

4. 2 Nephi 9:8, 17.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
6. Alma 42:23.
7. Alma 42:13.
8. Alma 34:16.
9. See Alma 12:32.
10. Moses 5:10.
11. Moses 5:11.
12. Alma 34:32.
13. Alma 34:33.
14. Alma 34:34.
15. *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 144.
16. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 575.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Redeemer of Israel.”

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## Sister Anne C. Pingree

### Growing up unto the Lord

Some months ago I rode in a car with two courageous senior sister missionaries. They were determined to find a ward member’s apartment in the heart of an inner-city neighborhood in the eastern United States. As I sat in the backseat holding my breath, the car’s guidance system regularly blared, “Wrong turn, wrong turn!” Undaunted, the missionary reading the map just kept suggesting way after way through the maze of city streets until finally we found the home of the sister whom they had promised to teach how to read and write.

In their actions and attitudes, these remarkable sisters embodied something that is much more than a reflection of their mortal years. They demonstrated true spiritual maturity.

Helaman, the great Book of Mormon prophet, named his sons Nephi and Lehi after their forebears, and “they began to grow up unto the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Young or older, all of us must do the same.

This idea of growing up unto the Lord is a compelling one. Unlike the process of growing up physically, we will not mature spiritually until we *choose*, as the Apostle Paul phrased it, to “put away childish things.”<sup>2</sup>

Daily prayer and scripture study, adherence to commandments and to cov-

enants made at baptism and in the temple are at the core of growing up unto the Lord. We learn to walk in His ways as we do what draws us closer to Heavenly Father and as we teach our children and others to do the same. We “put away childish things” as we choose to become Christlike and serve others as He would have us do.

### Determined service to others

When the Church was organized in this dispensation, the Lord explained that those who “shall be received by baptism into his church” would be, in part, those “willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.”<sup>3</sup> That means remaining “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works”<sup>4</sup> each day of our lives. Today, as the Church grows in 170 nations throughout the earth, *determined service to others*, even in difficult circumstances, is required of those who truly desire “to grow up unto the Lord.” This expansion of the Church means many of us will have opportunities to serve those who are new converts.

I participated in a memorable example of such determined service to those who are new to the gospel when I accompanied those dedicated sister missionaries—one a widow close to 80 years and the other a single parent in her 60s—who

would not be deterred by wrong turns. I also witnessed another example of it in that same ward.

### Service of a visiting teaching mentor

This ward is composed of members of many ages, from a variety of countries, all with varying economic circumstances and Church experience. A number of those with the most Church experience are busy graduate-student couples with demanding schedules and young families.

What I saw was a young mother serving as a visiting teaching mentor to newer converts in the ward. While her husband cared for their baby, she enthusiastically modeled loving watchcare to two African sisters. This watchcare involved teaching these sisters not only how to function in a new country but also how to adapt to their new religion.

Through her example she taught these African sisters how the Lord would have us serve each other. The words of the Apostle Paul tenderly describe what I saw in this visiting teaching mentor's actions toward these new converts: "We were gentle among you, . . . being affectionately desirous of you, . . . willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were *dear* unto us."<sup>5</sup> With each visit, the young mentor brought good cheer, a gentle helping hand, and the visiting teaching message.

In time, together the sisters prepared the visiting teaching message to share in other sisters' homes. Assessing needs, giving on-the-spot service as they went, they became true Relief Society sisters committed to lifting, comforting, and encouraging one another. I doubt I will ever hear the phrase "hearts knit together in unity and in love"<sup>6</sup> that I won't think of those three happy, loving women demonstrating through their determined service to others what it means "to grow up unto the Lord."

### Willingness to press forward in faith

Besides steadfast, determined service, another way we choose to grow up unto the Lord is through *our willingness to "press forward"*<sup>7</sup> *in faith*—even when we don't quite know what to do. Consider Nephi's account of being commanded to build a ship. He recounted the circumstance:

"And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee. . . .

"And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools?"<sup>8</sup>

Nephi did not question the task to be done. Rather, in this situation, he evidenced, as he had in others, this mature spiritual insight: "And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them."<sup>9</sup> In short, Nephi looked for a resolution rather than at the roadblocks, because he knew—he *knew*—that in this process of growing up unto the Lord, God could and would help him fulfill every commandment he received.

### Faith of a bishop

In that same inner-city ward I observed a similar type of faith in the gentle, loving care of a bishop who wasted no time despairing over the vast needs of an ever-growing number of new converts. Rather, he pressed forward by rallying the more experienced members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to help prepare new converts from Africa and Latin America for their priesthood responsibilities. The newer brethren were taught how to hold the trays while passing the sacrament, how to kneel and rever-

ently bless the bread and water. Their more seasoned, often younger brethren practiced along with them the words of the sacramental prayers so they would feel confident in giving them. Then, together, all the brethren discussed the sacred nature of this important priesthood ordinance.

We've all had experiences where we've had to demonstrate our determination to serve others and our willingness to press forward in faith. When my husband telephoned to tell me that our mission call had been changed to a challenging assignment in Africa, I responded, "I can do that. I think I can do that." I demonstrated by my words my commitment to move forward in faith—trusting once again that the Lord would help me. I was showing my willingness "to grow up unto the Lord."

As that faithful bishop, those dedicated sisters, and I might attest, in this ongoing process of growing up unto the Lord, we will be asked to do all we can, in some cases even more than we know how to do. The challenges may be formidable

and the route sometimes unknown. But inevitable wrong turns notwithstanding, those who strive to be truly Christlike—with steadfast determination to serve others and a willingness to press forward in faith—can come to echo this grand spiritual truth shared by Nephi as he continued his shipbuilding: "And I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things."<sup>10</sup> To be shown "great things"—what a gift, what a blessing to those who have chosen "to grow up unto the Lord." May ours be lives of gentle, loving, steadfast spiritual maturity, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Helaman 3:21.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
4. Mosiah 5:15.
5. 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8; italics added.
6. Mosiah 18:21.
7. 2 Nephi 31:20; italics added.
8. 1 Nephi 17:8–9.
9. 1 Nephi 17:3.
10. 1 Nephi 18:3.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Benefits of reading the Book of Mormon

Last year, at the invitation of a prophet, millions read the Book of Mormon. Millions benefited. For each of us there were blessings of obedience, and most of us also grew in knowledge and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom this book is a witness.

Many other things were learned, but what was learned depended on the reader. What we get from a book, especially a sacred text, is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.

### All men everywhere

One of the things I learned in this most recent reading of the Book of Mormon was how much God loves all of His children in every nation. In the first chapter Father Lehi praises the Lord, whose "power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth" (1 Nephi 1:14). Again and again the Book of Mormon teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is universal in its promise and effect, reaching out to all who ever live on the earth. Here are some examples, quoted directly from that book: