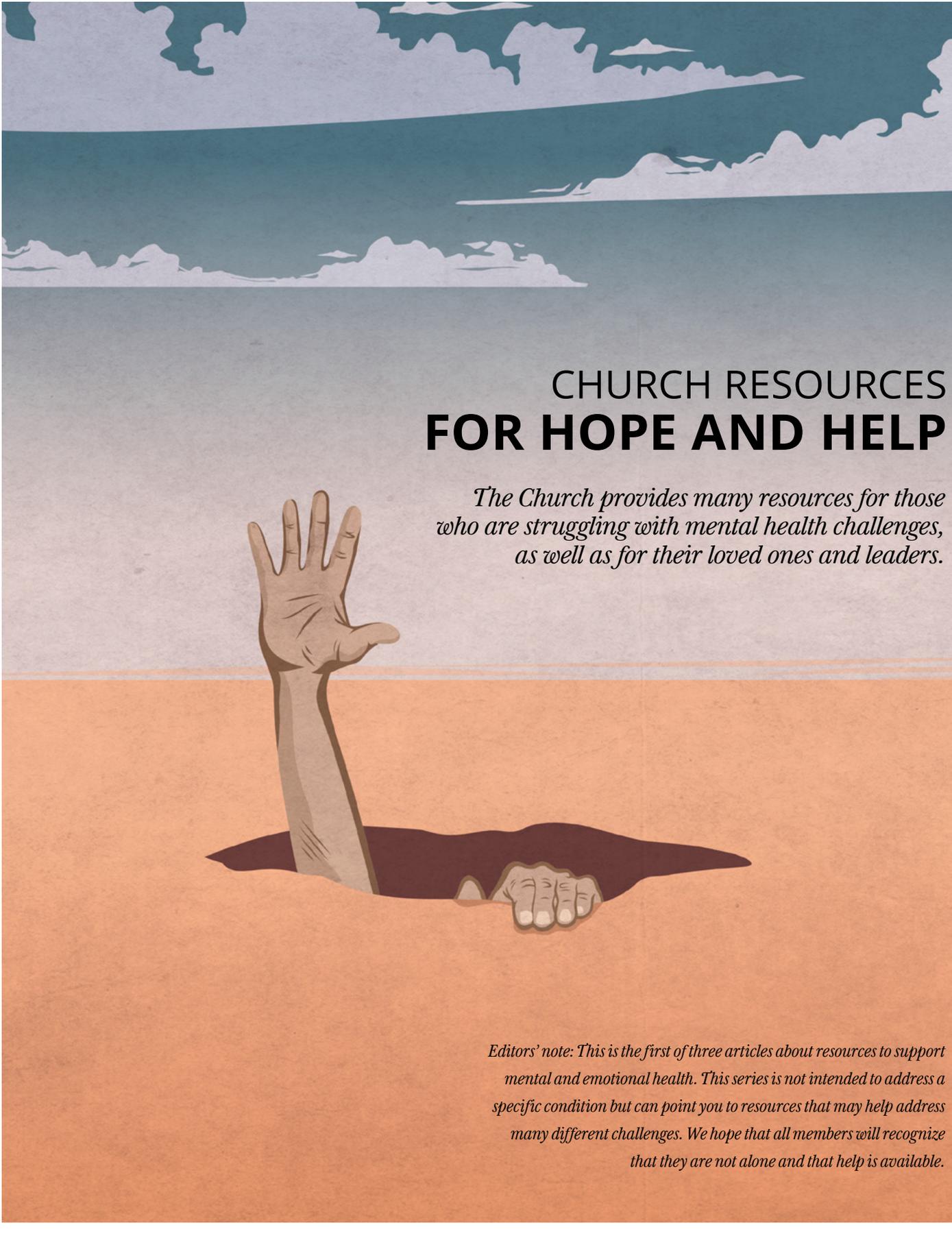
Instead of seeing Church history as a string of names and dates, we can look to the past 200 years to witness the modern ministry of the living Christ and draw insights from how He has shown love to God's children, including Latter-day Saints. The modern works of God can truly inspire us to repent and rejoice in Jesus Christ (see Alma 37:9). By seeing the Restoration as a sacred past

shared by Saints around the world, we celebrate the goodness of God, feel empathy for the experiences of others, and strengthen our unity (see Mosiah 25:7–9).

Repentance, rejoicing, and unity are among the many reasons that the Savior commanded our latter-day history be kept “for the good of the church, and for the rising generations that shall grow up on the land of Zion” (Doctrine and Covenants 69:8). Our modern history can reveal Jesus Christ as the central figure and can teach us the ways of God and help us draw closer to Him. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. See “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
3. David A. Bednar, “The Tender Mercies of the Lord,” *Liahona*, May 2005, 99; see also Psalm 25:6; 40:11; 119:77; 145:9; 1 Nephi 1:20.
4. See Church History Topics, “Zion's Camp (Camp of Israel),” Gospel Library.

An illustration of a hand reaching up from a hole in the ground. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers spread. The hole is a dark, irregular shape in the center of the ground. The ground is a solid orange-brown color. The background is a light blue sky with white, stylized clouds. The overall style is simple and graphic.

## CHURCH RESOURCES FOR HOPE AND HELP

*The Church provides many resources for those who are struggling with mental health challenges, as well as for their loved ones and leaders.*

*Editors' note: This is the first of three articles about resources to support mental and emotional health. This series is not intended to address a specific condition but can point you to resources that may help address many different challenges. We hope that all members will recognize that they are not alone and that help is available.*

**By Marissa Widdison**

Church Magazines

**A** therapist in Chile noticed that several people in her branch seemed depressed and lonely, especially during the winter months.

Meanwhile, when asked about challenges in her area of South Africa, a therapist mentioned addiction and economic difficulties.

And a therapist in Portugal brought up how social media pressure seems to be contributing to significant anxiety in the young people she knows.<sup>1</sup>

Challenges like this exist pretty much everywhere, don't they? True, some specific pressures and stressors might be unique to a culture or circumstance. But in many ways, the patterns of mental health challenges are universal.

"It is crucial to remember that we are living—and chose to live—in a fallen world where for divine purposes our pursuit of godliness will be tested and tried again and again," said President Jeffrey R. Holland, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding this, and knowing that Jesus Christ is the Master Healer, professionals within the Church have created mental health resources to help members connect with hope and help. These resources acknowledge both what we understand scientifically about mental health as well as what we understand spiritually about gospel truths.

Whether or not you currently struggle with feeling emotionally well, these resources are worth exploring. Chances are, someone in your sphere of influence does struggle from time to time. By understanding the situation and what help is available, you will be better equipped to be an answer to their prayers. And you'll be strengthened in the process.

## LIFE HELP

In the Gospel Library, the Church provides many resources for those who are struggling, as well as for their loved ones and leaders.

- In the **Gospel Library app**, look for a tile labeled "Life Help." Tap on that to display a variety of topics, including "Mental Health."
- At **ChurchofJesusChrist.org**, look under "Libraries," "Life Help," and "Mental and Emotional Health."

"Many factors can contribute to mental health challenges—genetics, environment, impairing accidents, life circumstances, and, at times, choices," states one section. "Regardless of the contributing factors, we can draw strength from the Savior."<sup>3</sup>

In some languages, you'll see links to crisis helplines around the world. Many countries now offer free, confidential services through phone calls or text messaging. Ward and branch leaders could encourage members to add these numbers to their list of contacts to be ready to use if they ever feel they are in crisis.

Additionally, this Life Help section shares real-life accounts of those who have found peace despite emotional and mental health challenges.

"One of the hardest things about mental illness is that you feel really isolated and alone," said Eldon, who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Connecting with therapists and medication, accepting love from friends, adjusting expectations, and being willing to embrace the Lord's help have all been tools that Eldon practices as part of his wellness journey. "You can do more than you could do on your own if you rely on the Savior," he said.<sup>4</sup>

## SELF-RELIANCE SERVICES

Have you ever been invited to participate in one of the self-reliance classes offered by the Church? These powerful group discussions address topics like personal finances, starting and growing a business, and gaining education for better employment. There's also a class on emotional resilience.

You can find the workbook in the Gospel Library under "Books and Lessons," "Self-Reliance Resources," then "Finding Strength in the Lord: Emotional Resilience." It has chapters on overcoming anger, understanding depression, developing healthy thinking patterns, and more.

For instance, in chapter 4, "Managing Stress and Anxiety," you can find a video about how a sister named Olivia learned

to combat perfectionism by trusting the Lord. "God's grace is His ability to make up for everything that I'm not—His willingness to love me in all of my imperfections and all of my weaknesses," Olivia said. "And I'm just holding on to that."

You can ask your ward or branch leaders when this course will be held next in your area, or visit [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/self-reliance](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/self-reliance) to learn more.

## HELP FROM OTHER CHURCH MEMBERS

Perhaps the greatest resource the Church has to offer is us! We can make sure we are building each other up instead of tearing one another down. One way to start is by evaluating



our own assumptions and perhaps misunderstandings about mental illness.

“Mental health issues are often seen as a personal weakness or a family disgrace, which discourages individuals from seeking help,” said Yoonseok Kil, a Family Services therapist in Korea. “People are anxious that they will face social discrimination if they are found to have a mental health issue.”

Do we treat others with compassion, realizing that we don’t understand exactly what they are going through? Do we reach out in love, patiently walking with them even if the road is bumpy and uncertain? Do we look for the best in others instead of focusing on their weaknesses?

Church gives us plenty of opportunities to practice these Christlike qualities. Through serving in callings and ministering assignments, each of us has chances to both accept and give help throughout our lifetime. The structure of wards and branches ensures that we are never alone in our challenges.

“Local leaders are always there to provide support and encouragement to us when we reach out to them,” said Linda Opuene, a Family Services therapist in Nigeria. “They can provide spiritual guidance, prayerful support, and may offer insights or resources specific to our spiritual journey.”

Bishops may be able to help members connect with counseling through Family Services in some areas or refer people to local counselors whose practices align with gospel standards.

Sister Opuene wants to encourage those who struggle with mental health issues, even though they feel like they are doing everything they can to stay close to the Lord. “Hold fast to your faith in Christ and never doubt His love for you,” she said. “Your challenge with mental illness does not mean the Savior does not love you. He is mindful of your challenges.”

## THE DISCUSSION CONTINUES

This is the first of three articles this year on mental health resources. The June 2025 issue will share some personal resources we can call upon to help with mental health, and the August 2025 issue will discuss how supportive relationships can help. If you feel that therapy may be needed, consider reading “Finding a Mental Health Professional Who’s Right for You” (digital-only article), *Liahona*, Jan. 2019, in the Gospel Library. ■

### NOTES

1. Experiences reported by Family Services counselors.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 40.
3. From the section “Know that mental health challenges have many contributing factors,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
4. From the section “Member Stories,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

## GOSPEL GUIDANCE

Consider reviewing these scriptures when you struggle with mental health: Proverbs 3:5–6; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 11:28–30; John 16:33; 2 Nephi 2:1–2; Alma 37:6–7; Doctrine and Covenants 6:36; 84:88; 121:7–8.

You could also turn to one of these general conference talks:

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Liahona*, Nov 2013, 40–42.
- Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 57–59.
- Erich W. Kopschke, “Addressing Mental Health,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 36–38.
- Gerrit W. Gong, “All Things for Our Good,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 41–45.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Higher Joy,” *Liahona*, May 2024, 66–69.

*Liahona* articles on specific mental health topics like depression, anxiety, and OCD can be found by searching in the Gospel Library app or at ChurchofJesusChrist.org.





# BUILDING ZION IN OUR WARDS AND BRANCHES: IT CAN START WITH **ME**

By Merrilee Browne Boyack

*Having a Zion-like ward or branch is a wonderful blessing. Here are some practical ways to do that.*

**W**hat would it be like if the Savior attended your ward or branch on a Sabbath day? Would the members feel not only comfortable but also joy at having Him there? What Christlike attributes would He see in the members?

The Lord commanded the early members of the Church to establish the center place of Zion in Missouri (see Doctrine and Covenants 57:1–3). In our day, we build Zion within our stakes, wards, and branches—and each of us is part of this work.

What is Zion? “The Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught how to apply this scripture in order to “establish Zion in our homes, branches, wards, and stakes. . . . It will be necessary (1) to become unified in one heart and one mind; (2) to become, individually and collectively, a holy people; and (3) to care for the poor and needy with such effectiveness that we eliminate poverty among us. We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.”<sup>1</sup>

As we look at our service and interactions with others at church, we can ask ourselves questions like the following:

- How do I treat visitors?
- Do I seek to create unity?
- Do I do my part to invite the influence of the Holy Ghost?
- Am I faithful in fulfilling callings and ministering?
- Am I committed to attend Church meetings and the temple?
- Do I support the poor and those in need and help them move toward independence?

Although we are imperfect, we can make a difference in every one of these efforts.

## BUILDING UNITY

A Zion ward or branch is reflected in how members treat others. Elder Christofferson taught that we develop greater unity by following the Savior’s commandment “to love one another not only as we love ourselves but as *He* loved us.”<sup>2</sup> We can work to promote beautiful unity within our congregations. What can we do to become of “one heart and one mind”? (Moses 7:18). Here are some ideas:

- One sister refused to say a negative word about anyone in her ward. This impacted many others who began to act the same way.
- One brother committed to learn all the ward members’ names and greet them as often as possible.
- In one ward, the bishopric invites new people to come to the front of the chapel after sacrament meeting so they can greet them and connect them with leaders from each organization.
- The Relief Society presidency in my ward invited new sisters to introduce themselves six weeks in a row. (This was before two-hour church, when we had Relief Society each Sunday.) We would laugh each time, but it allowed us to really get to know new sisters and connect.



## BECOMING A HOLY PEOPLE

Elder Christofferson explained, “Much of the work to be done in establishing Zion consists in our individual efforts to become ‘the pure in heart’ [Doctrine and Covenants 97:21].”<sup>3</sup>

What specifically can we do to become a holy people? It starts with our individual efforts to live according to the covenants we have made with God.

I lived in a ward where one woman was like a beacon of righteousness. Jessica (name has been changed) radiated love and goodness every week in our meetings. She went from person to person, greeting them and loving them—especially those who were “hanging on the edges” of the ward. She invited the lonely to her home, talked to the shy ones, and went out of her way to spread her commitment to Christ and His gospel. It impacted the entire ward for good.

Each of us can also contribute to the spiritual nature of our Church meetings by promoting understanding of the doctrine and commitment to the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

- We can come prepared to remember the Savior as we partake of the sacrament with a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20)—and teach our families to do so as well.

- We can seek the constant companionship and sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as we “discover the *joy* of daily repentance.”<sup>5</sup>
- We can take notes at Church meetings and try to make inspired comments that improve the learning of each class.
- Teachers can make diligent efforts to prepare and to increase the level of learning within their classes. Extra efforts show in the high levels of class participation and the spiritual nature of the classes.
- We can keep the covenants we have made in the temple. Worshipping in the house of the Lord as often as our circumstances permit will help us draw nearer to Him, and we can invite others to go with us to support them in their temple attendance as well.

As we each work to promote spiritual strength and righteousness within our ward or branch with humble, consistent efforts, the entire congregation will be blessed and inspired to greater spirituality and dedication.



## CARING FOR THE POOR AND THOSE IN NEED

King Benjamin taught many truths that can help us establish Zion. Teaching us to care for the poor and those in need, he said, “Ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need” (Mosiah 4:16).

Each of us can be part of caring and sharing. We may ask, What can I do to relieve need in my ward or branch? How can I use my resources to help the poor and those in need?

As the *General Handbook* explains, “Leaders can often help individuals and families find solutions to their needs by drawing on the knowledge, skills, and service offered by ward and stake members.”<sup>6</sup>

Here are some inspiring examples I’ve seen:

- A sister worked with ward members who were struggling with finances and taught them how to do a budget and stick to it.
- A brother offered short-term employment in his company to help members as they looked for long-term employment.
- A sister would secretly put bags of food on the porches of families in her ward who were struggling.
- A brother taught others how to repair cars so they could learn a new skill.
- Ward members offered services—such as cutting hair, doing taxes, babysitting, preparing résumés—that the bishop could draw on to assist those in need. Because the members were willing to serve, this saved families from having to spend much-needed money on those services.
- One ministering brother organized a yard cleanup for a family with long-term illness.
- A ministering sister organized a house cleanup for an overwhelmed mother.
- Another sister gathered donations of cleaning supplies for the single moms in her ward.
- When my husband had been unemployed for many months, a young mom from our ward came to our door and offered us some money to help us. I was stunned! I will never forget her generosity.

We can work together to promote self-sufficiency and independence. As we each make an effort to care and share with those in need, we will lift the temporal and spiritual well-being of our wards and branches.

## A ZION PEOPLE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

The people described in 4 Nephi illustrate some of the conditions that would exist when an entire people are seeking to establish Zion. Their example provides a helpful model for us to follow. After the Lord’s visit to the Nephites:

- “The people were all converted unto the Lord” (verse 2).
- “They had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor” (verse 3).
- “There was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (verse 15).
- “Neither were there . . . any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God” (verse 17).
- “And how blessed were they!” (verse 18).

In summary, the Lord has asked all members to help build Zion (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:6), and those who have received their temple endowment have covenanted to do so. We can all work together so that our ward and branch members are of one heart and one mind with no poor among us. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

### NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “Come to Zion,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 38.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “One in Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 78.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “Come to Zion,” 38.
4. See John C. Pingree Jr., “Eternal Truth,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 99–102.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 98; see also David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Liahona*, May 2016, 61.
6. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 22.2.1, Gospel Library.



## How Could I Not Be Happy?

By Bradford G. Smith, Arizona, USA

*I have a terminal disease that has left me a quadriplegic, but thanks to technology that lets me type with my eyes, I will continue to share my testimony of God's plan of happiness until He calls me home.*

Scan the code  
to read more



*The Lord acknowledged our hard work by leading us to a couple prepared to accept and share the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Are You the Messengers?

By Doug Norman, Oregon, USA

I was one of only four Spanish-speaking missionaries in the New England Mission. We worked hard to learn the language and share the gospel, but we met mostly with rejection.

One day we knocked on the door of Hugo and Niza Diaz, a couple in Providence, Rhode Island. After they invited us into their apartment, I asked how long they had lived there.

“We just moved here from New York,” they said. “The Lord told us to move to Providence and He would send us messengers to teach us the truth. Are you the messengers?”

We responded assuredly, “Yes, we are the messengers.” We taught Hugo and Niza about the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they readily accepted our message and were soon baptized.

Shortly after their baptism, Hugo and Niza went to visit their native home in Guayaquil, Ecuador. When they returned to Providence, they shared photographs of themselves with President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), then of the First Presidency, and his wife, Sara, at an area conference in Ecuador. While there, Hugo and Niza shared the gospel with family members. Eleven joined the Church.

My companion and I later learned that Brother and Sister Diaz were both working for minimum wage at a local textile mill and sending half

of their earnings to Guayaquil to help support their families. When we suggested that we eat less often at their house so we wouldn’t be a financial burden on them, Niza exclaimed, “Oh, no, Elder Norman!”

She explained that since they got baptized and started paying tithing, somehow their freezer seemed to stay full of chicken and fish, even though she frequently fed the missionaries.

In Doctrine and Covenants 123:12 we learn, “There are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.” Through Hugo and Niza’s missionary efforts as members and later as stake missionaries, many came to know the truth of the gospel.

When we, like Hugo and Niza, seek diligently for the truth and then eagerly share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will see a multitude of blessings in our lives and in the many lives we touch. ■



# Grateful to Learn His Will

By Aaron Wi-Repa, Waikato, New Zealand

When I was a university student, I knew I wanted to take a specific career path. I had planned all my classes until graduation, and I had a business opportunity I was ready to accept. Everything was in place.

After counseling with Heavenly Father in prayer, however, I felt He was saying to me, “I need you to go in a different direction.” Soon after that, an opportunity to work for the Church appeared. It was completely unexpected, but I recognized it as a new direction He had prepared me to take.

I explained to my family that a new opportunity had opened as training and operations manager at the Pacific Missionary Training Center. This led to a position three years later as institute director with Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. My original career plan would have likely been more temporally prosperous, but we decided to see what would happen if we put our trust in the Lord.

That decision led to blessings the Lord seemed to have prepared for us. It has been amazing. We aren’t wealthy, but we have always had the things we need, and our children have been raised in a wonderful gospel environment.

I have never regretted my decision 23 years ago, though I have had to

forsake some things and leave behind some people, places, possessions, and positions. But we have been happy to do that for Heavenly Father. Doing so has been a great blessing.

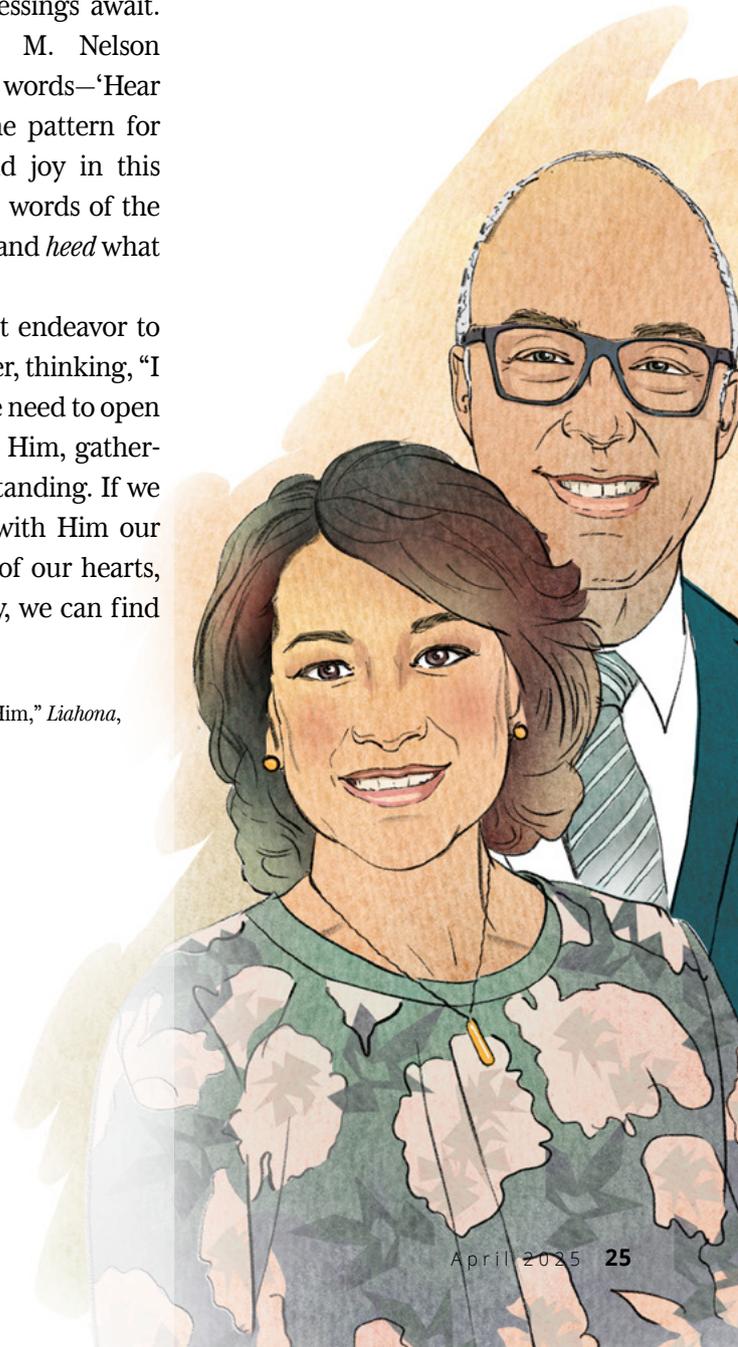
I have learned that when the Lord leads you in a certain direction and you hear and obey, blessings await. As President Russell M. Nelson taught: “In those two words—‘Hear Him’—God gives us the pattern for success, happiness, and joy in this life. We are to *hear* the words of the Lord, *hearken* to them, and *heed* what He has told us!”<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes we might endeavor to counsel Heavenly Father, thinking, “I know best.” Instead, we need to open our heart and listen to Him, gathering insight and understanding. If we go to Him and share with Him our needs and the desires of our hearts, and then listen intently, we can find out His will for us. ■

#### NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” *Liahona*, May 2020, 89.

*My family and I decided to see what would happen if we put our trust in the Lord.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRADLEY CLARK

# You Are the Church

By Judith England Coleman, Utah, USA

*During 70 days in a lookout tower, my husband and I had everything we needed to remain faithful to the Savior and His gospel.*

In June 1963, my husband, Gary, and I left the Cardston Alberta Temple and began our journey together as newlyweds in the gospel of Jesus Christ. All our possessions were stuffed in a few bags laid on the backseat of our little car as we drove to Clarkia, Idaho, USA.

Gary was to begin work watching for wildfires at the Anthony Peak lookout tower in the St. Joe National Forest. Five miles (8 km) by road and an additional three miles (5 km) by mountain trail, our first home together was a single room in a lookout tower 30 feet (9 m) above ground.

Before arriving in Clarkia, we visited President Larson, the president of a small branch in that area. We explained that for the next 70 days, we would be living in a lookout tower and would not be able to take a day off for Sunday worship services in his branch at St. Maries, Idaho.

Given our unique circumstances, President Larson shared inspired and helpful counsel: “Brother and Sister Coleman, you will be the Church in your little home on Anthony Peak. You have the priesthood, your covenants, your testimony, your scriptures, and your faith to do everything necessary to be faithful in the gospel. I authorize you to hold sacrament meeting each Sunday, where you may partake of the sacrament and give talks about the gospel. You will hold your priesthood meeting, your Relief Society meeting, Sunday School class, and family home evening. You are the Church!”

As we said goodbye to President Larson, we felt blessed to begin our family journey in our authorized two-person group of the Church on Anthony Peak. We held daily prayer, individually and as a couple. We each had a copy of the scriptures, and we had a Sunday School manual. Gary would teach priesthood meeting, and I would



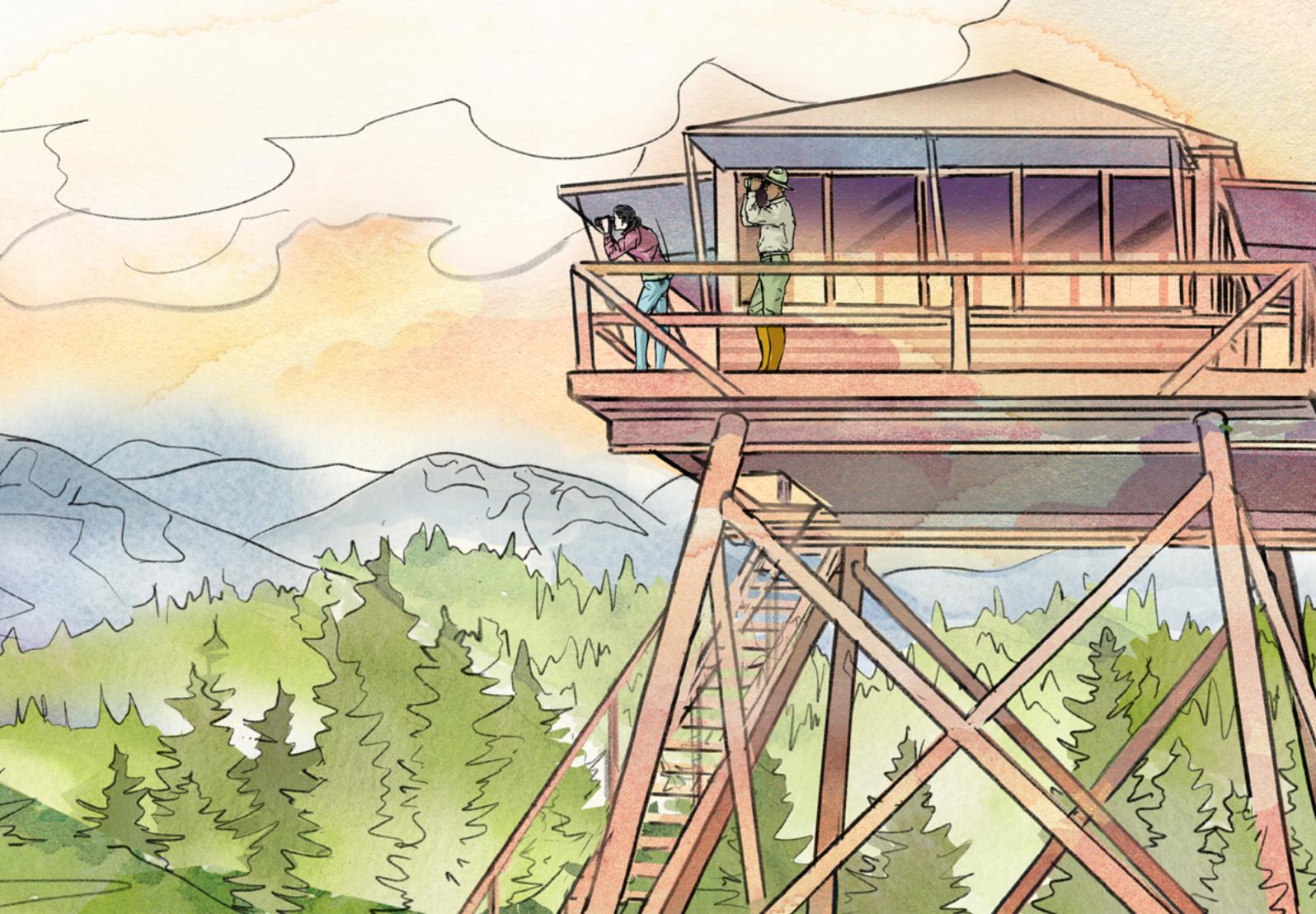
participate. I would teach Relief Society meeting, and he would participate. On the appropriate Sunday, we would hold fast and testimony meeting.

## A SPECIAL LOVE FOR NEPHI

In this environment, we began our lifelong study of, and love for, the sacred Book of Mormon, which had played a significant role in Gary’s conversion in 1962. As we studied, we grew a special love for Nephi.

When Nephi was young, he and his family left their home in Jerusalem, as directed by revelation to Lehi (see 1 Nephi 2:2). In the wilderness and later in the promised land of the Americas, they were isolated from others who believed in the Savior’s coming. But Lehi’s family had everything they needed. They had faith, they had the scriptures in the form of the brass plates, and they had prophetic guidance.

In this setting, Nephi sought and gained a personal testimony of the Savior and spiritual experiences with



Him (see 1 Nephi 2:16). He did not have access to the synagogues or learned teachers of Jerusalem. Yet Nephi grew in spiritual stature and developed a personal relationship with deity, as evidenced by his use of dozens of different titles for the Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wilderness, Nephi says, “It came to pass that the Lord spake unto me” (1 Nephi 2:19). In like manner, Heavenly Father spoke to Gary and me on a hilltop in our forest wilderness.

Regarding the essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ, President Russell M. Nelson said, “One Muslim man said it this way, ‘When your Christianity is simple enough that I can take it with me on the back of a camel, I will be interested.’ Faith, repentance, baptism, the endowment, and the sealing ordinance are essential.”<sup>1</sup>

We had all we needed.

I am grateful for guidance from a branch president in Idaho and for the counsel of ancient and modern prophets. Truly, as the Lord declared in Matthew 18:20, “Where

two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

May our faith in the Savior, joy in His gospel, and gratitude for the Book of Mormon grow as we gather with other Latter-day Saints—whatever our numbers and wherever we are. ■

**NOTE**

1. Russell M. Nelson, in Sheri Dew, *Insights from a Prophet's Life: Russell M. Nelson* (2019), 405–6.

YOUNG ADULTS



**W**hen my husband, Joe, told me he wanted to get baptized, I was anything but excited. I had grown up in the Church, but over the years I had struggled with certain ideas and policies. As a young adult, I eventually stopped going to Church meetings and started studying other religions as well as nonreligious lifestyles.

During this time of exploration, I met Joe, and we began living together. My family was concerned about me, but we always had

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# I Had Left the Church. So Why Did My Husband Want to Join It?

By Angelina Hui

If my husband joined the Church, what would that mean for me?

a great relationship. Joe and I often went to family and religious events to support them. We lived this way for four years, and I was happy with it.

Joe and I eventually got married, and soon I became pregnant. During this time, we went to a family reunion with my side of the family. Every day during the reunion, my family held a devotional. Each individual family gave a lesson or bore their testimonies. One devotional was about how amazing my grandparents' lives had been and what a great role the Church had played in that.

Many also talked about how the gospel had brought strength and happiness into their own lives.

## Needing to Know for Himself

When we returned home, Joe was determined to meet with the missionaries. When I asked why, he said, "I need to know for myself what your family members were talking about." I told him to go ahead. I figured he'd get the basics and then call it good. But after three lessons, Joe wanted to be baptized!

"This is so fast," I said. "Are you sure you know what it means to be a member of the Church?"

"It means we're going to go to church and figure it out," he said with a smile.

I wasn't terribly excited, but we agreed that he could keep taking the lessons, though he wouldn't commit to baptism until I was OK with it.

After a few weeks, my feelings about the Church hadn't changed. But Joe had. He had discovered faith and prayer. He had a sense of peace and confidence that he hadn't felt before. And it was beautiful to see. I decided that no matter what I was feeling, I couldn't take this away from him. We determined that if he was going on this journey, we were going to do it together. So Joe got baptized.

A lot of people at the baptism knew I'd been raised in the Church and assumed I must be thrilled. But I felt a mixture of pride in Joe for being so brave, and fear for what this was going to mean for our life together.

## Our Plan to Figure Things Out

I started going to church with Joe, and we made a plan to deal with my concerns. The first step was to identify what, exactly, bothered me about the gospel. We bought a small journal that I brought with me every Sunday. Whenever someone made a comment that irritated me, looked at a scripture with a perspective that I thought seemed odd, or talked about a policy that rubbed me the wrong way, I wrote down my feelings.

I scribbled in that journal for months. I would say things like, “I hate it when people say . . .,” “Doesn’t anyone fact-check?” and “That makes no sense to me.” Expressing my feelings as I had them made them easier for me to understand and process. Before, when something bothered me, I would hold on to it all day, and it would poison my church experience. But as I wrote in my journal, I became free to enjoy more of church, in between the moments I struggled with. I was getting more out of it than I had in a long time.

Now that I had identified *what* bothered me, the next step was determining *why* these things bugged me. As we would eat Sunday dinner, Joe and I would discuss what I’d written in my

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## I found solutions to most of my issues, but I was still struggling with one: **HOW COULD I BE PART OF A CHURCH I DIDN’T ALWAYS AGREE WITH?**

journal. Sometimes I would simply say, “This is how I feel. I don’t know why.” Figuring things out took a lot of discussion, personal thought, and prayer. One thing I’ve always believed is that prayer is the most important and accurate source of information on pretty much everything.

Working together, Joe and I realized that when you know who you are and what you believe, it builds a wall of protection around your heart. And so, after a while of writing in my journal and discussing it with Joe and with Heavenly Father, I ran out of criticism regarding the Church.

### **What about the Temple?**

When the one-year anniversary of Joe’s baptism was approaching, he started asking about going to the temple. Again, my reaction was, “Whoa! Slow down! I’m not ready for that.”

So my patient husband waited. Every now and then, he would slip something into the conversation like, “Honey, I read a great article about the temple. Do you want to read it?” or “Hey, babe, I saw a wonderful video about the temple. Do you want to watch it with me?” His enthusiasm was endearing, but it wasn’t getting me any closer to being ready to go to the temple. Finally, one day he asked me directly what made me feel unprepared.

“You know I had some issues with the Church growing up,” I said. “But I loved going to the temple. Baptism trips were my favorite. I loved the way I felt in the temple, so calm and peaceful. But I don’t know about the rest of the temple. What if someone says or does something that bothers me? What if that ruins going to the temple for me? What would be the point of being a member of the Church if you can’t go to the temple? So I don’t want to go until I’m sure nothing will shake me.”

### **Many Realizations**

I found solutions to most of my issues, but I was still struggling with one: how could I be part of a church I didn’t always agree with? This led me to the final step of learning from my journal. I realized I needed to try to understand *why* other people believe what they believe and say what they say. I needed to know why God had directed

the Church to be the way it is today.

I found my answer through my husband. When he first started reading the Book of Mormon, a line from the title page stood out to him: “And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God.” Joe had quoted this over and over, but now it meant something more to me.

I realized that the Church exists in an imperfect world populated by imperfect people. And that includes me. We all have times when we get things wrong before we get them right. I realized I needed to stop judging others, just as I wouldn’t want them to judge me. We are all on a path of learning and growth.

I also realized that the Church is the Lord's. It is in His hands. Yes, He works through imperfect people, but *He* directs *His* work. He knows what is needed, and when.

After this, I felt ready to go to the temple. I was pleased to find that it felt just as good on that day as it had years before when I had done baptisms. On our third wedding anniversary, my husband and I went to the temple again to be sealed together and have our son sealed to us. It was so sweet and such a happy day. I kept thinking that this was what all families are meant to be—eternal. And I had yet another realization: though there might be policies or doctrines that might take me time to sort out, there are also rare and beautiful truths in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. One is that each of us can actually talk to Heavenly Father and receive answers. Another is that through living prophets, He gives guidance for our day.

Through my experiences, I truly know that revelation for the Church (given through Church leaders) and personal revelation for each of us allow Heavenly Father to guide us through our

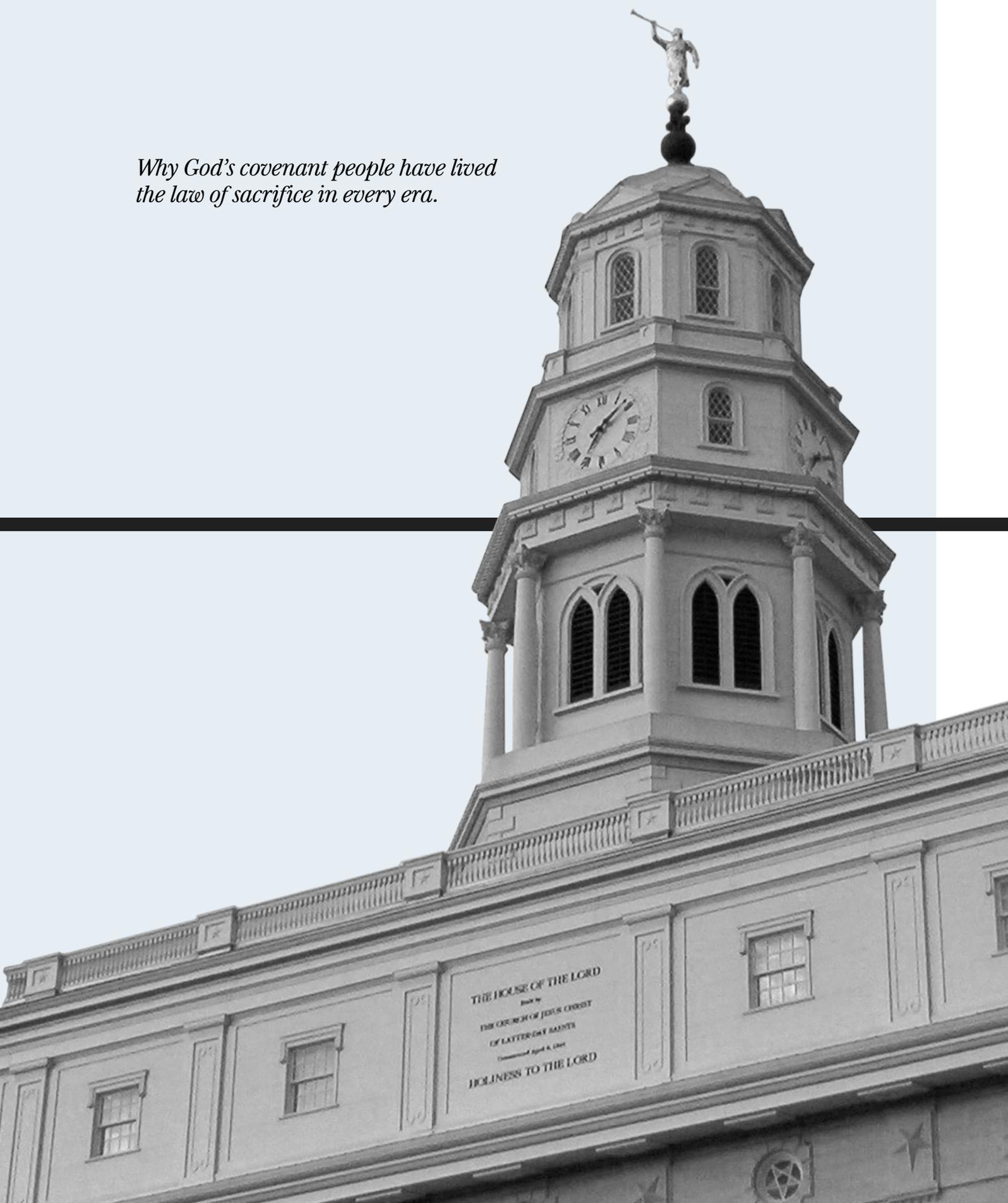
mistakes and triumphs. As we follow His map for our lives, we can find great happiness in knowing Him and His Son, Jesus Christ (see John 17:3). I am proud to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■

*The author lives in Indiana, USA.*

***Angelina and Joe Hui with their children***



*Why God's covenant people have lived  
the law of sacrifice in every era.*



# SACRIFICE AND THE TEMPLE

**By James Goldberg**

Church History Department

**A**s Latter-day Saints began to build a temple in Nauvoo, revelation called them to look forward and backward in time. The Lord told the Saints He would reveal in the temple “things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:41).

At the same time, He emphasized that the temple would be a place where the Saints could be washed and anointed like ancient Israelite priests and a place for “memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:39).

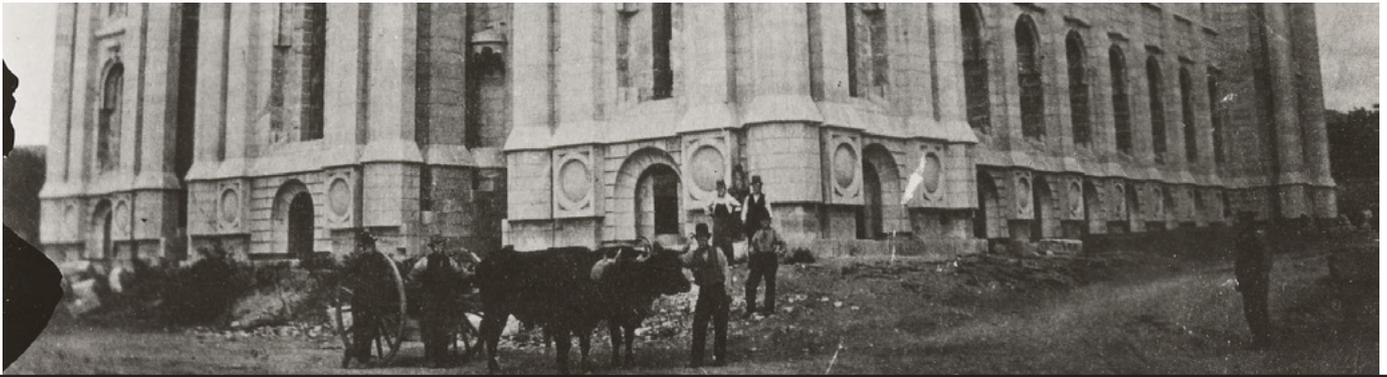
Although the altars in latter-day temples are used for making covenants rather than making offerings of animals, grain, oil, or wine, they still remind us of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice and the related principle of sacrifice. Latter-day Saints have made sacrifices to build temples, to reach temples, and to keep their temple covenants. As in ancient Israel, these experiences help us draw close to the Lord and experience the blessings of being a covenant people.

## **SACRIFICE AT THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM**

In ancient Israel, the opportunity to participate in physical sacrifices was often what brought people to the temple in Jerusalem.



PHOTOGRAPH OF NAUVOO ILLINOIS TEMPLE BY ALAN WILLIAM JENSEN



**BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES  
WERE GIVEN IN ANCIENT ISRAEL.**

**EARLY SAINTS SACRIFICED THEIR TIME  
AND TALENTS TO HELP BUILD TEMPLES.**

**TODAY WE CAN OFFER OUR BROKEN  
HEARTS AND CONTRITE SPIRITS.**

Biblical passages describe a calendar of daily, weekly, and annual offerings in the temple, as well as specific offerings for certain life events (see Leviticus 1–7; Numbers 28–29). These sacrifices called attention to different aspects of people’s relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> For example:

- Sin offerings and trespass offerings reminded people to be reconciled with God and honor His commandments.
- Peace offerings celebrated God’s covenant relationship with His people and showed gratitude for blessings.
- Burnt offerings and meal offerings acknowledged God’s presence and showed people’s devotion to Him.

Whether a person offered a small measure of grain, a pair of birds, or a healthy herd animal, sacrifices involved giving up something of value. In addition, to sacrifice something was to share it with God and others. During many sacrifices, this sharing was literal. The blood and fat of an animal sacrifice might be offered on the altar while the priests received the skin for future use and the giver received meat to eat. Through temple sacrifices, the children of Israel could symbolically share a meal with their Heavenly Father and King.<sup>2</sup>

Families in Jerusalem could watch trails of smoke ascend from the temple altars toward the heavens and recognize the “sweet savour” of meats, produce, and drinks being offered to the Lord (see Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17). These offerings connected their own animals, crops, land, and labor with God. Righteous kings welcomed pilgrims from across the promised land to events like the temple Passover celebrations, where each family offered a lamb as a sacrifice (see 2 Chronicles 29–30; 35). Participating in sacrifices and sharing feasts alongside other worshippers served as a powerful reminder of shared spiritual heritage and destiny. Israelites could leave the temple more prepared to make everyday sacrifices for God and each other.

The temple atmosphere of sharing and fellowship through sacrifice appears prominently in the New Testament. When Jesus was young, His family traveled to the temple to offer sacrifices and met people like Anna, Simeon, and religious teachers (see Luke 2). The culmination of Jesus’s mission and ministry came when He journeyed for the last time to the temple, then laid down His life as a sacrifice for others. After Jesus’s death, the Apostles frequently visited the temple and taught people who had gathered from many nations to be there. Some of the New Testament authors described Jesus’s Atonement through comparisons to temple sacrifices.<sup>3</sup>

## SACRIFICE IN THE RESTORATION

By the time Latter-day Saints were building temples, their understanding of sacrifice had been refined. The Book of Mormon explains that the central purpose of ancient sacrifices was to prepare people's minds for the coming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice He requires from us is "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20). In latter-day temple worship, physical reminders of Jesus Christ's sacrifice prepare us to love, serve, and sacrifice as Jesus did.

Latter-day Saints offered their time, talents, and possessions to help build early temples. Lucy Mack Smith recognized that work on the Kirtland Temple brought people together. "There was but one mainspring to all our thoughts," she said, "and that was building the Lord's house."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ appeared in the completed temple and promised that the Saints could enter His presence there: "I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house" (Doctrine and Covenants 110:7).

In Nauvoo, many men sacrificed their time by working on temple construction every 10th day. The Relief Society was organized after a seamstress, Margaret Cook, approached her employer, Sarah Granger Kimball, about a plan for women to contribute by making shirts for temple construction workers.<sup>5</sup> These efforts meant that Nauvoo Temple construction workers were often clothed through the sacrifices of their fellow Saints. In pioneer temples in Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Utah, shared sacrifices of materials and labor helped connect temples forever to the families of those who contributed.

The contributions of everyday Latter-day Saints, like that of the widow who gave what she had to the temple treasury in Jesus's day, continue to make temple building possible (see Mark 12:41–44). In many cases, Saints have also sacrificed to reach the temple. For example, after temple ceremonies were fully translated into Spanish in 1945, Saints from Mexico, the United States, and later Central America joined annual caravans to visit the Mesa Arizona Temple.<sup>6</sup> Members along the route and in Mesa offered travelers meals, places to stay, and powerful shared experiences.

Whether Saints today charter buses for a similar caravan, keep up a regular ward temple night, or arrange youth visits to the temple, shared temple traditions can help us draw near to God and each other as we remember Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

In the temple, we covenant to obey the law of sacrifice, which includes adopting a spirit of sacrifice and sharing as we return to do the Lord's work in the outside world.<sup>7</sup> Our willingness to give up worldly desires and live in a higher and holier way shows the Lord that we are willing to offer Him "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Just as ancient Israelites often received a portion of their sacrifices back to eat physically, we often find that our own sacrifices nourish us spiritually. As we enter the Lord's house, we can remember that the time we offer to participate in temple work is more than something we give up—it's time we can share with the Lord and a precious chance to stand together in His presence. ■

### NOTES

1. As Adam and Eve learned from an angel of the Lord, sacrifices were intended as "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:7).
2. Ancient and modern temples both emphasize bringing people into God's presence. In ancient times, meal-related symbols were part of that experience. For example, the biblical tabernacle and temple contained a table with dishes and loaves of "shewbread," which many modern translations call "the bread of the presence [of God]" (see Exodus 25:29–30). The image is that the temple, as the house of God, is a place where God invites worshippers to eat in His presence. Sacrifices also contribute to the meal imagery. The purpose of burning part of an animal is that the smoke ascends, representing the sacrifice rising to God. Technically, in giving a burnt offering, the worshippers were not sharing a meal with God but only giving God the food in the form of ascending smoke, or "sweet savour unto the Lord" (Leviticus 1:17). In a peace offering or meal offering, though, the sacrifice was shared between God, the priests, and the offerers.
3. See, for example, Hebrews 9:13–14; 1 Peter 1:19.
4. "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 14, page 3, josephsmithpapers.org, spelling standardized; also quoted in Lisa Olsen Tait and Brent Rogers, "A House for Our God," in *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants* (2016), 170.
5. See James Goldberg, "Five People Who Helped Found the Relief Society," history.churchofjesuschrist.org.
6. See Eduardo Balderas, "Northward to Mesa," *Ensign*, Sept. 1972, 30–33.
7. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 27.2, Gospel Library.

RELEASED  
BUT NOT  
OBSOLETE:  
**PURPOSEFUL  
SERVICE AT  
ANY AGE**



By Norman C. Hill

*Heartfelt ministering,  
encouraging, and  
lifting others don't  
require a formal  
Church calling.  
We are all called  
to this kind of  
Christlike service.*

Julie Bangerter Beck knows plenty about Church service. In addition to serving in stake and ward callings, she served five years as a counselor in the Young Women General Presidency and later served five years as the Relief Society General President from 2007 to 2012.

“I traveled more than a million miles during those 10 years,” she says. “It was tiring, but the Lord renewed me and gave me the energy I needed when I needed it.”

After being released, Sister Beck served on various Church and education-related boards for several years. She guided Utah Tech University as a trustee during a difficult transition. Now she has finished those assignments and doesn't have a formal Church calling.

People sometimes ask her if she misses these callings and assignments. “I miss the associations,” she says, “and I miss going into people's homes to watch them interact with their families.” But Sister Beck likes to remember the words of President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency: “We do not ‘step down’ when we are released, and we do not ‘step up’ when we are called. . . . There is only ‘forward or backward,’ and that difference depends on how we accept and act upon our releases and our callings.”<sup>1</sup>

## **JUMP THE FENCE**

Now that she is without formal Church or civic assignments, Sister Beck says that she has more time for children, friends, and quiet service. “I've always been more

like Ammon than Captain Moroni anyway,” she says. “Let me tend the sheep.” (See Alma 17:25.) With unstructured time that she hasn't had for years, she enjoys opportunities to eat with grandchildren, talk to old friends, exercise at the gym, and savor the free time that she has now.

Sister Beck also looks to the example of her father, William Grant Bangerter. “My father said that he didn't want to miss anything mortality had to offer,” she says. “This included growing older. After he had served as a General Authority, a temple president, a sealer, and in other callings, he was asked to be a family history consultant in his ward.”

He was then in his 80s and didn't know how to use a computer. “He had to learn,” Sister Beck explains. “He called a deacon in his ward to help him. Then they taught the other deacons how to do family history research. The deacons then taught the rest of the Aaronic Priesthood holders in the ward. Eventually, they took over 10,000 names to the temple.”

Sister Beck and her husband, Ramon, focus on what's ahead of them, not what's behind them. “We don't talk much about what we've done. We have too much to do. It's unstructured time now. We get to decide,” she says. “When someone says they've been put out to pasture, we say, ‘You get to decide whether you stay to graze or jump the fence.’ Most barriers are artificial anyway. Service, friendship, family, ministering—none of these have any boundaries.”



## TEENS AND TUNES

Sister Beck says one of the best ways to stay relevant is to connect with youth in your family or ward. This can include getting to know their favorite music, their interests, or their habits. Youth can benefit from connecting with someone who will listen, share experiences, and offer a long-term perspective.

There are a variety of community programs that pair teens and retirees. Seniors can also informally make time to be with youth either in their own extended family or in their wards, benefitting both groups.

“There is an older guy in my ward who comes to my high school basketball and soccer games,” Kimball Carter says. “He’s even a substitute seminary teacher in the area. Kids like him because he asks a lot of questions but doesn’t give a lot of advice. He even listens to our music and knows some of the latest artists. He’s not a youth leader; he’s just a neighbor. Other than my family, I think he must be my biggest fan.”

## LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Former mission president Steven Fox emphasizes that regardless of our age or circumstances, there are many opportunities for service—formal and informal, big and small, individual and civic. The important thing is to follow

the Lord’s command to “be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27).

After being released as a mission president, Brother Fox said that he felt emotionally and spiritually “out of place.” Going from a demanding calling to no assignment at all was a big change.

He says, “It is up to me now to make things happen on my own rather than relying on the daily demands from a mission to fill my calendar. It’s no longer about a calling; it is instead about looking around to see opportunities to serve.”

F. Melvin Hammond, an emeritus General Authority Seventy, says that genuine ministering has always been about looking for those opportunities. At age 91, he serves in the temple, teaches once a month in elders quorum, and stays updated on local and national sports teams so that he can find common ground for conversations with younger men in his ward.

He knows all of his neighbors and visits them often. He tries to follow the Savior’s example, who spent time with people from all walks of life. “I like visiting with people regardless of their situation or gospel allegiance,” Elder Hammond says. “One neighbor is a recovered alcoholic, another neighbor hasn’t been to church for years, while

another has dementia and his wife asks me to sit with him while she runs errands. We both like cowboy shows, so we watch them together.”

After serving in the temple one evening, Elder Hammond stopped at a fast-food restaurant. He began visiting with a worker who was cleaning tables. The worker asked Elder Hammond why he was wearing a suit. “I told him about the temple,” Elder Hammond says. “We talked for more than 30 minutes. I don’t know if he’ll find out more about the Church, but he knows there is someone who doesn’t just see him as kitchen help.”

Elder Hammond’s wife, Bonnie, passed away two years ago. While Elder Hammond misses her terribly, he decided to do something nice for his neighbors on the anniversary of her death. He and other family members made cards for his

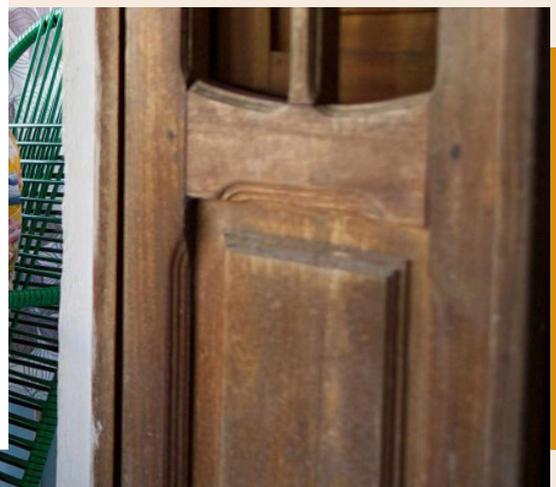
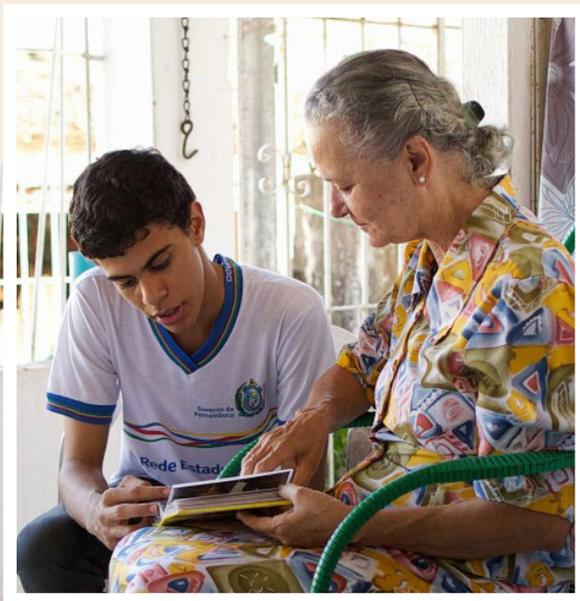
neighbors acknowledging this anniversary. On the cards, he included a picture of a cherry atop a delicious dessert with the words “She was always the cherry on top.” He gave a bag of fresh cherries with each card. “I want my neighbors to know how much I love her and that I look forward to spending eternity together,” Elder Hammond says.

Heartfelt ministering, serving, encouraging, and lifting others don’t require a formal Church calling. We are all called to this kind of Christlike service regardless of our age or circumstances. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

**NOTE**

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Liahona*, May 2014, 49.





*The world tells us that making covenants with God is limiting, but they yoke us with the Savior, giving us a measure of His strength and power.*



# COVENANTS WITH GOD ARE LIBERATING, NOT LIMITING

By President  
Camille N.  
Johnson

Relief Society  
General  
President

**T**he Savior invites us to be yoked with Him, and He tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light (see Matthew 11:28–30). Being yoked with Him means we are connected, similar to how oxen are connected in a yoke. Two oxen, yoked and working on the same objective, can carry more weight than a single ox. This is what it means to be bound to the Savior through covenants: He will share our burdens and help us lift our load on the uphill climb toward exaltation.<sup>1</sup>

## KORIHOR'S DECEPTION

Let us not be deceived by Satan on this point. The story of Korihor, in Alma 30 in the Book of Mormon, is instructive.

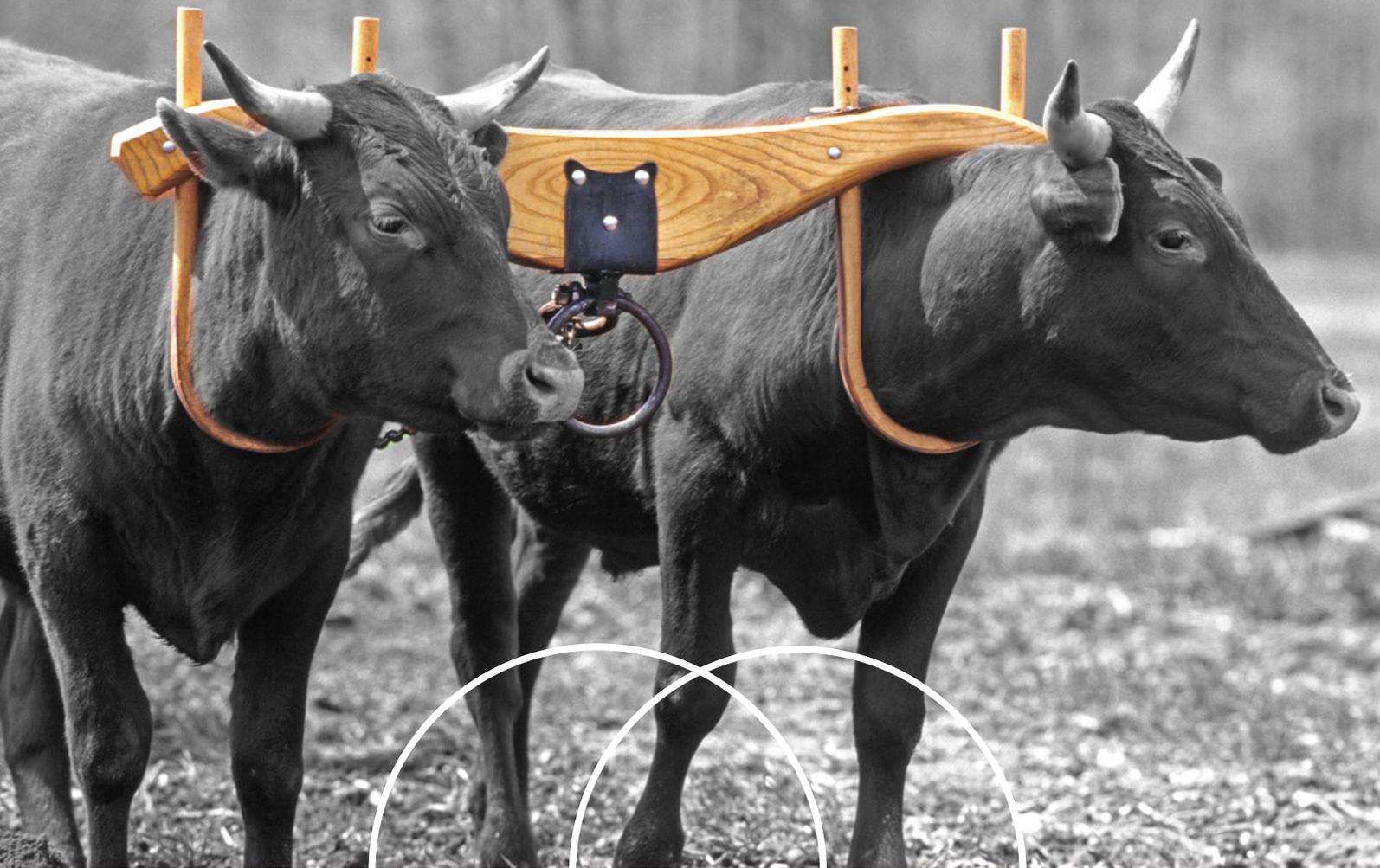
Korihor, the anti-Christ, mocked the people for believing the traditions of their fathers and mothers. He said they were “bound down under a foolish and a vain hope,” saying, “Why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things?” (verse 13).

He preached that there is no need for a Savior because we prosper according to our own genius and conquer according to our own strength. He called the believers frenzied and deranged. He taught that you must see in order to know. He preached that death was the end—so do whatever makes you feel good. (See verses 13–28.)

Of priesthood ordinances, he said, “I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances . . . which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down” (verse 23).

Do we see similar teachings in our day?

- Are we similarly mocked and called foolish for believing in the Savior?
- Are we told our minds must be frenzied to believe in something we haven't seen?
- Have we heard that being bound to God through ordinances and covenants is restrictive?



### **POINTS TO PONDER**

- “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29).
- “The reward for keeping covenants with God is heavenly power.”  
—President Russell M. Nelson
- In our day, we see false teachings similar to those of Korihor, an anti-Christ (see Alma 30).
- As a Relief Society General Presidency, we desire that all our sisters have access to the liberating blessings of a covenant relationship with God, including the power of God available to those who make and keep covenants and worship in the house of the Lord.

## A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP IS LIBERATING

The same tactics Korihor used to lead away many women and men are being used against us now. Like Korihor, the world tells us that being bound or yoked with the Savior means we are “bound down” or “bound up,” incapable of movement or progression. We must discover for ourselves that a covenant relationship with God is liberating, not limiting! “There is no other head whereby ye can be made free,” King Benjamin taught. “Therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ” (Mosiah 5:8).

Covenant keepers are blessed by God’s power. Keeping our covenants liberates, empowers, and brings us peace. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that “the reward for keeping covenants with God is heavenly power—power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better. This power eases our way. Those who live the higher laws of Jesus Christ have access to His higher power. Thus, covenant keepers are entitled to a special kind of *rest* that comes to them through their covenantal relationship with God.”<sup>2</sup>

I know that is true.

By choosing to be bound to my Savior through the covenants I have made with God, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). My efforts to keep my covenants—though not perfect—have been rewarded with an increased capacity to do what has been asked of me. I have been blessed with a greater capacity to serve. I have been blessed with the inspiration I need to do the Lord’s work in the ways He would have me do it. With faith in the Lord, I have been blessed to face my challenges with optimism. It is God’s power that eases my way—albeit a way that is uphill!

But we must exercise our agency to access this power. As my counselor Sister Anette Dennis taught, “When we use our agency to choose to enter a covenant relationship with [God], we are witnessing to Him that we want Him to be more deeply involved in our lives and that we are

willing to pay the price to receive the increased power and privileges that come with that covenant relationship.”<sup>3</sup>

## COME TO THE TEMPLE

We receive that power as we walk on the covenant path back to our heavenly home. We enter the covenant path when we are baptized and confirmed. We enter it more completely in the house of the Lord. As a Relief Society General Presidency, we desire that all our sisters have access to the liberating blessings of a covenant relationship with God, including the power of God available to those who make and keep covenants and worship in the house of the Lord.

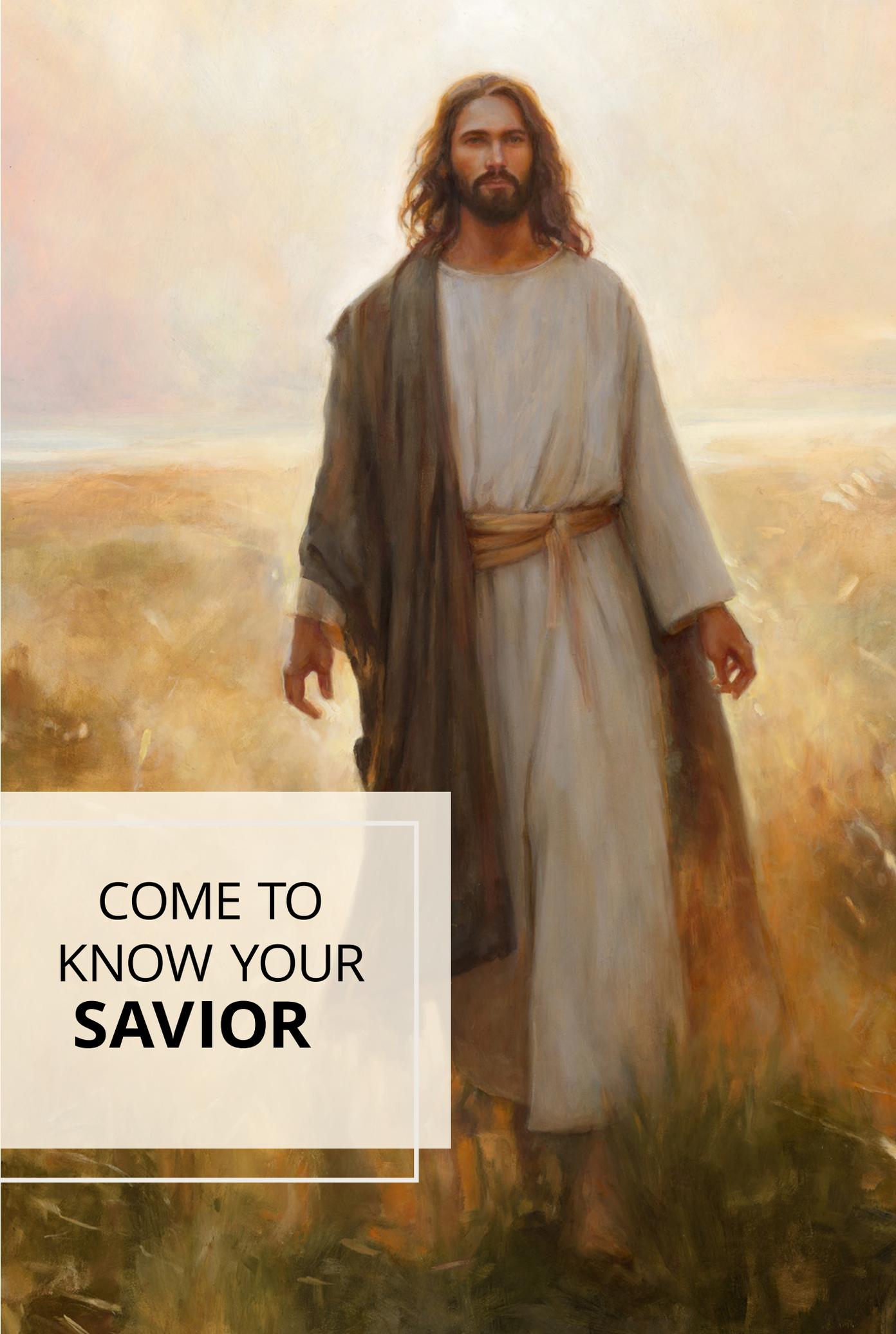
President Nelson taught: “Everything taught in the temple, through instruction and through the Spirit, increases our understanding of Jesus Christ. His essential ordinances bind us to Him through sacred priesthood covenants. Then, as we keep our covenants, He endows us with *His* healing, strengthening power.”<sup>4</sup>

The blessing of receiving God’s *power* depends on our making *covenants* with God by participating in priesthood *ordinances*, which yoke us with Him.

As a presidency, we seek to help each sister *desire* and *develop* a covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. We desire to see our sisters endowed in the house of the Lord, opening the door to spiritual privileges and exaltation, bound to the Savior and empowered through ordinances and covenants. We promise that as you make and keep covenants, you will be blessed by the liberating power available to covenant keepers. ■

### NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 99.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 96.
3. J. Anette Dennis, “Accessing God’s Power through Covenants” (2024 worldwide Relief Society devotional), Gospel Library.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 93–94.



COME TO  
KNOW YOUR  
**SAVIOR**



**By Elder  
Rubén V.  
Alliaud**  
Of the Seventy

**W**hen I go to conferences and devotionals, I am often asked, especially by the youth, what my favorite scripture is. Usually I don't have one. My favorite scripture depends on the day. It is always different. But, for some reason, for the past several months there has not been a single day that this scripture in one way or another has not come to my mind:

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13).

I have reflected over and over again on this scripture from the amazing sermon of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon. We all need to know our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ. By walking where He walks, loving what He loves, and embracing what He embraces, we can come to know Him.

### **STRIVE TO SERVE**

We have the privilege and opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ through studying the scriptures. But to truly know Him and be His disciple, reading and studying are not enough. We know the Savior more deeply by doing the things He would do—especially serving others as He would serve.

After a disastrous earthquake in Europe, I visited camps where those displaced by the earthquake lived. I met many families living in tents. They didn't know who I was or that the Church would bring assistance. But as I met with them, the very first thing they did was put something to eat or drink in my hands with smiles on their faces.

These people had lost everything. I was there to serve *them*. But they found it in their hearts to serve. This brought me joy and reminded me that one of the best ways to know Jesus Christ in a deep and profound way is to serve Him by serving God's children.

### **BE AN EXAMPLE**

For many people around us, the only way they will get to know about the Restoration and the true Church of Jesus Christ—and sometimes about Jesus Christ Himself—is through *us*. For this reason, we always need to be mindful of the importance of being a good example.

*One of the best ways  
to know Jesus Christ  
in a deep and profound  
way is to serve Him by  
serving God's children.*

We know the Savior more deeply by doing the things He would do—**especially** serving others as He would serve.

We should live in such a way that those around us can come to know the Savior. If we live differently from what we believe and teach, others may not believe our words or even in the power of the Savior’s Atonement. Instead, they can come to know Jesus Christ because they know *you* and can see and feel His light in your life.

This is especially true for parents. When my wife and I were expecting our first child, I called my uncle for advice. He is the one who introduced me to the Church, and I love him dearly.

“What can I do?” I asked. “How can I teach my children to help them grow and be strong?”

I was struck by what my uncle said.

“Don’t worry about them,” he said. “It’s about you. They will be with you and see you all the time. Try your best to obey the commandments. Be honest and worthy in all you do, and they will follow your example.”

A few years later, I was shaving one morning when my second child, who was about four years old, came in the bathroom with a stick and some soap and began to imitate me. When I saw him, I remembered what my uncle said. His advice came back to me in a profound way.

Many have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ because they see something different in Church members. We need to be sure that the gospel is reflected in our countenances. We don’t have to be perfect, but we should be willing to strive to be more like Jesus Christ in all we do.

### LOOK TO THE SAVIOR

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once observed, “There could have been no Atonement without the character of Christ!”<sup>1</sup> Even in the most difficult circumstances of His life, it was in Jesus Christ’s character not to think of Himself. He always thought of others.

After learning that John the Baptist had been killed, Jesus invited His Apostles to depart with Him to a solitary place to rest. A multitude of more than 5,000 followed Him. Jesus set aside His desired rest to heal, teach, and feed them—*all of them* (see Matthew 14:12–21).

When He discovered His disciples struggling with their boat on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus walked to them on the water and said, “It is I; be not afraid” (see Matthew 14:22–27).

Later, while in agony on the cross, the Savior called on the Apostle John to care for His mother (see John 19:25–27). After His Crucifixion, He went to the spirit world and “commissioned [the righteous spirits] to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30).

As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once noted, as human beings, we naturally tend to turn inward during our challenges or distress, but Jesus Christ did exactly the opposite. Even in His most demanding and stressful moments, He always opened Himself to the needs of others.<sup>2</sup> He still does. He accomplished the



Atonement for us and opened the door so we can come unto the Father again. We can look to Him in every moment, and He will always be there to help us.

## HOLD ON TO HOPE

We live in a fallen world. The good news is that this did not happen by mistake. This fallen world has a purpose, and it is glorious (see Moses 1:39). Although we live in difficult times with much evil in the world, there is a way out because of Jesus Christ. He is the reason for all hope.

Every temple in the world testifies of our hope in the Savior. In a way, every time the prophet announces a new temple it is a declaration of the reality of Jesus Christ and His redeeming power. The only reason why we have temples is because of Him and His atoning sacrifice. And every time we worship in the house of the Lord and make covenants with God for ourselves and on behalf of those on the other side of the veil, we proclaim our faith in the resurrected Christ.

Jesus Christ lives. He walks with us in this mortal pilgrimage. He is full of grace. He loves us so much that He came to this world to do what was impossible for us to do on our own. He is our friend. “Greater love

hath no man than this,” He said, “that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

It is a privilege for me to bear testimony of Jesus Christ. With all my heart, I want to be His friend. He leads this Church through prophets and apostles. He is mindful of every single one of us. He knows us by name and knows our needs, our struggles, and the desires of our hearts. Through Him we hold on to hope. As we serve others, strive to be an example, look to Jesus Christ, and hold on to “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20), we come to know Him and discover that He is always with us to fill our lives with peace and joy. ■

### NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “The Holy Ghost: Glorifying Christ,” *Ensign*, July 2002, 58.
2. See David A. Bednar, “A Christlike Character,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2017, 50–53.

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Liahona, floor 23  
50 E. North Temple Street  
Salt Lake City, UT  
84150-0023, USA



WHITMER HOME BY JOSEPH ALLEMAN

**ARTIST'S DEPICTION OF THE PETER AND MARY WHITMER HOME IN FAYETTE, NEW YORK, USA.**

**T**he Whitmers were a German immigrant family who sheltered Joseph and Emma Smith in their home. Here, Joseph completed the Book of Mormon translation and received revelations from the Lord for the Whitmers and other early converts. Some of the Whitmers were chosen as witnesses of the Book of Mormon. In the Whitmer log home the restored Church of Jesus Christ was formally organized on April 6, 1830.

“[Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ, “Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 21:1–2).

**OF ONE HEART  
AND ONE MIND**

What can we each do to  
build Zion in our wards and  
branches?



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