Linda and Richard Eyre

Teaching Children Charity

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A Program to Help Teens and Preteens Forget Themselves

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Many parents have called their years with adolescent and teenage children "one crisis after another."

Perhaps this is so. But it is well to remember that the Chinese character for the word *crisis* is actually a combination of two characters: one means "danger"; the other means "opportunity."

We invite you, through the pages of this book, to view the teen and preteen years as both a danger and an opportunity. See them as a danger in order to be motivated to take your parenting task with great seriousness. But see them as an opportunity also—an opportunity to grow again with your children, to learn to love once again through them, and to "school your feelings" as you learn with them to exercise and implement charity.

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PREFACE

"Okay, now we've got to get serious!" we thought as we sat down to start writing the third book in our teaching children series—the book on teaching children charity.

When we began, it occurred to us that writing this book would be more difficult than the first two in the series: *Teaching Children Joy* and *Teaching Children Responsibility.* To be truthful, our first thoughts were that teaching joy to preschool children is fun and teaching responsibility to elementary-school-age children is challenging, but teaching adolescents and teenagers charity is . . . *impossible!*

How can you convince a daughter who used to spend all her time helping with little brothers and sisters and now spends most of it in front of the mirror crying because her hair "won't go" that she should be sitting at breakfast with the family and helping with the dishes—regardless of how "horrible" she looks?

How can you help another daughter who sits in Sunday School class wondering why everyone hates her to realize she should be looking around to see who needs her?

How can you teach a son that the most satisfying relationship in the world does not exist between him and his computer?

This is undoubtedly the greatest challenge in the saga of parenting. The sweet, teachable, moldable characters to whom we've tried to teach joy and responsibility are beginning to show the symptoms of age—becoming set in their ways. Their excitement in the realization that *they* know certain things just about matches their knowledge that their parents are getting dumber every day (of course they still respect us because we're so old).

We are convinced, despite the difficulties, that charity *is* the thing we should strive to teach our adolescents, and we believe that there are some good, constructive ways to do this teaching. The first thing to realize, as we will soon point out, is that charity begins with us! (That's the hardest part.) Often our biggest problem with teenagers is our inability to put ourselves into their shoes—to see the world through their eyes and to laugh at ourselves. If we could, we would often see ourselves as parents being intolerant and insensitive, anxious and angry, nagging and nasty.

Being parents of teenagers is one of the hardest, most serious jobs around. As we move on from the physically and mentally exhausting job of having little children, we realize that parenting becomes even more difficult mentally and emotionally as our children become adolescents and struggle to reach adulthood. Because it is so hard, one of the greatest assets we can have is a sense of humor.

The hard job of learning where to draw the line can often be softened with a good laugh—privately as husband and wife, or together as parent and child. Often great teaching moments can occur when we can learn to laugh at ourselves.

We have discovered through our own children, our six hundred missionaries in England, and our work with countless numbers of parents and youth that it is possible to teach these young people charity. The principles and methods in this book don't work every time with every adolescent. There may be several failures for every success—but that one wonderful success can get parents through the next few crises with a smile and with the insight that sometimes failure teaches as much as success.

Perhaps the most important key in teaching children charity is to remember: When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. It also helps to remember Winston Churchill's widely applicable advice to "Never give up . . . never, never, never, never."

SECTION I

CHARITY: THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION

Charity comes as a gift from Christ. If we can accept it and gain its qualities, it can be returned to him and it can be given to others.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "If I have not charity, I am nothing." Conversely, if we have charity, we can become everything that we (and God) want ourselves to be.

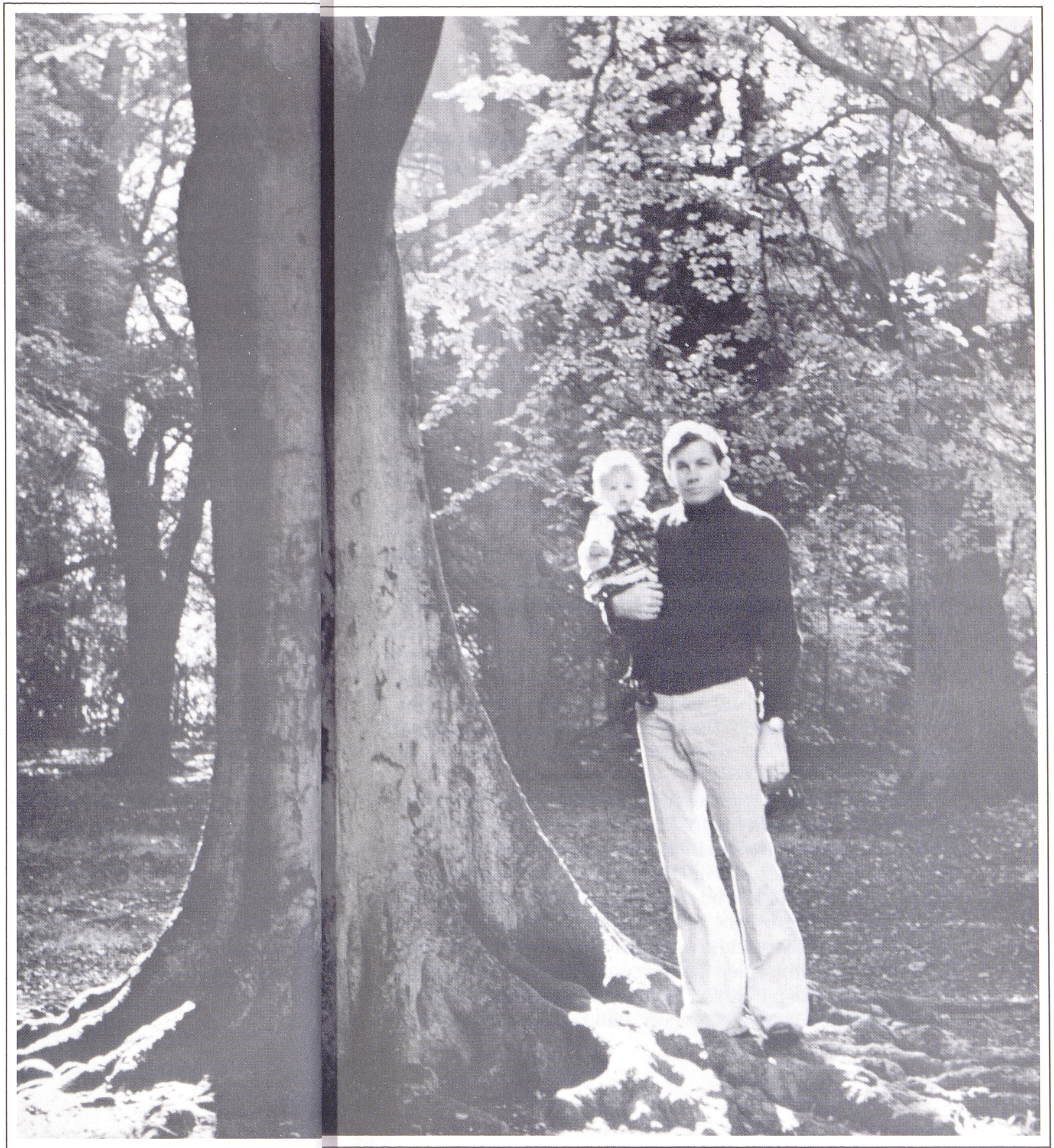
Charity is the ultimate solution because it is the purest form of love. It overcomes the "leaves" and "branches" of jealousy, rebellion, shyness, depression, immaturity and various forms of sin by attacking and destroying the "roots" of selfishness and self-consciousness.

So let us explore together the meanings of charity, and the magic of it, and the means whereby we can teach it to our children while learning it ourselves.

CHAPTER

1

The Purpose



"Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him." (Moroni 7:47.)

There is a window, a brief season when children are old enough to be accountable yet young enough to be pure. That window is the best time to teach charity.

This book is based on a belief that a great many of the problems and concerns of preteens and teenagers are based on their self-centeredness. If we can get our adolescents to get their minds *off* of themselves and their worries, most of their problems are solved. If we can get them to get their minds *on* to the needs of others, they cease to be part of the problem and become part of the solution. Perhaps the best name for this ability to think about others rather than self is *charity.*

This is not a psychological or analytical book on teenage behavior, nor is it a book of generalizations about what happens or should happen at each age or phase of adolescent development. Rather, it is a method book, an exercise book aimed at the objective of learning and teaching charity. It is an organized, categorized list of techniques to help you increase the charity and extra-centeredness of your children . . . and of yourself. (Extra-centeredness is the ability to think of and feel for other people. The opposite of self-centeredness.)

Charity is made up of several elements: the ability to see and observe, the ability to feel and communicate, the ability to empathize and give service and encouragement to others. The goal is not necessarily to make children into "good Samaritans" or people who spend their full time doing good turns and serving others. Such a goal with busy, volatile, moody teenagers would be unrealistic. Most of their service to others will come after the teenage years as they become missionaries and parents. The attitudes and skills that go into service and charity, however, can best be developed in

children while they are in their adolescence. It is these charity-related attitudes and skills that this book is about.

We feel that charity must be learned, one element at a time. We also know that it is difficult for busy parents to concentrate on learning or teaching more than one concept at a time. Thus we have written about one element of charity in each of twelve chapters. We suggest that parents concentrate on one chapter each month, making the book a one-year program for developing charity in themselves and in their children.

Before we get to those one-a-month chapters, though, let's think together about ourselves and our children. The simple fact is that teenagers are tough—tough to raise and tough to live with. To say they are a challenge might win first prize in a contest of understatements! A friend of ours says that the only thing she can think of to compare her teenager with is a werewolf or a Mr. Hyde. The daylight of his sweet childhood was transformed by the full moon of adolescence. He grew fangs! He started to bite!

There aren't any perfect teenagers, but then again, there aren't any perfect parents. There aren't even any perfect solutions for teenage problems. But there are some things that help.

Whom the Book Is For

Though this is a book for all parents of teenagers, it is especially for parents of young teenagers and preteen adolescents. It is a simple fact of life that ten-year-olds are more teachable than sixteen-year-olds. Many parents will find that some of this book's methods work well with eight-year-olds and even younger children. We have called the book *Teaching Children Charity* rather than *Teaching Teenagers Charity* for two reasons. One is to emphasize that charity should be taught to eight-year-olds. The other is to remind us of the precious principle that our offspring continue to be our children—God's children—regardless of their age.

In the method section of each chapter, we have attempted to suggest a range of ideas, some particularly suited to preteens, some aimed at mid-teens, and some for older teens.

This book is *not* written for parents of children with severe problems such as drug addiction, serious criminal activity, or even total alienation from family. We leave such problems to experts who are far more qualified to deal with them than we are.

Rather, it is for parents who want a program to avoid those problems. It is for parents who want to act rather than react, who prefer the positive notion of "parenting by objective" over the negative approach of solving problems when they grow too big to ignore. Our belief is that the best defense is a good offense, that parents who seek to give their children greater capacity for charity will, in the process, give themselves freedom from many problems that would otherwise arise. We believe that service, empathy, and charity are preventive medicine.

But don't get the idea that you can come around to the Eyres' house looking for examples of perfect teenagers. What you would find instead are the normal hassles of a house full of children and a couple of amateur parents trying to keep their heads above water. We wrote the book for ourselves along with other struggling parents like ourselves. We wrote it because we want our children's teenage years to be the happiest time of their lives—and of ours.

Joy, Responsibility, Charity

Many years ago, when our older children were still small, we decided that we needed clear, specific objectives for our parenting. The problem-solving, defensive approach of many parenting books didn't appeal to us, and we began to ponder the question, "What do we want to *give* to our children?"

From the beauty of the Latter-day Saint perspective, our children really are God's children. We are stewards over

them, and they are, in fact, our brothers and sisters. Thus, we can go beyond the question, "What do we want to give them?" and ask, "What does God, their Father, want them to have?"

And he has told us the answer. In 2 Nephi he says that *joy* is mortality's purpose. Throughout scripture he tells us that this life, with its agony and its veil of forgetfulness, is designed to help us become fully *responsible* for ourselves and our actions. And he tells us directly through his apostles that no matter what other gifts we possess, we are nothing without *charity.*

These thoughts have been the basis for the teaching children series: *Teaching Children Joy,* for parents of preschoolers; *Teaching Children Responsibility,* geared to the capacities of elementary-school-age children; and now *Teaching Children Charity.* We feel that the three books are, to some extent, tied to each other. We believe that a small child who obtains the joy of self-esteem, confidence, and security can understand and accept responsibility as it comes to him. And we believe that a secure, responsible adolescent is well prepared to learn and develop characteristics of service and charity.

This book then, like its two predecessors, is an attempt to understand one of God's goals for his children, and to present methods and techniques for teaching those objectives to the children he has sent to us.

Why Charity Is So Important—and So Challenging

Scripture treats the word *charity* with singular importance. Peter, in one place, refers to it as the final great virtue to add, and in another place says it is important "above all things." (2 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 4:8.)

Moroni teaches that we cannot inherit God's kingdom without charity. (Ether 12:34.)

Paul, who calls charity the "bond of perfectness," says that it is greater than faith and hope, and that it is the "end

of the commandment." In his most awesome characterization of the word, Paul says that even if he speaks with the tongues of angels, has the gift of prophecy, understands all mysteries and all knowledge, and has the faith to move mountains, he is nothing without charity. (See Colossians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, 13; 1 Timothy 1:5.)

Why is charity so vital? Simply because it is the ultimate solution. There is no problem in the world or in any human heart that could not be directly or indirectly solved by the exercise of charity. Charity, as we will discuss in the next section, is the pure love of Christ. The power and magnitude of that love is a greater factor and force than anything else that exists.

But can it be learned by parents, let alone taught to children? Can it penetrate teenagers who sometimes seem unlovable as well as unteachable? Can such an ethereal concept as charity really solve the gritty, frightening problems of the real world?

Let's look at what parents are up against and at why the preteen and teen years are usually the biggest challenge a family faces. There are some very definite reasons.

1. Adolescence is a real change. There are physical changes of puberty and growth spurts. There are mental changes as adult brain-wave patterns take over, and there are untold emotional and social changes and traumas.

2. At about the same time in the life of a family, parents are undergoing the equally real changes of midlife crisis. The sparks of each change create added friction against the other.

3. We live in an era when child rearing is more difficult than ever before. Music and media surround our children with "other voices" from every persuasion and amorality is rampant.

4. An elementary school teacher recently said: "I've started substitute teaching after being away for eight years. Kids have changed—I can't believe how cruel they are to each other. If it's not physical, it's verbal. It's constant, and

it's intense." The Carnegie Commission report "When Dreams and Heros Died" says today older adolescents have a "titanic mentality"—they think the ship of state is headed for disaster, but they want to go first class. Their goal is not to better the world but to make a lot of money, have status, and live well. Television sitcoms teach children that put-downs are funny and cool. And a steady diet of TV commercials (the average child sees 20,000 per year) fosters a self-centered appetite for ever more things and makes it harder for parents to encourage children to think of the needs of others. The bottom line is that the society around us, perhaps more than ever before, teaches our children selfishness and cruelty.

When the changes of adolescence, the changes of midlife, and the changes in our world and our society come together and converge within our families, we feel the pressure. Sometimes it feels like an explosion!

Can charity neutralize the pressure? Can charity become a practical, day-to-day atmosphere and pattern of life that prevents some problems and solves others? We think it can—see if you do.

CHAPTER

2 The Problem (Mirrors)

"Except they should have charity they were nothing." (2 Nephi 26:30.)

The problems of adolescence have an infinite number of symptoms, but all have the same cause. The cause is a preoccupation with self.

Divine Models for Parenting and Growth (and for Charity)

The gospel teaches us that we exist in a two-way eternity. Not only will we live after death, but also we lived before birth. In the eternity preceding this life our role was that of children. Our parent was God.

In this flicker of time called mortality, we take upon ourselves, for the first time in eternity, the role of parent. We assume a role that previously belonged only to God. And we believe that if we perform the role well, we can retain it and the children that come with it for the eternity that follows.

What is it in mortality that makes us more like God? First, we obtain bodies. Second, we become parents.

Not long ago a religious newspaper reported: "Today, society is uncertain as to whether parenting is a prestigious activity." (*New Catholic World*, November 1979.) *We* are not uncertain. In fact, we are certain that no activity or role in life is as prestigious as parenting. Parenting is God's role, given to us.

Because we know God is our Father, and because we know something of him, we have the opportunity to pattern our parenting after his. The scriptures and the restored gospel tell us much of how Heavenly Father loves his children.

And as we can strive to follow his model of parenting, we can also look to his only begotten Son as the model for the process of adolescence. The scriptures give one verse: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2:52.)

What do we know of God's parenting and of Christ's growth through adolescence? We know that God loved his children with wise, unconditional love—with pure love. And we know that Christ, as he developed in body and mind, also grew in favor with God and with others, probably because he looked outside himself and saw the needs of others.

"Loving with pure love" and "looking outside oneself" are both definitions of charity. Charity is the ultimate solution.

But before we talk more of the solution, let's look more closely at the problem.

Some Stories about Ordinary Adolescents

Kelly, Peer Pressure, and Morality

Kelly is as aware of peer approval as any normal sixteen-year-old boy. He's put on some inches and pounds lately and improved as a ball player, which has allowed him to crack the "in crowd." His new friends brag about their exploits with girls and Kelly is never sure how much of it is just talk and how much they have really done.

He wants to have something to talk about too, and while he certainly doesn't want to get in trouble, he *is* influenced by his peers who tell him that "there's no problem as long as you don't quite go all the way. Even if you do, you can repent on your mission."

Allison, Shyness, and Sociability

Allison, thirteen, is usually talkative, even boisterous around home. She is a bright girl, and attractive, and she has never been without opinions or hesitant to express them. So her parents have always been a little miffed when teachers told them that Allison was painfully shy at school.

Occasionally, in moments of frustration, Allison would express the pain. "No one likes me." "Everyone ignores me." "I'm so sick of sitting all by myself in the lunchroom." "When I don't eat, I'm just sitting alone in the hall trying to look busy and hoping people don't notice that I'm always by myself." "Why doesn't somebody pay attention to me?"

Larry, Drugs, and Independence

Larry, fifteen, has a drug problem. It's not an addiction problem so much as an experimentation problem. It's hard for him to resist trying things, particularly when his friends push him. His parents don't know much about it. They suspect that he's "on" something or other but there's not much communication between them and Larry. The only adult Larry talks to is his uncle Bill, who takes Larry hunting and fishing and who respects his confidence. In their last discussion, Larry said, "Life is boring. The only thing that makes it interesting is trying new things. The guys I hang around with are a lot more exciting than the other kids. We're finding out things for ourselves rather than just doing the old routine things that parents want their kids to do."

Patsy, Respect, and Authority

Patsy, fourteen, has recently become a know-it-all. Suddenly no one, particularly not her parents, can tell her anything. In fact, simultaneously with her becoming a know-it-all, her parents have become know-nothings. She questions everything, including their authority to tell her to do anything. She is critical of her family, of her friends, of how people dress, of how hypocritical everyone is, and of everything but herself. She is so obnoxiously outspoken about everything that she is extremely hard to be around.

Bill, Service, and Selfishness

Elder Bill Gustavson has been on his mission for nearly five months. Everyone had told him that by the time he had

been out for a few weeks he would feel adjusted and wouldn't want to be anywhere in the world but on his mission.

It hasn't happened. Bill is still preoccupied with what he is missing, what he is sacrificing. He wonders if his car is all right. He wonders if his girl is all right (and faithful). He wonders what every missionary wonders; the difference is that Bill spends nearly full time at it. He's sorry for himself when his companion gets him out to tract. It seems unfair to him that he has to go through the uncomfortable process of getting up so early every morning. It also seems unfair to him that he's had such little success in finding people to teach and baptize.

Becky, Dating, and Old-Fashioned Parents

Becky, who just turned sixteen, has been dating only for the last couple of months. The trouble is that she is dating the wrong kind of boys, or at least her parents think so. "What do you do that attracts that kind of boy?" her mother has said. "Can't you try to go out with someone a little more clean-cut?" Becky, predictably, argues that there is nothing wrong with the boys she dates. Some of them just have a little different world view than her parents and certain other nineteenth-century beings she knows.

Jeremy, Motivation, and the Question of "Why?"

Jeremy, fifteen, is lazy. He's a bright enough boy; his IQ tests have always confirmed that. But he is also, according to the school counselor, a "severe underachiever." His best grades are mediocre. His favorite activity is sitting in front of the TV. He has some friends, but unfortunately most of them are of his same ilk.

His folks have tried everything, from bribery to punishment and penalties of all kinds. Jeremy's favorite response, to everything from "Get your room straightened up" to "You can't succeed without good grades," is *"Why?"*

Diedra, Sensitivity, and the Cruelty of Children

Diedra, eleven, seems to be a model child in many ways. She is intelligent, friendly, well liked, a leader in almost everything. She is the apple of everyone's eye, particularly her parents' and teachers'.

But Diedra isn't very sensitive to other people's needs. She assumes that everyone else is as happy as she. It hasn't occurred to her that her own security and self-esteem could be shared or given as a gift to other children who need it.

She is like so many children her age, openly critical and sometimes abusive of children who are a little different, a little shy, a little out of place. This criticism sometimes takes the form of ridicule and outright cruelty.

Laura, Self-Esteem, and the Right Friends

Laura, thirteen, has started to talk a lot lately about being depressed. In fact, she does more than talk about it! She is negative about everything. She expects the worst and she gets it.

She peps up a little when she is with her friends. But they are, in her parents' eyes, mostly the wrong type. Her mother has urged her to make friends with more of the kids in her ward, to which Laura makes a horrible face and replies, "Mom, that *depresses* me."

Conrad, Maturity, and Moodiness

Conrad, even though he is nearly sixteen, is very immature. He relies on his parents as much or more than his eleven-year-old brother. He gets sick quite often and seems to enjoy staying home in bed where his mother can wait on him hand and foot. He cries often and tends to sulk when he doesn't get his way. And he must sulk at other times, too, because he sulks often and it's not very often that he doesn't get his way.

He likes books and lately he has been spending most of his time in his bedroom alone reading. He has been caught twice trying to sneak adult magazines into his room.

Norman, Hyperactivity, and Attention Span

Norman's mom describes him as "a twelve-year-old, hyperactive, social butterfly who never lights." From the time he was a small boy, Norm has loved people. He would bring a different friend home from school every afternoon if he was allowed to.

But he can't stay with anything. His attention span is about five seconds long. He's been taking piano lessons for nearly three years and has made very little progress because he can't discipline himself to practice. Grades, sports, and other interests suffer for the same lack of discipline.

Lisa, Honesty, and Rationalization

When Lisa was smaller, her parents were sometimes amused with the imaginative excuses she came up with. Her untruths were so creative. It was hard to get mad at her for them.

But she is twelve now, and her little lies have ceased to be amusing. Her account of things is always whatever is most convenient or advantageous for her, whether it is true or not. With this dishonesty has come a remarkable ability to rationalize.

Both abilities combined recently in a case or two of shoplifting. She hasn't told her parents, of course, and will deny it if she is ever asked. And if she is ever caught she will explain that the store deserves it because their prices are too high.

Glen, Tidiness, and Responsibility

Glen, who is fourteen, has never been very tidy. His messy room and general untidiness have been a problem of long duration, but one his parents have tolerated in the hope

that he would grow out of it. Instead, it has become worse. He can never find anything. His own room is literally hard to get into or out of. And he leaves what his mother calls a "trail of disaster" in every room he passes through.

Tim, Time Wasting, and Testimony

Sixteen-year-old Tim is a highly intellectual boy who had asked his parents about one million questions by the time he was five. Lately, his questions have turned slightly cynical and have focused on the Church. He's aware of the hypocrisy in some members, and extremely critical of it. He's not sure that he or anyone else knows exactly what a testimony is, but he's pretty sure that he doesn't have one.

Church, he says, is not nearly as stimulating as computers or video games, which are his two passions. His mother is constantly telling him to quit wasting his time in front of the TV and the computer terminal and to either study the scriptures or at least get out and accomplish something.

Jill, Fad Consciousness, and Nonconsideration of Family

The absolute highlight of Jill's week is her shopping trip to the mall on Saturdays. She's always simply dying to get one of those new sweaters with the "right label" to go with her already "right label" faded jeans so that she can blend well with her friends.

She screams hopelessly when she finds her sister wearing the only shoes that go with the outfit she spent hours last night picking out, and stubbornly refuses to go to school until she gets them back. And she simply cannot understand why her mother cannot seem to remember to wash her gym clothes on Friday, yet still complains when Jill washes them herself (separately) on Sunday night.

Symptoms vs. Causes

In the case of most diseases the symptoms are the manifestations of the cause, and the cause is the presence of something—namely, a virus or germs. In the case of teenagers, the symptoms are the kinds of behavior illustrated in the preceding short stories and the cause is the *absence* of something.

What is it the absence of? What quality, what property, what element could be added that would eliminate or reduce such varied symptoms as shyness, rebellion, obnoxiousness, laziness, dishonesty, and insensitivity?

Could the answer be something as basic as charity? Could the far-reaching effects of charity be the reason that the Apostle Peter put it above all things and the Apostle Paul said he was nothing without it?

And if so—if charity has the most magical properties of ultimate solution—can it be taught to adolescents? to early teens and preteens?

At this point, we would like to suggest three principles that may allow us to answer "yes" to all of the above questions:

1. Charity is a new way of thinking: an observing, feeling, communicating way of thinking.
2. When we change the way in which someone thinks, we change the way he acts.
3. When approached in the right way, no age group is more capable of changing how they think than preteens and early teens.

Mirrors

Most of the problems teenagers face, and most of the unhappiness they experience, result from their natural tendency to "look into mirrors." Teenagers tend to see all situations, all people, and all circumstances in terms of how those things will affect *them.* It is these "mirrors" that cause

rebellion, depression, selfishness, insensitivity, self-consciousness, and a host of other symptoms.

Adolescents look at another person, but what they see is the mirror of how that person will affect them. "What can he do for me?" "How will my reputation be affected by associating with him?" "Will it cost me anything to be nice to him?"

They look at a situation or an event, but what they see is the mirror of what they can gain or lose by it. "What can I get out of this?" "How will this make me look?"

They prove the cliché, "Someone who is all wrapped up in himself makes a very small package." And perhaps a rather erratic and unhappy package at that!

There is no depth in mirrors. We see only the surface of ourselves when we look into them. One who stares into them continually is happy only fleetingly and is never stable or predictable because every change of light or circumstance threatens the image and changes the feeling.

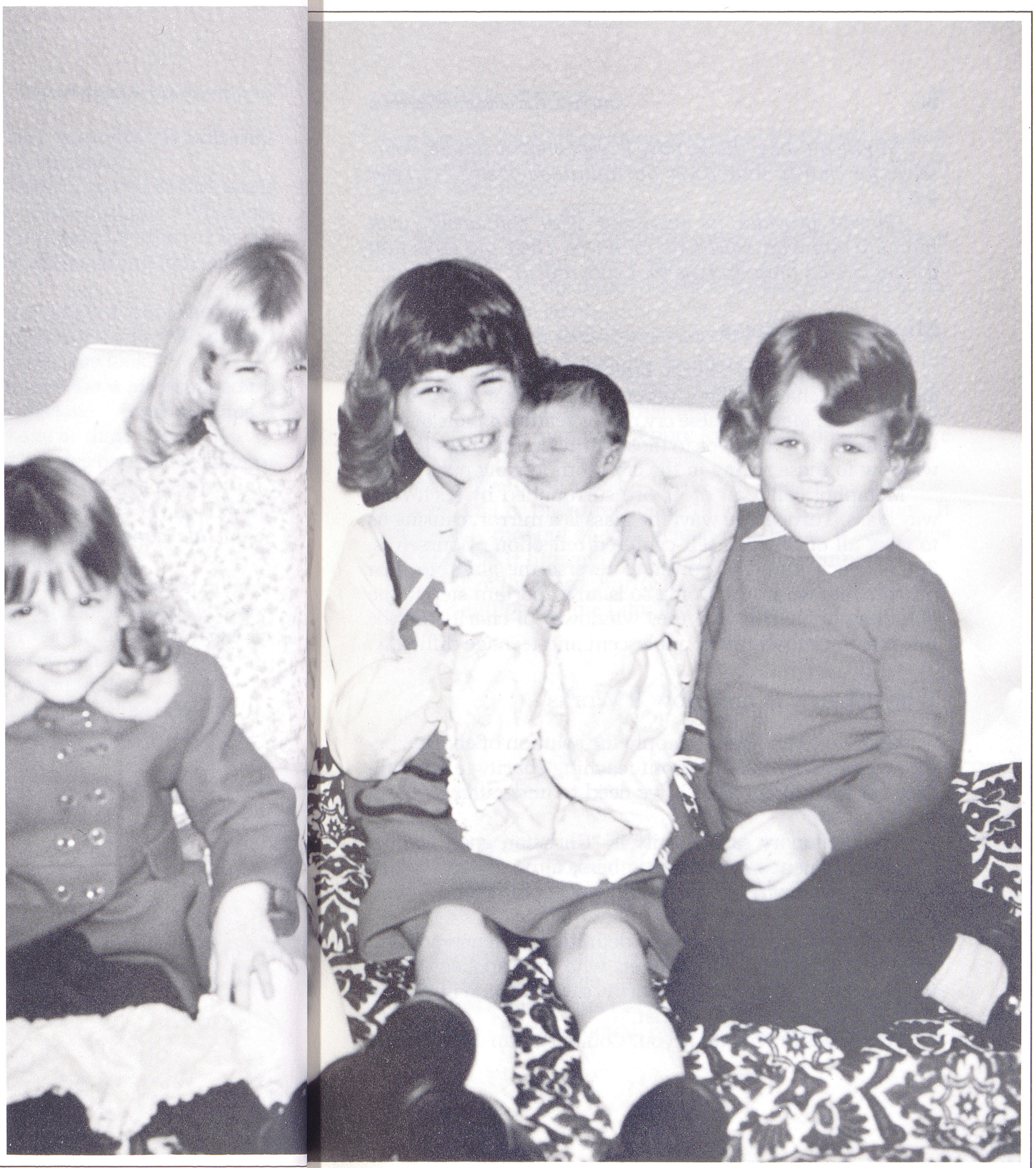
Of course, if we are going to accuse our children of looking in mirrors, we had better examine ourselves first. Everyone thinks of himself more than he should, and if we are going to teach our children to be less self-centered, we had better teach ourselves the same lesson first.

As you read on you will see that that is the order of this book: First teach a particular aspect of charity to yourself; then teach it to your children.

Let's look next at the solution of "windows." With it, we can revisit some of the "ordinary adolescents" from our stories.

CHAPTER

3 The Prescription (Windows)



"Above all these things have fervent charity among yourselves for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8.)

Charity provides its possessor with confidence, with humility and with sensitivity to others. These are tools that fix any break, prescriptions that cure any ill.

Mirrors—Windows

Some of our older church buildings still have cry rooms just off the chapel where parents can retreat with extra-noisy babies. Many of these cry rooms feature a pane of one-way glass that is a mirror to those sitting in the chapel and a window to those sitting in the cry room looking out.

Metaphorically, all of us are surrounded by such one-way glass. Turned one way, the glass is a mirror, causing us to view all of life as a self-centered reflection of ourselves. But we each have the power to reverse the glass, to turn mirrors into windows. Doing so is an important step in the obtaining of charity, and the "windows" of charity are the solution to virtually every adolescent and teenage difficulty.

What Charity Is and How It Works

Before we can begin to apply the solution of charity, before we can start talking about teaching charity to our children (or even to ourselves), we need to understand what it is.

The dictionary says charity is "Christian good feeling, kindness, lenience in judging others, alms giving." When asked for synonyms, some would say "compassion," "empathy," "welfare," or "relief."

Restored scripture gives us a definition of charity so complete that it justifies the prophets who have spoken of it as the greatest of all qualities. Charity, says Mormon in Moroni 7:47, is "the pure love of Christ."

What does that mean to you? Could it mean Christ's pure

love for us? Could it mean our pure love for Christ? Could it mean loving others with the same pure love with which Christ loves them?

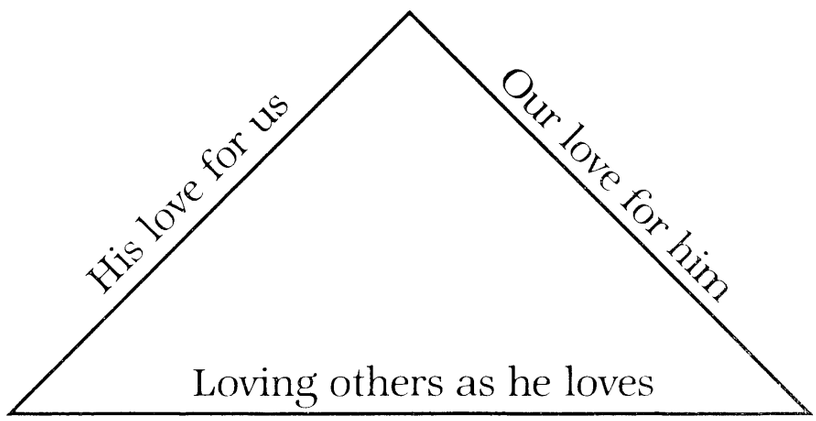
Could it mean all three?

Perhaps these are not three separate interpretations of the definition, but three aspects of one interpretation. Perhaps they are the three corners of the same triangle or the three legs of one stool.

One who truly feels Christ's love for him cannot help but love Him back and love his brothers and sisters with the same pure love. One who loves Christ cannot help feeling his love in return and giving that love to others. And one who loves his fellow man with a pure love comes directly to love Christ and to feel Christ's love for him.

Thus the pure love of Christ (or charity) is not one-dimensional or one-directional. It flows in all directions. It goes and comes out of each person who has it. It surrounds and engulfs. It lifts and refines. It heals and humbles.

Think of the word *charity* for a moment and of the triangular definition of "the pure love of Christ."



Now think for another moment of the natural consequences of the triangle.

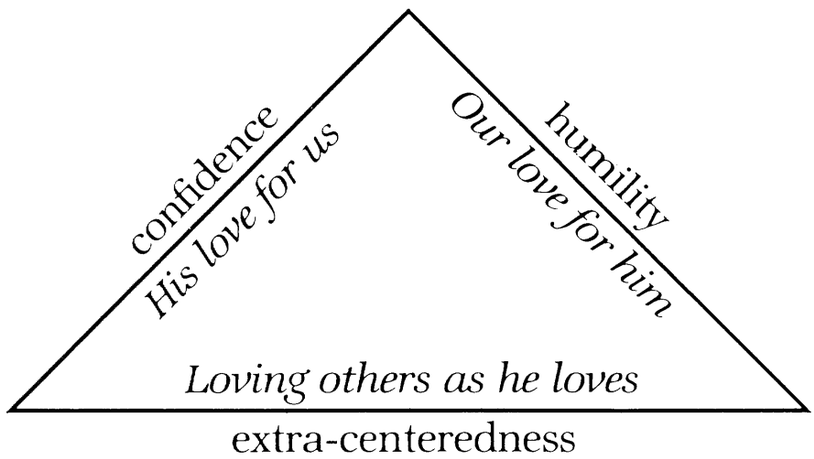
1. God's love for us leads us to personal confidence and self-esteem. Unconditional, parental love always gives secu-

rity and a sense of well-being. When the love is pure love from our heavenly Parent and from Christ, and when we truly feel it, it can lead to the deepest kind of faith-centered confidence.

2. Our love for Christ leads us to the humble realization of how dependent we are on his light and on his atonement. Our love for him becomes ever more pure and ever more humble as we realize that he has done everything for us, that we would be nothing and have no future without him.

3. Our attempts to love others with the sensitive, empathetic love that he exemplified make us progressively less self-centered and more extra-centered.

With these results in mind—the results of these three aspects of pure love—we can relabel our triangle.



What we are saying is that the pure love of Christ produces within people certain qualities of character, qualities of *soul* that are the ultimate solutions to problems on all levels.

Christ himself was the epitome and example of all good qualities, even those that we often think of as opposites or mutually exclusive. For example, Christ had broad vision and lofty goals and yet was completely interested in "insignificant persons." He had in abundance the "masculine" qualities of strength, resolve, and purpose, and yet epito-

mized the "feminine" virtues of sensitivity and gentleness. Lao Tsu, a Chinese philosopher who lived six centuries before Christ, taught that the whole universe was held in balance by the yin and yang—the two great opposites—the light and dark, the hot and cold, the masculine and feminine. He also said that if a being ever came to the earth who was both the yin and the yang, that being would not be man, he would be God.

Such a being did come to earth six centuries later.

If Christ himself was the perfect incarnation of all good qualities, even those that seem opposite, then likewise the pure love of Christ builds within us qualities of good that might otherwise be mutually exclusive. This can easily be illustrated by running the sides of our triangle model together. We create a person with "extra-centered, confident humility" even though we have often thought of confidence and humility somewhat as opposites. We can see how, in the pure love of Christ, they are complements to each other, both stemming from our relationship with Him. (Who would not be confident, knowing he has the love and assistance of such a brother. And who would not feel humble in relation to such a brother?)

The words can be combined in any order. Think of a person who has humble, extra-centered confidence, or confident, extra-centered humility, or humble, confident, extra-centeredness.

Any way the words are arranged, they create a balanced, model human being, the kind each of us wants for a friend, the kind each of us wants for a son or daughter, the kind each of us wants to be!

Some Stories Revisited

Think of the fruits of charity according to our triangle model: one part confidence, one part humility, one part extra-centeredness. Then let's take a quick look back at some of the children mentioned earlier.

Remember thirteen-year-old Allison, painfully shy; sixteen-year-olds Becky and Kelly, and fifteen-year-old Larry, trying to "find themselves" through rebellious friends or immorality or drugs; and Jeremy, the lazy fifteen-year-old. The confidence aspect of charity would do a great deal for each of them. You may want to reread their stories and realize that their solution is confidence. A teenager who learns the true principles of charity will have the confidence that is the root solution to these problems.

Remember critical, know-it-all Patsy; talented, unfocused Norm; intellectual Tim; and confident but insensitive Diedra? Each needs the humility effect of charity.

All of the children mentioned, particularly missionary Bill, immature Conrad, sloppy Glen, dishonest Lisa, and inconsiderate Jill would be happier if some of their self-centered thought patterns were replaced with the extra-centeredness of charity.

The solution to the problem of each of these teenagers in each of these stories lies in the principle of charity. Charity would turn their mirrors to windows, removing the self-centeredness that produces shyness in some, laziness and immaturity in some, and rudeness and rebellion in others.

The children are not the only ones who need to turn mirrors into windows. Some of the problems discussed in the stories resulted from a lack of charity not in the children but in their parents.

Self-oriented, mirror-gazing parents may become aggravated by minor amounts of normal teenage nonconformity because of its impact on their own image or reputation. Or they may become personally hurt or offended by the new independence and strong opinions of an adolescent rather than understanding that such breaking away is a normal and healthy part of growing up.

Parents who had acquired the qualities of charity would be able to understand the need for independence being expressed in various ways by the teenagers in the stories. They would think more of the evolving needs of their children and

less of their own inconvenience or embarrassment. And as they tried to teach their children the principles of charity, their own charity would allow them to look for the unique and real character of their own children rather than to try to make them over into their own preconception of what their children should be.

Charity, then, as it is developed by parents and taught to children, becomes something of a panacea. It becomes a solution for some problems, an elimination of others, and a preventer of still others.

But charity is not easy to learn or to teach. Some would argue that it can never be learned or earned, only received as a gift from God.

Whether it is earned or given, charity does involve certain capacities of understanding, seeing, feeling, communicating, and doing. It is these capacities at which this book takes aim, suggesting methods, techniques, and ideas through which they can be given and gained.

How to Read (and Do) the Rest of This Book

The capacities or abilities or skills that go into charity are like the facets of a well-cut stone. Each supports and enhances the others and contributes to the beauty of the whole.

As in an equation, five elements must be added together to equal charity. They are best learned (and taught) in sequence. First, we must *understand* the pure love of Christ and how it can work within us. Second, we must learn to *observe* with equal depth, to perceive what is going on around us, and inside us, and inside others. Third, we must school our *feelings*, tuning them and learning to apply them to the needs and circumstances of others. Fourth, we must learn to lovingly *communicate* both what we see and what we feel. Finally, we can form habits of *doing* something about what we feel, of giving and serving, and of doing it anonymously.

This charity equation becomes the outline and the sequence for the twelve "months" of this book. The equation is:

CHARITY = Understanding + Observing + Feeling + Communicating + Doing

Month 1: His love for us	Month 4: Seeing	Month 6: How do I feel?	Month 9: Expressing what we see	Month 11: Service
Month 2: Our love for Him	Month 5: Listening	Month 7: How do you feel?	Month 10: Transmitting what we feel	Month 12: Anonymous service
Month 3: Loving others with his love		Month 8: How does he feel?		

The remainder of this book is composed of twelve "months" because, like its predecessors, *Teaching Children Joy* and *Teaching Children Responsibility*, it is designed to be absorbed and implemented one facet per month over the course of a year.

You may (and we hope you will) read entirely through the book first, but then we hope you will return to Month One and spend a full thirty days on it with your family, then a second month on Month Two, and so on. We believe that a key to effective parenting (and to effective living, for that matter) is to concentrate on one thing at a time. In a month, behavior patterns can be established as good habits that will continue after the teaching emphasis has shifted to the next facet.

Most of what follows in each "month" is methods, ideas, and techniques on how to gain certain elements of charity and how to teach them to your children. Some of the methods will appeal to you and work with your teenager. Others will not. Pick out the ones that ring true for you and read right on past the ones that don't. Use the shoe store approach: Look at all the ideas, try on those that you like, and keep the ones that fit and feel the best.

You will notice that some methods are used in more than

one month. For example, certain writing techniques, perception games, and even the use of "ancestor experiences" are introduced in one chapter and then reused (but with a different emphasis) in another chapter. Certain concepts and words such as "mental effort" and "serendipity" are also repeated.

This repetition is intentional, because the methods work in more than one way and the concepts apply to more than one skill. Most importantly, they are repeated because they are so relevant to true charity that they benefit us more each time we use them.

Each of the twelve "months," while dealing with a different aspect of charity, has the same format and the same five subheadings:

1. *Illustrations and stories* (to define what you are dealing with).

2. *Approaches for parents* (to improve your grasp of the trait or aspect of charity being discussed).

3. *Exercises to teach children* (to help them do the same). This section will always begin with a family discussion and a pretest to measure how much children know about the month's subject. It will always end with a posttest to measure what they (and you) have learned during the month. These discussions and tests are suggested for fast Sundays. In them, you will finish your concentration on the aspect of charity you will be dealing with in the month ahead.

4. *Family focal point* (a suggestion for one permanent family practice or procedure to retain the quality in your family even as your focus shifts to another chapter and another facet of charity).

5. *Summary.*

Getting Started

Before beginning with Month One, call a family meeting with all children eight and older. The ideal time to do this is

at the beginning of a month, on a fast Sunday. Drawing on your own understanding of charity and on what you have read in the first three chapters of this book, discuss the following points:

1. *What is charity?* (Helping others, doing what Jesus would do, "the pure love of Christ.")

2. *What are the connections between charity and happiness?* (Practicing charity makes others happy as well as ourselves. It takes our minds off of ourselves. It gives us warm feelings. It makes the world a better place!)

3. *What are the differences between a person who looks "into mirrors" and one that looks "through windows?"* (The first is more selfish, more worried about clothes, looks, popularity, and so on, and usually more stressed and unhappy; the second is kinder, notices more, is nicer to be around.)

4. *What are the abilities or skills that would help someone exercise more charity and look through more "windows"?* (Abilities to see and observe, to listen, to feel, to communicate, and to think of ways to help others, along with an understanding of what charity is.) On a blackboard or chart, write the equation: Understanding + Observing + Feeling + Communicating + Doing = Charity.

5 *We (your parents) have decided to spend one year working on our own charity.* We want to work on one part of this equation each month. We'd like to invite you to do this with us. Each fast Sunday, we'll have a discussion like this about the part of charity that we'll be working on during the coming month.

6. *Response and further discussion.* If you hold this discussion on a fast Sunday, suggest that one of the things everyone prays about in connection with his fast is for help from the Lord in better understanding what charity is and how to gain it.

7. *Go on to discuss Month One on understanding the Lord's love for us.*

Our challenge to you is to read this book and implement it a month at a time, to use the methods and suggestions that you like and add your own ideas to them, to invest a year in the pursuit and discovery of charity and in the teaching of it to your adolescent children.

SECTION II

UNDERSTANDING

The Book of Mormon defines charity as "the pure love of Christ." It is a beautiful definition and a most interesting one, because it lends itself to three separate and compelling interpretations. It could mean his pure love of us. It could mean our pure love of him. It could mean to love others with his pure love.

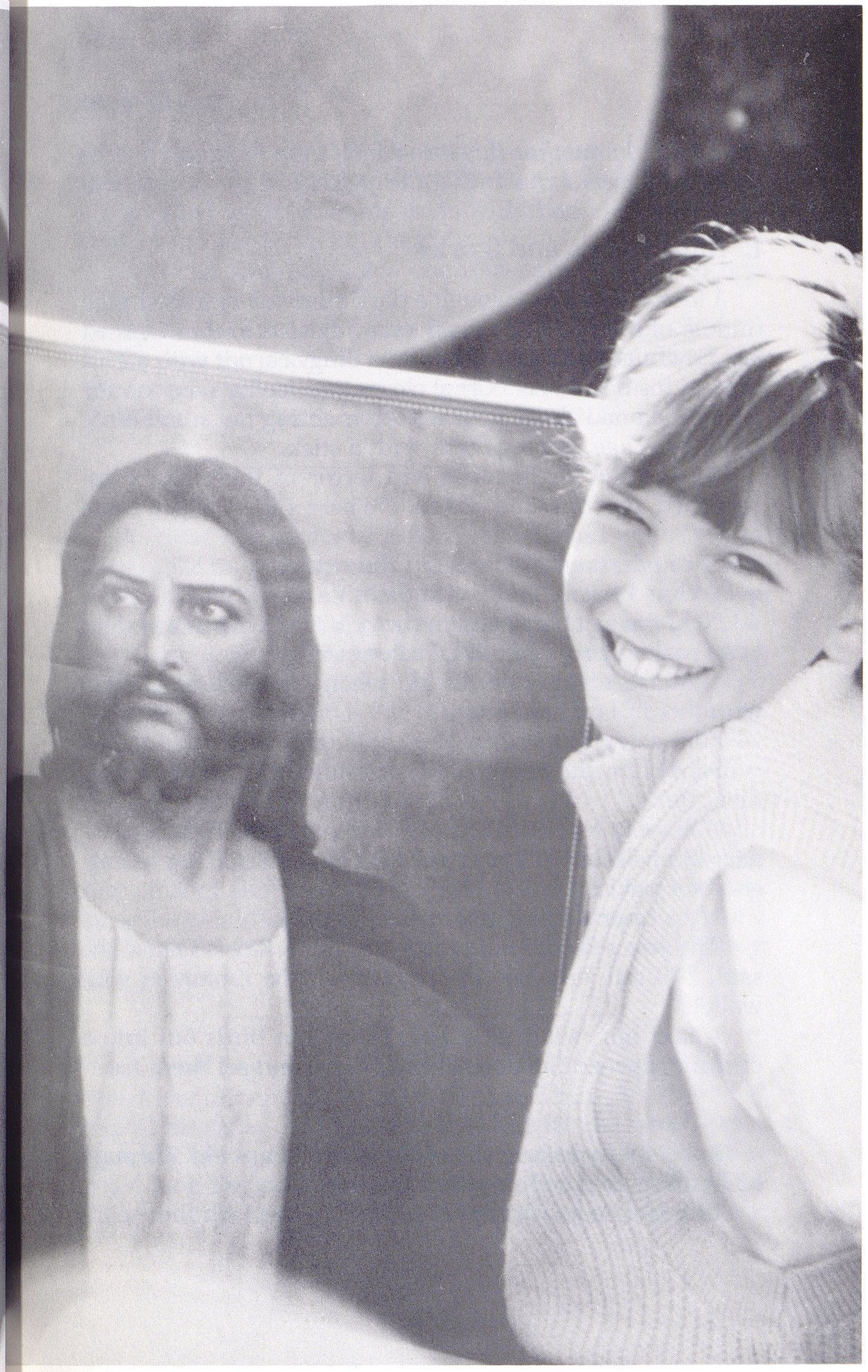
The first step in the cultivation of charity is to understand that it means all three; to understand that any one of the three leads inescapably to the other two; to understand that each of the three can be taught to our children.

MONTH

1

His Pure Love for Us

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity



"Now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity." (Ether 12:34.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

I took a shortcut through a dark alleyway one day in the middle of a large city. As my eyes adjusted to the dimmed light, I noticed a boy hunched in a dingy corner with a bird cage in his hands. As I drew closer I noticed a sneer on the boy's face and saw that he was tormenting the small birds inside the cage, poking them with a stick.

Feeling the helplessness and terror of the birds, I approached the boy and asked, "Where did you get those birds?"

"I caught them in the field," he replied.

"What are you doing with them?"

"Oh, I'm just playing with them. If I poke them just right I can make them fight with each other."

"What are you going to do when you're done playing with them?"

"I'm going to kill them!"

Startled by the boy's cruelty, I responded, "I'd like to buy those birds."

"Oh, you don't want these birds, mister. They're ordinary old field birds. They can't sing or nothin'. They're only good for pokin'."

"How much will you take for the birds?"

The sneer deepened across the boy's face. "Okay," he said, "I'll sell 'em, but the price is all the money in your wallet."

I paid him what he asked. I took the birds out into a clearing, opened the door of their cage, and set them free.

Long ago, a dark spirit set out to trap mankind. Through his intellect and cunning, he succeeds often.

If one were to ask him what he is doing with these chil-

dren, he might say, "I'm poking them, trying to wound them, trying to make them turn and hurt each other." And when asked what he wants to do with them ultimately, his chilling answer is "to kill them."

Into this situation steps one who says, "I want to buy them; what is the price?"

The answer: "All of your blood, all of your tears."

He pays the price. He buys us. We owe him our lives, our freedom, our chance to return to God. (Note: This is a paraphrase of a story told on the radio by Paul Harvey.)

A friend of ours had a dream that she has never forgotten. Unlike most dreams that fade, this one somehow grows stronger. In it she was sitting on a mountainside overlooking a blue lake and listening to one who stood, speaking, holding his audience spellbound. She became aware that it was Christ, that he was giving the Sermon on the Mount. The feeling she remembers is one of awe and of fear: fear that he would look at her, that his eyes would meet hers, and that he would see into her, through her, discovering all her faults. She prayed that he would not look.

And then he did look at her, directly into her eyes. In an instant her fear was transformed into love. She knew that he saw all that she was, all that was inside her. But she also knew he would always love her. She was warmed and softened and lifted by his gaze. She prayed that he would never look away.

A small boy was walking home with his younger sister. The driver of a speeding car failed to see them. The boy tried to pull his sister out of harm's way but the car struck her a glancing blow and spun her to the pavement. The ambulance took them both to the hospital. Doctors operated on the girl while her brother waited. A doctor emerged to ask

the boy a question: "She lost a lot of blood, son. Since you're her brother, your blood will probably match and might save her life. Would you give some of your blood to your sister?"

The boy swallowed hard, then looked directly into the doctor's eyes and said, "Yes."

Much later, when the operation was successfully over, the doctor went into the room where the boy was lying on a cot. When he heard that his sister was fine the boy smiled warmly. He was still very pale, though, and when he looked up again he asked, "Doctor, when do I die?"

A popular short film produced by the Church attempts to graphically portray the overpowering love that our Heavenly Father has for us. It is the story of a man who operates the switching mechanism of a railroad track. Just before the train arrives, he spots his only son out on the bridge, standing on the tracks. He must choose between the life of his son and the lives of those on the train. He throws the switch and sacrifices his son.

Feeling Heavenly Father's and Christ's love, and trying to understand it, is the first step in gaining charity. It is the first step because as we feel this love, we can return it and extend it to others. It is always easier to reciprocate love than to initiate it. Therefore, as we learn to be more conscious of Christ's pure love for us, we will better understand what it is and how it can be returned to him as it is extended to others.

II. Approaches for Parents

We suppose that anyone who believes in Christ believes in his love—knows of that love, at least academically. But do we feel his love for us, and does that feeling transform us, warm us, lift us? The answer to this question, of course, lies in the extent and depth of our relationship with God. And

the pursuit of that relationship is a personal and individual matter. Nevertheless, there are some approaches that can make us more aware of his love.

A. *Count your blessings.* It's an old phrase; we hear it often, we even sing it. But it works. We have a friend who occasionally has trouble sleeping and yet looks forward to his insomnia because he has learned to count blessings instead of sheep. He relaxes his body, closes his eyes, and literally counts his blessings, picturing each one in his mind. He claims that he enjoys it so much that he is always a little bit disappointed when he falls asleep.

Try this when you're wide awake, too. Try it anytime you want to replenish your appreciation and awareness of God and of Christ. Be specific and particular about your blessings. Your awareness will grow, and you will never run out of things to count.

B. *Offer a "gratitude only" prayer.* An extension of the first approach is to thank the Lord for your blessings as you count them. Whenever we had a depressed missionary in London, we challenged him to kneel down for a full fifteen minutes and do nothing but thank the Lord for every blessing he could think of. The method never failed, and no missionary ever ran out of blessings to count (or at least none dared tell their mission president that they had).

C. *Ask for the Holy Ghost.* One of the most frequent admonitions in scripture is to ask. It is interesting to ponder why this is so. As a loving Father, there is so much that God wants to give us. But his commitment to our agency prevents him from automatically giving us the things we need without any thought or request on our part. Therefore, he asks us to ask.

In 3 Nephi, chapter 19, we are told that Christ's apostles, as they prayed, desired one thing more than any other: the gift of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost, according to Parley P. Pratt, "quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections . . . inspires, develops, cultivates, and

matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. . . . It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man." (*Key to the Science of Theology* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], p. 61.)

The Holy Ghost also conveys the love of God and of Christ to our hearts. In the presence of the Spirit, we feel that love and begin to be able to return it and to pass it on to others.

It is a mistake to think that we can earn the Holy Ghost. We must strive to be worthy of his presence, of course. But it is well to remember that the Holy Ghost is a gift. We need to ask for that gift sincerely and often. Then, as we feel the Spirit's enlightening, calming, love-conveying presence, we must act in accordance with its peace in order to retain it.

We must learn to practice those two three-letter words that begin with "a." We must *ask* and *act.*

D. Implement the next two chapters of the book. We must remember that the best approach in seeking to understand the Lord's love for us is to show love for him and to try to emulate the kind of love he had for others.

E. *Stewardship.* Reminding ourselves that God owns all and has given us stewardship over so much is another way of trying to grasp his love for us. He has put this wondrous earth in our care, given us incredible physical bodies, even allowed us the Godlike privilege of procreation through which we become stewards over others of his children. In simple terms, God loves us enough to give us all that he has.

F. *Use the priesthood.* One of God's greatest gifts to us is his priesthood. In addition to being his power, the priesthood is a thrilling manifestation of his love. The more we use it, the more we feel that love. Fathers who hold the priesthood should bless their wives and children not only in times of crisis, but in times of need. Children should be encouraged to ask for blessings when they feel deeply troubled or worried or when they face a problem or opportunity where they need strength beyond their own.

G. *The sacrament.* The sacrament time, as we renew our

covenants, can also be a regular time for reflection on Christ's love for us. As we quietly consider his atonement and try to ponder what he suffered, the extent of his love becomes clearer in our minds.

H. *"Sweet prayer."* Sometimes our personal prayers can tend to become somewhat routine and superficial. Other times, usually not as often as we wish, our prayers take on a certain sweetness as we feel the Lord's love for us. In routine prayers we are often anxious to finish, to climb into bed at the end of the day, or to be on our way in the mornings. In sweet prayer we have the opposite feeling. We do not want the prayer to end; we want to prolong it, to keep the warmth and spirit as long as possible.

Sweet prayer happens when we want it to happen badly enough, when we stay on our knees a little longer, thank the Lord a little harder, ask him a little more deeply for his forgiveness.

It might be unrealistic to expect every prayer to be deep and "sweet." But it is the most direct way of all to feel God's pure love, and it is a way that is always open and available to us.

I. *Reflect.* Think about the love you feel for your children, what you would do for them, the sacrifices you make and are willing to make for them. Use the emotion you feel as a small indication of God's love for each of his children and Christ's for each of his younger brothers and sisters.

J. *Your own methods.* Take a moment, before going on, and list other ways that lead you to feel the Lord's love more directly and personally. Think back to some specific times when you have been particularly aware of his love, perhaps in the temple, or in filling Church assignments, or in quiet reflection or meditation. Take the time to make a short list.

_____

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III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to establish the goal of better understanding Christ's love for us during the month ahead).

Note: in all twelve "months" or chapters, the first method is a fast Sunday discussion. In this way, fast Sundays become the transition time when you shift your focus from one aspect of charity to another. The aspect for the coming month can also become the subject of the day's fasting and prayer.

Carry on with the introductory discussion outlined in chapter 3. Refer to the "equation" you have written on a blackboard or chart and point out that the first thing we must do in developing charity is to understand as much as we can about Christ's love for us.

Then build a brief concluding discussion around the following points:

1. *What does the pure love of Christ mean? Whose love for whom?* (Draw on blackboard or chart the triangle diagram from chapter 3 and discuss the three meanings.)

2. *How much does Jesus love us?* (Enough to die for us, enough to listen to every prayer, enough to give us what we need to become like him.) Read or paraphrase the four stories from the opening of this chapter.

3. *What are some things we can do to become more aware of Christ's love for us?* (Mention the exercises you like from this chapter along with others that family members may come up with.)

Then say, "To help us measure how much we learn this month, we're going to take a short test today on how much we understand and how much we think about Jesus' love for us. At the end of the month (next fast Sunday) we'll take the same test again to see how much we've improved."

Have each family member (include yourself) write his name on a blank piece of paper and draw a line down the center. Tell them that they will only be using the left column

today. Have each person write the numbers 1, 2, and 3, evenly spaced, down the left margin and attempt to answer the three following questions:

1. About how many times during the past month have you thought specifically about how much Jesus loves you?

2. In exactly one minute, list as many things as you can that Christ has done for us or given to us. (Stop their writing at the end of sixty seconds.)

3. Explain the atonement.

After everyone (including parents) has answered all three questions, collect the papers and tell the children not to worry about how well they did on the questions. Tell them that everyone will take the same test after a month of thinking about Christ's love.

B. *Example* (to let them see and emulate your understanding of Christ's love). As with every principle, example is the best teacher. Be open and verbal about your own understanding of Christ's pure love. Let your children see and observe your gratitude. Look for opportunities to mention things you are thankful for and to connect that gratitude to God. Take every chance to testify to them of God's love and to let them hear you speak of it to others.

C. *Gratitude* (to help them connect their blessings with God's love).

1. *"Thankful things."* Some time ago, we became concerned that our children's prayers always gave thanks for a few "popular" things, but never mentioned anything current or new. We began spending a moment each Sunday at dinner to think of one thing we were really thankful for that particular week. The children began to call it the "thankful thing" and to mention it in their prayers. For several years we kept a list of each week's "thankful thing," and the list itself has become a reminder to the children of God's love.

2. *Thanksgiving list game.* On Thanksgiving morning, make a long list (perhaps on a roll of cash register paper) of things for which you are grateful. Let the children come up with them and you write them down. When you are

through, time each other for speed in reading through the entire list out loud. See who can read the list fastest.

3. *Discussion of Christ's major gifts.* At an opportune moment, ask children what they think the main things are that Christ has done for us. With a little thought, they will list "created the world," "presented and explained God's plan to us in the premortal existence," "gave us commandments or guidelines by which we can live happy lives," "paid for our sins through the atonement," and so on.

D. *Discuss the atonement* (to help them understand this most dramatic and important manifestation of the Savior's love).

1. C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is a story that helps children of all ages, and particularly adolescents, to better understand the atonement and how the law of mercy could overcome the law of justice. The best way to read the book is together as a family, taking turns reading and taking time to discuss things. Reading together is actually possible! (Particularly when the TV is broken.)

2. Use the analogy of an older brother paying the debt of a younger brother who could not pay what he owed. Elder Boyd K. Packer uses this metaphor beautifully in his small book *The Mediator.*

3. Within the context or discussion of one of these books, ask children if they can think of anyone for whom they would give their life—perhaps a younger brother or sister. Tell them that the feeling they have can help them understand the feeling that Christ had (and still has) for each of us.

4. Tell and retell children any of the stories at the opening of this chapter. The one about the little boy who was willing to die for his younger sister is especially helpful in causing children to vicariously experience some of the emotion of the ultimate love Christ exhibited in dying for us.

E. *Increase children's perspective* (to help children understand the wisdom and intelligence of God's love).

1. Paraphrase the following story: There was once a very

wise man who had many children. He loved them, cared for them, and taught them all he could within his own home. As they grew older, the time came when they could learn no more without the freedom and experience of being out on their own. Knowing how he would miss them, and fearing for their well-being, the wise father nevertheless let them go away to school, remaining ready to help when asked, but not initiating contact or forcing any help upon them. The school he chose was a marvelous one which offered no guarantees but contained all of the facilities and all of the freedom necessary for great advancement.

Ask the children what the story is a metaphor for. Then discuss the wisdom and restraint of God's love.

2. Ask the children what another name might be for the Ten Commandments or other laws that God has given us—a name that expresses God's love for us and his desire that we be happy.

The best name is "ten ways to be happy."

Discuss how laws and commandments make us happy and how they are therefore another manifestation of his love.

3. Discuss the scriptures as another great gift of guidelines and insights as to how to be happy.

F. *Convey how personal Christ's love is* (to help children feel their individual importance to Christ).

1. Read Matthew 10:29. Ask what it means when it says that one sparrow cannot fall without God's knowledge. Ask what meaning or relevance that has to us.

2. Make a list, perhaps during a family home evening, of the individual gifts and talents of each family member. Discuss whether these talents came naturally, were given, or were developed. Read D&C 46 and discuss how God has given each of us different gifts and how he loves us each individually, knowing that we are each unique, each different from every other one of his children.

3. In line with one of the above discussions or activities, ask what would have happened if there had only been a

couple of families on earth—a dozen people in all. Would Jesus still have died for them? What if you were the only person? Would he have died on the cross just to remove your sins? Testify to the children that he would have!

G. *A symbolic game* (to help children grasp how much love God has given and realize that they can repay him only by giving love to others).

In a family home evening or similar setting, give children a large number of marbles (or Lego blocks, or toothpicks, or any small object that you have several hundred of). Tell them that the marbles represent God's love for us. Ask them to name some of the specific gifts the marbles could represent that show God's love. They may name any sort of blessing or opportunity, from material things to the teachings and insights of the Church to the atonement itself.

Then ask, "When someone gives you so much love, what does it make you want to do?" (Answer: be grateful and give love back to the giver.) Then ask, "How can we give love back to God?" (Answer: by obeying him, respecting him, and showing love to others of his children.)

Have children represent this "return of love" by giving a marble to another person or back to you and saying what it represents. (For example, I help this person with a task, comfort this person who is old, I'm friendly to this child who looks lonely, I am honest in a difficult situation.)

As a child gives a marble back to you or to another person, give him two more to replace the one he has just given. Explain that this is the way God's love works. We keep getting further in debt to him because every time we do something right he rewards us with more love, with more good feelings, and with the warm feeling of the Holy Ghost.

Read together Mosiah 2:20-25 where we are told that we are ungrateful servants because no matter what good thing we do to repay God's love, he immediately rewards us with more of his love. Ask the children, what does it mean to be a servant? an unprofitable servant?

Pursue the discussion in any way you are able that underscores to the children how all-encompassing Christ's love for them is.

H. *"Star Story"* (to help children sense more accurately their individual importance and God's personal love for them).

On a clear night, point out the Andromeda galaxy to the children. If you know where the constellation of the Pegasus Square is, Andromeda is a faint spot of light-mist just beyond the lower left-hand corner of the square. Explain that the speck of light is not another star (like all other lights that we see with the naked eye) but another spiral galaxy as large as our Milky Way Galaxy. Andromeda is 750,000 light years away, so the light we see as we look up actually left that galaxy 750,000 years ago. Andromeda is composed of more than one hundred billion suns, and although it is the only other galaxy we can see without telescopes, there are hundreds of millions of other galaxies of equal or larger size.

Continue the discussion, pointing out that the creations of God are so vast that we cannot comprehend them and that our own earth is just a tiny speck in this seemingly endless universe.

Then, in your own words, give the following punch line: "When we look out on the night sky, we see God's handiwork; we see what he has made and organized. But when I look at your face, I see one of God's actual children who is more important to him than *all* of the stars and other creations combined."

Emphasize to a child that not only is he God's child, but he is also a unique child. God has none other exactly like him, and never has and never will. And God, who knows everything about him, loves him completely and totally.

I. *Your own methods.* Think for a moment of other ways to make your children more acutely aware of God's love for them. Think of recent experiences that illustrate it. Think of how you can express your own sense of his pure love for your

family. Jot down anything that comes to mind that you can use during this month's focus on Christ's pure love for us.

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J. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned).

On fast Sunday, at the end of the month you spend on this chapter, get out the papers on which you took the "pre-test" last fast Sunday. Retake the test, writing the answers this time in the right-hand column of the divided pages.

Discuss how much more aware everyone has been of Christ's love during the month. Discuss how you can stay aware, and bring up the "family focal point" that follows.

IV. Family Focal Point

Sunday dinners (to keep the perceptions of Christ's love vivid in our minds on an ongoing basis). To stay aware of his love, it is important to have some kind of recurring yet simple procedure that serves as a reminder.

In our family we have found that building certain traditions into our normal pattern of activities on Sunday can accomplish this. They all occur at our Sunday dinner table.

1. *"Thankful thing."* As explained earlier, we discuss what we are especially grateful for that week and pick out one specific thing to include in our prayers throughout the week.

2. *"Spiritual experiences."* The question is asked, "Who had a spiritual experience this week?" A *spiritual experience* is defined as a time when someone felt a warm feeling of guidance or of love for a family member or friend. We have had so many beautiful feelings expressed, ranging from

"when I was lost and said a prayer and found my way home" to "when Shawni helped me with my homework and I had such a warm feeling of thanks that she was my sister." Small children as well as adolescents are very adept at recognizing these feelings when they come during the week, especially when they know they will be discussed at Sunday dinner.

3. *Picture of Jesus.* Over the years we have located certain favorite paintings of Christ and found copies of them which we have had framed. On Sunday, each person brings one of them from his room where it has hung during the week to the Sunday dinner table. On a rotating basis each week, a different child has his "first choice" and each person chooses the picture he wants in his room for the coming week. When there is time, we discuss the facial expression of Christ on one or more of the pictures and ask ourselves what he might be thinking there and in what way he loves us.

4. *Family testimonies on first Sunday.* On the first Sunday of the month we stay a little longer at the Sunday dinner table (or come a little early) and have a short family testimony meeting in which the testimonies focus on Christ's love for us and ours for him. These testimonies can tie into the fast Sunday discussions mentioned earlier.

What we are saying, then, is that the Sunday dinner table can become a valuable focal point for this first dimension of charity. The environment can be set by removing the phone from the hook, using the best dishes and tablecloth, playing some soft, sacred music, and perhaps eating by candlelight. Children of all ages respond well to traditions, and the traditions built around the Sunday dinner can be among the most memorable of all (and among the most useful in focusing a family's understanding of Christ's love).

Summary

The skills of observing and listening, feeling and communicating that are taught later in this book do not become

integral parts of charity unless those who learn them have a basic understanding and conviction of Christ's love for them and of the ability to return that love and spread it to others.

If adolescents can be made more aware of God's love for them, two very important things will happen.

First, they will want to reciprocate that love, and the desire to return love is the basic seed of true charity. It is easier to return love than to initiate it. As children feel Christ's love and see it illustrated around them, they will begin to think of obedience and of kindness to others as ways of reciprocating his love.

Second, they will feel the heightened sense of self-worth and self-esteem that being loved always creates. Adolescents (and indeed all people) can become good givers only when they feel the security of loving themselves. Their self-love is enhanced as they are made more aware of the love of God who knows and understands them completely. It is for this reason that this chapter, while more theoretical than some that follow, comes first.

The Apostle John tells us that "perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4:18.) As we work to help our adolescents feel Christ's perfect love, we can literally drive fear out of them—fear of peer pressure, fear of insecurity. Love casts out not only fear, but also jealousy, hate, resentment, bitterness, pride, and a whole host of other problems that adolescents are particularly susceptible to.

One final reason for beginning with this chapter: Becoming more aware of the love Christ has for our children makes us more aware of our own love for them. The level of success we will have in teaching our children charity will be in direct proportion to the level of love we feel for them.

MONTH

2

Our Pure Love for Him

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity

"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Corinthians 13:13.)

Lord, might I be but as a saw,
A plane, a chisel in thy hand.
No Lord, I take it back in awe;
Such prayer for me is far too grand.

I pray thee, rather let me lie
As on thy bench the favored wood;
Thy saw, thy plane, thy chisel ply
And work me into something good.

George McDonald

"The more we ponder where we stand in relation to Christ, the more we realize that we do not stand at all, we only kneel." (Neal A. Maxwell.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

George McDonald, Scottish philosopher, writer, father of fourteen, and Christian thinker par excellence, whose writings are enjoying a swell of new popularity, possessed a way of capturing the true Christian spirit of humility in a few words. His "prayer" at the opening of this chapter holds the key to how we can love Christ. It is not by trying to "repay" him, for we could never do that. It is not even by being a tool in his hands, for that notion implies too much self-importance. Rather, it is by giving ourselves to him, by letting him do with us what he wishes, by submitting our "wood" to his tools so that we will become what he wishes us to be. We can make this gift of self through our words, our actions, and our thoughts.

Ammon, eldest of the sons of Mosiah, who experienced a miraculous conversion after years of rebellion, demon-

strated his love for the Lord by giving up any opportunities for earthly power, position, or wealth and placing himself fully and unconditionally in the Lord's service. He placed no time limit or other conditions on that service, nor did he hesitate to commit himself verbally to this unconditional gift of self. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Alma 17:23 where Ammon approaches the Lamanite king and says "I desire to dwell among this people for a time; yea, and perhaps until the day I die."

In the opening quote by George McDonald, he uses the word *awe.* C. S. Lewis, who thought a great deal of McDonald's views on Christ, said, "Beware of anyone who calls himself a Christian but possesses insufficient *awe* of Christ."

The scriptures tell us that we should both love and fear the Lord. *Fear* may be partially defined as awe.

There is a tendency at times within the culture of the Church to familiarize Christ too much. We say, "He is our brother, therefore we are alike and similar." Too much familiarization can destroy our awe and our worship of Christ. True, he is our brother, but He is also our God. He has all power. He has created this very earth. The differences between him and us are the differences between perfection and imperfection.

Part of the process of loving Christ is thinking about him. I observed a bishop in a ward in England during the passing of the sacrament one Sunday. He was a convert of only a couple of years. His head was nodding, his eyes closed, and I wrongly judged him to be asleep and unaware for the moment of the purpose and commitments of the sacrament.

Then, as I watched, I saw a tear flow out from under his eyelash and roll down his cheek. I knew then that he was

deep in thought, deep in contemplation of Christ and the sacrifice he made for us.

I turned my judgment toward myself and resolved to think harder and deeper about the Lord and about my love for him.

Those who think frequently and deeply about Christ are those who have the best chance of loving him deeply enough to know him. Study alone will not accomplish the task because there is a wide difference between knowing *about* him and knowing him.

The story is told of three men who died and found themselves beyond the veil. They were ushered in turn into a white room where they were to be interviewed. The first man entered and the interviewer asked him a single question, "What do you know of Christ?" The first man said that he knew little, that he attended church only a few times and was not as religious a man as he wished he had been.

The second man entered and, when asked the same question, responded by saying he knew much. He had attended church and studied religion all his life. He gave the interviewer a lengthy description on all that he knew of Christ.

The third man entered the room, looked into the eyes of the interviewer, and dropped to his knees, crying out through his tears of joy, "My Lord, my God, how long I have waited to see thy face."

Many years ago, while I was serving as a missionary in New York City, a knock came at our door late one evening as we prepared for bed in the high-rise apartment building where we lived. Opening the door, I was surprised to see the General Authority who was visiting our mission. He was staying that night in the same building. He told us he was alone that night and asked if he could join us for prayer.

Being the senior companion, I invited him in and asked if he would offer the prayer. He thanked me but said he would prefer for me to say it.

I did so. We knelt around our battered old coffee table and I attempted to give a thorough prayer, not wanting to leave anything out in this man's presence. Partway through my lengthy prayer, I heard the unmistakable sound of a pencil writing on paper. Not daring to look up, I went on, assuming that my companion, new in the field, bored with my inflated prayer, and perhaps not even realizing who our visitor was, had decided to begin his nightly letter to his girlfriend.

But when I finished and looked up, it was the General Authority who held the pencil. I glanced furtively at the writing on his yellow pad and in my nineteen-year-old mind wondered if he had done an evaluation of my prayer. I could imagine a B on content, a C on delivery, and perhaps a D+ on brevity.

He said nothing other than to thank us and went straight to the door. Then, just as he was leaving, he turned back and said (in the most matter-of-fact way) "You see, when I pray, the Lord often gives me answers, but I am somewhat forgetful so I try to take notes on what he says."

Loving Christ is the natural consequence of feeling his love for us. There are certain attitudes and practices, however, that can extend, magnify, and purify the love we feel for him. This "month" attempts to mention some of these ways, both as they apply to us and as they apply to our children.

II. Approaches for Parents

As with almost everything else, children learn to love by watching others love. Your own love for Christ, and how you

manifest it, will be the greatest teacher your children will ever know.

A. *Prayer.* We love those with whom we spend thoughtful, mutually interested time. When our prayers are real and intense, we are spending time with our Heavenly Father and with Christ in whose name we pray. When prayer becomes a literal dialogue, as it was with the General Authority in the earlier illustration, we will find that we are talking to and listening to the Lord—and therefore able to both feel and express our love to him more deeply.

Couples who wish to make prayer both more meaningful and more uniting may find it helpful to both speak to the Lord within the same prayer. The partner who starts the prayer, instead of closing when finished, squeezes the other partner's hand and the spouse continues the same prayer. The hand-squeeze alternating may go back and forth several times before the prayer is ended. Such a practice can turn a couple's prayer into a literal three-way partnership with God. It can also, as any deep and sincere prayer, intensify their love for him.

B. *Scripture study.* Once again, we love those with whom we spend time. When we read the scriptures with concentration and with an effort to project ourselves into what we are reading, we are spending time with the prophets and with the Lord.

It is not the quantity of scripture that we read, but the quality of the reading that counts. One or two verses, thoughtfully (and lovingly) read, can mean more than two chapters read through to reach some "number of pages" goal.

Read thoughtfully, the scriptures are like a trigger that can shoot into our minds the very reassurance, the very idea, the very comfort, the very insight that we need at the time. Children will observe not only the practice but the result (the effect of the scriptures on us).

C. *Discussion.* To learn more of Christ is to love him more. One of the best vehicles for learning is a discussion or

study group. We are impressed with people we know who have formed small scripture reading and discussion groups with stimulating friends—particularly when the objective of such groups is to seek greater insight into Christ.

D. *Attitude.* Children are rarely fooled (or influenced positively) by what happens on the surface or by parents who "go through the motions." They often learn more about our love for the Lord from our attitudes than from our actions. A grudging payment of tithing does not teach our children much about loving God. Nor does the half-hearted or resentful or even dutiful filling of any Church calling or assignment. On the other hand, if we take every opportunity to show our love through our gifts, our callings, and our obedience, children will see it and emulate it. We should watch for chances, in attitudes and actual words, to express the perspective that we enjoy even the slightest opportunity to return to God a tiny measure of all he has given us. Three key words can help with this attitude.

1. *Servant.* We can try to remember that we are privileged to be servants of a perfect master whose work is a greater privilege than we can yet understand.

2. *Stewardship.* Again, by remembering this important word we can keep in mind that all belongs to God, that we are mere stewards over all the things that we mistakenly call "ours." Even "our" children are actually his children, and we are the "babysitters" hoping to do well enough that they can *become* ours for eternity.

3. *Nothingness.* In King Benjamin's great address he gave an incredible list of promises to parents. He told us that if we fulfilled one condition we could teach our children to love and serve one another, to avoid transgression and quarreling, and to walk in the ways of truth and soberness. The condition is that we (the parents) remember the greatness of God and our own nothingness.

E. *Sacrifice.* Historically, a way of showing love for God was to make sacrifices to him. Today, one of the key sacrifices asked of us is our time. In addition to the time re-

quired to fill callings, we should sacrifice more TV time, newspaper time, even sleeping time to gain more spiritual nourishment (and express more love) through prayer and scripture study.

F. *Worship.* There are many different kinds of love. We love a child by nurturing and caring for and teaching him. We love a spouse by romancing, by supporting, by sharing. We love a friend by listening, respecting, helping. And we love God by worshiping him. Worship includes obedience and sacrifice, but it also includes things like praising, thanksgiving, singing, and making frequent, prayerful commitments.

To those who know the beauty of God's plan and the opportunities given by Christ's atonement, worship should be a sort of celebration. There should be joy, even ecstasy, as we think of the Lord's perfection and therefore of his predictability and reliability and of our own ultimate safety as we lean on his understanding rather than our own.

No time is more opportune for worship than during the ordinance of the sacrament. We can make this time, if we wish, a frequent and regular expression of our love for Christ and a moment when we come to know him more and more by thinking about who he is and what he has done for us.

G. *Your own methods:* Take a few moments and write down any other ideas or methods that you think will help you be more aware of your feelings for the Savior.

III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to establish a goal for the month ahead in the minds of family members—

the goal of developing a deeper inner feeling of love for Christ).

Gather all family members age eight or older together for a discussion. After retaking the test for Month One (see page 44), hold a brief discussion built around the following points:

1. *Last month, as we thought about how much Jesus loves us, what feelings did you feel for him?* (Warmth, love, security, joy, humility, a desire to follow him, to keep his commandments, to please him, and so on.)
2. *How do people show their love for someone else?* (Help him, give things to him, encourage him, be loyal to him.)
3. *How do we show love for Christ?* (He owns everything, therefore there is little we can give him—except our time, our loyalty, our love. But he has told us that when we give to others, we are giving to him.)
4. *How should our love for Christ make us feel?* (Joyful that we are literally his younger brothers and sisters; humble and filled with awe as we realize his perfection and our own nothingness.) Present any stories or illustrations from the first pages of this chapter that you think your children would enjoy.

Then say, "Our goal this month will be to gain ever deeper feelings of love for Christ. To help us measure how much we learn this month, we're going to take another short test on how much we think about our love for Jesus. Next fast Sunday, we'll take it again to check our progress."

As you did last month, have each family member draw a line down the center of a blank page. Number the left column from 1 to 4. Then present four questions and have everyone write out his answers:

1. What is the *center* of the gospel? Why?
2. What do God's commandments do for us?
3. How can we love Christ and fear him at the same time?
4. What does the sacrament mean to you?

Keep all the papers so you can use them again next fast Sunday.

B. *Connecting all Church and spiritual experiences to Christ* (to help children's emotional and spiritual feelings center on the person of Christ rather than on the organization or institution of the Church).

A friend of ours, a professor at one of our Church universities and also a bishop there on the campus, did an informal survey of his ward members regarding what they mentioned most in their testimonies on fast Sunday. The thing the students testified of most frequently was their roommates, second was the Church, third was the university, fourth was the President of the Church. Christ himself was not mentioned nearly so frequently; in fact, he barely made the top ten!

We are sure their intent was good, and that love of Christ was implied by much of what they said. Still, there is real benefit in more conscious references to Christ and more direct acknowledgment of him as the source of all blessings.

Nephi, writing anciently of those who love the Lord, said, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ." (2 Nephi 25:26.) The connection is still true today. Loving Christ does cause us to talk and testify of him, and to rejoice in him and in his love. The connection works in both directions! Talking of him and rejoicing in him increases our understanding and our love for him.

At every opportunity, help turn your children's attention toward Christ himself. Help the "Joseph Smith story" to become, in the minds of your children, the story of Christ, returned to the earth to reestablish his church. Perceive the Book of Mormon to be not so much the story of Lamanites and Nephites as the story of Christ, the prophecies that preceded him, the changes he wrought in the world and in mankind, and the second witness of his divinity. Be sure that you talk of faith as being not in some general set of beliefs but in the Lord Jesus Christ. Teach your children to view the Church less as a building or an organization or even a set of commandments and doctrine, and more as Christ's kingdom and as the vehicle which contains information about

the Lord and seeks to spread that joyous insight throughout the world.

Seek to concentrate your children's spiritual capacities on what Elder Maxwell calls "the glorious and desperately needed gospel truths and doctrine pertaining to Jesus Christ, our Savior, on whom all else that really matters greatly depends. He and His atoning sacrifice are the operating center of our Father's plan of salvation, and if we would be truly happy, He must be the operating center of our lives."

The "Sunday dinner activities" mentioned in the family focal point of the previous chapter are one practical way to create this sharper focus within your children. Other ways will come to mind as you think about it and as you strive to refocus your own thoughts and beliefs.

C. *The joy and freedom of obedience* (to help children perceive God's commandments as loving counsel from a wise Father, and to perceive their obedience as a privilege and as a way of returning that love).

As mentioned earlier, strive to speak often of your own callings, of your payment of tithing, of your observation of commandments as a *joy*. Paraphrase the following story to illustrate:

"A great being who mastered all the secrets of the universe wanted to help a group of his friends to be as happy as he was. He made up a list of the things that bring happiness and called them 'commandments.'

"Some of his friends thought the commandments were restrictions to their freedom, so they did not keep them. But the wiser friends realized that the commandments were ways to extend and expand their freedom. They kept them and became more free and happy."

Then ask what we are made free from when we keep the commandment of chastity, of tithing, of truthfulness, of the Word of Wisdom, and so on.

D. *The book and film "Jesus of Nazareth"* (to help children form more specific visual images of Christ, and to give their love for him a sense of historical reality).

Of all the films or pictorial attempts to illustrate Christ's earthly life and times, we think the most beautiful is Franco Zefferelli's *Jesus of Nazareth.* It is a six-hour movie, now widely available on videotape. Still photographs from the film are collected in a book with text by William Barclay.

We think the best way to use both the book and the video is to bring them out *only* on Sunday, letting the children handle and enjoy them only on that day (when other television as well as secular books or magazines are "off limits").

If you have a videocassette player, you may want to rent the video and then decide if you want to purchase it. We know some families who bring the book to church and allow smaller children to thumb through it during the sacrament to concentrate their thoughts on Christ.

E. *Devotionals* (to regularly focus children's attention on Christ and their love for him).

We greatly admire all families who hold regular family prayer and who couple it with some form of scripture reading or "devotional." Sometimes these are as simple as reading a verse of scripture prior to a prayer. In other families, an early morning service is held daily, including a song, prayer, scripture, and counsel by parents.

In our family, the time before breakfast has traditionally been used for music practice. We all group at a specified hour before any individual practice to play ensemble music together, to read a verse or two of scripture (or to ask a family member to summarize a scripture he read the night before), and to have family prayer. We also encourage and challenge each other to memorize certain passages of scripture, as well as selected poetry and quotations.

Whatever form it takes, and whether it is daily or less frequent, a family devotional can be of great value both in teaching and sharing the love we feel for Christ.

F. *Church literature focusing on Christ* (to deepen children's knowledge—and thus their love—of Christ).

With the vast quantity of Church books available today, it is interesting (and in a way disappointing) that there are

not more works specifically about the Savior. One positive reason, however, that there are so few is that those that we have, written by latter-day apostles, are so comprehensive and so beautiful. James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* and Bruce R. McConkie's three volumes on the Messiah lend their detail and scholarship. Boyd K. Packer's *The Mediator* gives deep but simple insight into the atonement. J. Reuben Clark's *Our Lord of the Gospels* (though now somewhat difficult to find) gives a chronology of all ancient and modern scriptural reference to Christ. Neal A. Maxwell's *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* provides intellectual and poetic perception of Christ and His personal connections to all facets of Heavenly Father's plan and program.

Standing far below these, both in authority as well as in perception, are other LDS books that aim at an expanded awareness of and love for Christ. My own (Richard's) book *What Manner of Man* is largely a collection of the insights of others arranged in a way that allows a person to ponder a different aspect or facet of Christ each Sunday as he partakes of the sacrament for an entire year. The thesis is that we come to know and love someone a little at a time, one dimension after another.

As our children become old enough to read (individually or with us) about Christ, we can call on the words and feelings of others to supplement our own as we try to communicate the love of Christ.

G. *Your own ideas.* List other ways that would help increase your children's awareness of their love for Christ.

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H. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned). On fast Sunday, at the end of the month you spend

on this chapter, get out your test papers from last fast Sunday and answer again the four questions, putting answers this time in the right-hand column. Discuss what everyone has learned. Let family members express their feelings for Christ. Ask if it is important to keep thinking actively about our love for Christ. Then present the family focal point which follows as a way to stay aware of this love.

IV. Family Focal Point

Sacrament observance (to focus attention, every week, directly on our love for Christ).

As mentioned earlier, we have a remarkable opportunity each week in sacrament meeting to feel and to demonstrate our love for Christ. This opportunity comes as we partake of the sacrament and renew our covenants to always remember Christ, to take upon us his name, and to keep all of his commandments.

The "rebaptism" that the sacrament can provide is the most regular if not the most comprehensive way we have to express our love. With effort, it can truly be the key to deepening our children's feelings for Christ.

Without preparation and concentration, however, it can be a meaningless ritual. Consider the following suggestions:

A. Read a scripture, watch a video portion of *Jesus of Nazareth*, or look at the book or at other favorite pictures of Christ before leaving for church. Bring some pictures of Jesus (or the *Jesus of Nazareth* book) for smaller children to look at during the sacrament.

B. Decide on one specific aspect of Christ to think about during the sacrament (such as his love for little children, his optimism and positive attitude, his gentleness and patience, his courage and fearlessness). Use the book *What Manner of Man* as a guide, or find a certain scripture or other "image" of Christ to focus your thought each week. Discuss (it can be very briefly) as a family what you will focus your minds on during the sacrament. This can be done in the car on the

way to church, at the door of your home before you leave, or early on Sunday morning before any of the commitments or responsibilities of the day come into play.

C. On the way home from church or at Sunday dinner, briefly discuss the feelings that accompanied your partaking of the sacrament. What did each person think about? What ideas or images or feelings came to mind? Was the partaking of the sacrament itself a meaningful experience?

V. Summary

If the saying were true that "we love those who love us," then loving the Savior would become the easiest and most natural thing in the world.

Unfortunately it is not true. By human nature, we all too often use and take advantage of those who love us, or we reject their love in various ways. The love that comes in our direction is too often either absorbed or ricocheted, too seldom returned.

What *is* true to say is, "We love those whom we serve and with whom we spend meaningful time."

Thus, there is no shortcut to developing our love, and that of our children, for Christ. Knowing that he loves us is not enough. Only the process of being with him (through scripture study, prayer, and meditation) and the practice of serving him (through magnification of callings, acts of service, and joyful obedience of commandments) can result in a blossoming of the love we feel for him.

MONTH

3

Loving as He Loves

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart." (1 Timothy 1:5.)

"Love of one's neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self." (George McDonald.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

Serving with us in England was a sister missionary who believed that proselyting was essentially a process of loving. For her, missionary work was not an all-or-nothing proposition in which you either gave someone the whole gospel and baptized him or gave him nothing at all. Her attitude was to give whatever a person could accept.

She and her companion knocked one day on the door of an older woman who lived alone. "No," she said, she had no interest whatever in hearing their message and began to close the door.

"Then might we help you in *any* way?" said the sister, and her tone of voice left no question that she wanted to do just that.

The older woman hesitated and then asked timidly, "Would you wash a window for me? It is the high one in the entry hall and I can't reach it. I'm afraid if I get up on a chair I might fall. It's the only dirty thing in my house."

The sister washed her window, gladly—with enjoyment.

A month or so later, she was again in the neighborhood and stopped by again to wash the window. She went back every few weeks, asking each time if she could teach the woman of the purpose of life or the restoration or the Book of Mormon. Always the answer was no.

Some time after returning home, the sister received a letter. The writer introduced himself as "a son of the woman whose window you washed." He then said that he and his wife, as well as his sister and her husband, all living in America, had joined the Church. They had contacted the

missionaries because of letters from their mother in England who had told them of a sister who had "taught her more of Christ than anyone she had ever met."

"The faith He asks us for is not to understand Him but to follow Him. By that and that alone can man convert the tragedy of human life, full of disappointments, disillusionments, and with so-called death ever looming ahead, into a most glorious place of honor, worthy of the dignity of a son of God. What Christ asks is that we shall try it out. He actually dares us to follow Him. In that way, He says, you shall win that prize in life for which any man can, with perfect reason, afford to give everything else." (Wilfred T. Grenfell.)

We met one winter with some old friends whose three oldest boys were in their mid-teens. We had some of our younger children with us and were staying at a hotel that had an indoor heated pool. Our friends sat with us on a balcony above the pool while their boys joined our children for a swim.

During the course of our visit, I glanced down occasionally at the children below. What I noticed was that these three were not typical teenage boys. Most seventeen-, sixteen-, and fourteen-year-old boys, placed in that situation with a bunch of younger children, would either ignore them or tease them. These boys did neither.

They introduced themselves to the younger children, got acquainted, asked them questions, gave them swimming pointers, and even humored them when they started asking if they could jump off their shoulders, if they could "ride them" across the pool, and so on.

I finally changed the course of our balcony conversation by asking the mother just how she had developed such extra-centered, happy, natural teenagers.

She said she wasn't sure, that the boys had, somewhere along the line, picked up a certain commitment to service, that they almost competed with each other in visiting widows in their neighborhood, shoveling snow for elderly people, and just stopping in to talk to two sets of shut-ins that needed someone to listen.

All three boys were musical, she said, but none of them were very athletic and some of the kids at school called them "wimps." Still, they were well liked, the oldest having just lost the election for student-body president by only ten votes.

We spent the rest of our visit trying to pinpoint what it was that made these boys so different from their peers. The answer, we concluded, was service; it was loving others for the sheer joy of loving.

Corrie ten Boom, in her remarkable book *The Hiding Place,* recounts her experiences and those of her sister in Nazi concentration camps. In one instance she tells of her sister observing a brutal beating of a Jew by an SS officer and tearfully expressing how sad she felt for him.

Then Corrie ten Boom explains how she suddenly realized that her sister was speaking not of the Jew but of the German officer. She felt sorry for him because he had lost his humanity, lost his soul, which was more than the Jewish victim was losing.

The sister's love was pure enough to include even her persecutors.

Indeed, Christ redefined the very meaning of love. Before his life, in most societies, *love* meant friendship, loyalty, affection for one's own. Christ added the difficult, self-sacrificing elements of love to the easy, self-serving aspects. He said we should love our enemy as well as our neighbor.

In many earlier philosophies, revenge was as noble a trait as love. Xenophon, a favorite disciple of Socrates and

Plato, praised and eulogized his hero Cyrus by saying, "No man ever did more good to his friends and more harm to his enemies."

Jesus upended the western world's concept of love. His instructions to "turn the other cheek" and "love your enemy" were revolutionary when he gave them, but they now have counterparts in most behavioral codes. Even governments and constitutions now take the posture of reform rather than revenge.

If we are to love as He loves, we must learn to love unconditionally, unselectively, purely, and without self-interest.

A school-bus driver observed a small but significant example of "difficult love." A new child had moved into the neighborhood, a twelve-year-old girl who was rather small and shy, and who didn't have the "in" clothes or hairstyle that would have matched most of the other kids on the bus.

She had been riding for a couple of days now. The other kids teased her a bit, tried to trip her as she went down the crowded aisle, but mostly they ignored her. She sat at the back of the bus, by herself.

What the bus driver observed was this: As the new girl got on the bus the third day, she was tripped again, and called a name. There was a tear in her eye as she took her lonely back seat. Then a girl in the front of the bus, one of the most popular, quietly stood up, stared a dagger or two at the boy who had done the tripping and the girl who had called the name, and walked back and sat down by the new girl, put her arm around her shoulder, apologized for her friends, introduced herself, and began to ask questions, making friends.

The bus was silent for a moment and then returned to its normal noisy din. But the driver said he thought he noticed a new light in some children's eyes that day—and he said he *felt* a new light in his own heart.

"We never live so intensely as when we love strongly. We never realize ourselves so vividly as when we are in the full glow of love for others." (Walter Rauschenbush.)

II. Approaches for Parents

Learning to love is, of course, a lifetime process—indeed it is the goal of life. But it is helpful and genuinely interesting to concentrate your thoughts for a month on *how* you love other people, how you respond to them, how you think about them.

Too often we find ourselves jealous of others, or competing with them in a "win-lose" manner where our successes are enhanced by their failures. Even more often, we are simply unaware of others and of their feelings—even of our feelings for them—because we are so busy and so occupied with our own lives and what is required of us.

What follows is a short list of a few approaches we can take to school ourselves a little in the divine act of selfless love and extra-centeredness—a beginners' attempt to love both our children and others in a more Christlike way.

A. *What would He do?* Everyone we learn of who has read a book called *In His Steps*, by Charles M. Sheldon, has been affected by it. It is the story of a group of people who made a pledge to each other that they would live an entire year of their lives by the guideline of asking (before every decision and even every action or comment), "What would Jesus do?" The book tells how dramatically that question changed their lives.

The most interesting thing about that question is that we almost always know the answer. It is rarely difficult to know what Christ would do. But it *is* difficult to ask the question, especially in the moments we need to ask it most, the moments of anger, of jealousy, of frustration and self-centeredness. It is also difficult to do what he would do once we have asked the question.

Think of it that way: a hard thing, then an easy one, then another hard one. Hard to ask, easy to answer, hard to follow. Hard, but worth it. Those of us who try it for the month will find ourselves able to teach it to our children. And we may be forming the greatest habit of our lives.

B. *Consciously put relationships above achievements.* We are all confronted daily with little, subtle decisions that are, in essence, choices between a person and a thing. Too often we choose the thing: to get the work done instead of paying attention to the child who is asking us something, to finish writing the memo instead of responding to the person sitting next to us who starts a conversation. An achievement, when chosen over a relationship, is always the wrong decision.

C. *Practice giving.* A friend of ours often tells us of his experiences in a part of the world where people want to give you anything you admire. He has to be very careful about saying he likes a painting, or a flower pot, or anything, because the people will say, "Then it is yours!"

Theoretically, within the Church it should be easy to give, because we know that whatever we have is not really ours anyway, but God's. We covenant to live the laws of stewardship and of consecration, but when it really comes down to giving, especially if it is something as precious as our time, we find it very difficult.

Again, the best way to learn how to do it is to practice. If we consciously try during this month to give gladly, to make a point of sacrificing something we want or not doing something we want to do in order to do something else that benefits someone else—if we do this, we will find ourselves loving as He loves.

In this connection, while it sounds funny to say, we should take advantage of the opportunities the Church gives us to practice our giving. Just to reiterate once again, we should pay tithing gladly, give fast offerings generously, thinking of it all as what it really is—an opportunity.

We can also give the gospel, taking our opportunities to

share beliefs with others. It is difficult, and our own inhibitions may prevent us from the kind of thing Elder LeGrand Richards did when he borrowed the microphone from a surprised stewardess as the crowded plane took off from Salt Lake City and said, "Any of you on this plane that are Mormons, please raise your hands. Now, the rest of you, please look at these people because they are going to tell you about our church during this flight."

But as difficult as it is, missionary work is a form of love and, as we practice love, it will, as the scriptures say, cast out all fear.

D. *Attitudes toward children.*

1. *Not a nuisance, or a "bundle of sin," or a "lump of clay," or a "noble savage," but a "seedling" and a first priority.* It is easy to think of children as a nuisance, because they so often get in our way. It sometimes seems obvious to think of them as a "bundle of sin" because we are so often correcting them, disciplining them, trying to redirect them. We sometimes view them as "noble savages," surrounded by the jungle of our decrepit society and needing most from us to be protected from the world.

And we are sometimes told that our children are lumps of clay in our hands, that we can shape and mold them into anything.

All these views are incorrect. In fact, our children are the most valuable stewardship and the highest priority we have. They are basically good, not evil. They need to be trained to live in the world, not isolated from it. Their importance far surpasses the things we sometimes think they get in the way of. And they are anything but shapeless, interchangeable lumps of clay that we can mold at will.

Perhaps the best analogy for children is that of a seedling. Already within them are the gifts, talents, the intelligence gained through an eternal premortal existence. While they are young it is not completely clear what kind of a tree they will grow into, but whatever kind it is, they already are. We cannot change them from a poplar to an oak, nor should

we want to. What we can do is cultivate, nourish, straighten, so that they will grow to be the best of the type of tree they are.

2. *Brother and sister.* An even more accurate and important way to view our children is as our brothers and sisters—coequal and coeternal spirits who came to earth a few years later than we, and into our care.

We were on a trip not long ago with a special Church leader who was accompanied by his wife and ten-year-old son. We noticed that, in private conversation, he called the boy not by his name, and not "son," but "little brother." There seemed to be a special tone of respect and love in his voice, as though the term represented a fact, a reality that he wanted to remind himself of.

E. *Work on "wise" love.* Christ's love was always wise in that its expression helped and benefited the person it was directed to. He gave people what they needed, not always what they wanted. And he gave for *their* benefit, not for his own.

Parents' love for their children, although completely genuine, is sometimes counterproductive and even harmful because it is given unwisely. We all know parents whose misdirected love has spoiled children, or has tried to turn them into something they are not.

Wisdom is more related to the effort of thinking than it is to intelligence or vast accumulation of knowledge. If we take the time to think about our children we usually find wise and effective ways to express love.

Most couples need a "prompter" or an organized time and place to do some thinking. The best method we know is the five-facet review. We have suggested, in other writings, that couples go on a monthly date to a quiet restaurant and confine their discussion or agenda to their children. By asking, "How is Johnny doing physically? socially? mentally? emotionally? spiritually?" it is possible to have a surprisingly thorough review of each child in a relatively short time. By focusing their minds on one of their children at a time, a

couple generates the kind of mental effort that constitutes faith and opens the channels of inspiration. Most five-facet reviews yield two or three areas of concentration for the coming month and allow parents to focus their attention on the most critical problems or the most timely opportunities.

Many parents grope around, looking for general answers or panaceas that will solve everything. Specific answers come with remarkable ease when problems and concerns are specifically defined. Parents who can put their finger on a well-defined emerging problem can, with mental effort, think of a clear solution.

For example: Our fourteen-year-old was undergoing some difficulty making new friends during her first few weeks at high school. For a while, we floundered around with her, offering general suggestions like, "If you want friends, you have to *be* a friend," or, "Just be yourself and everything will work out fine."

But in a five-facet review, we focused some mental energy on the concern. We discussed it and shared our individual observations. We decided that what was needed was an ice-breaker, a way to get her together with some new friends in a setting where relationships could get a start. A little more thought and brainstorming led us to the idea of setting up a surprise party for her. We decided to call it an "unbirthday" since her birthday comes in midsummer when we are usually away and thus she is unable to have a party.

Setting up the party was relatively simple—and fun. We opted for a slumber party where everyone would have lots of time to talk and get better acquainted.

It worked. It turned out that all they needed was a chance to get together. But what really worked was the five-facet review, the time we had taken to think together.

In D&C 9:7, the Lord reprimands Oliver Cowdery for taking "no *thought* save it was to ask." The key to loving with wise, Christlike love is thought. And that same mental effort is also the key that unlocks the channels of inspiration and

gives us access to guidance from the real parent of these children: their eternal Heavenly Father.

F. *The "L.O.V.E." formula for communicating with teenagers.* Every parent of teenagers knows the frustration and difficulty of trying to communicate with stubborn, headstrong, opinionated, peer-influenced, moody, overdramatic, emotionally volatile teenagers. At times they clam up and say nothing. At other times they make their points with powerful drama and impish logic.

The parents' options, it seems, consist of ignoring them back, imposing authoritarian parental-martial-law, or sending them to some sort of counselor who can "deal with these things more objectively."

Actually, teenagers are most often quite easy to communicate with if parents remember the "L.O.V.E." formula.

"L" = *Lightness* (avoid "heavy" communication; use a little humor, don't take yourself too seriously).

"O" = *Offense* (don't let yourself be put on the defense). Act rather than react. If you feel upset, pause and reflect for a moment. Listen carefully, decide what is best, and take the offense—do what you've decided is best. Deep down, what each teen and preteen needs most is the security of a parent who listens and cares, but who knows what is right and holds to it.

"V" = *Visualize.* Keep in mind a positive image of your teenager. Separate the behavior or comment you are displeased with from the person whom you love unconditionally. Learn to visualize what he can become and what his most positive potential is—at the very moment that his actions or words are most disturbing. This will preserve your respect for him and will help him keep respect for himself. Get angry at what he is doing if the action merits it, but make sure that anger is directed at his action and separated from your love for him.

"E" = *Empathize.* Make a genuine attempt to remember what you can of how it felt to be his age. Do this *while* you are talking. Make a real mental effort to put yourself in

his shoes and feel what he is feeling. Tell him what you can understand and what you can't.

G. *Your own methods.* List any other thoughts you have on how you could better emulate Christ's kind of love during the following month.

III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to establish the goal for the month ahead of better understanding and better emulating Christ's kind of love).

Once again, gather all family members age eight and older. After retaking the test for Month Two, discuss the coming month (Month Three) along the following points:

1. *What would happen to a person if he decided that he was going to ask himself, several times each day, "What would Jesus do?"* (He'd be more sensitive, more kind, more aware of others' needs.)

2. *What are some examples in daily life of people loving other people as Christ would love?* (Use stories from the opening of this chapter—particularly those of the sister missionary and the girl on the bus—and add your own stories or those your children might offer.)

3. *What is it that makes us want to love others?* (The fact that they are brothers and sisters *and* the fact that the best way we can show our love for Christ is to love others.)

4. *How can we love others more during the month ahead?* (Open discussion.) As in previous chapters, explain that taking a short test now and retaking it at the end of the month will help everyone measure how much they learn.

Give everyone a piece of paper and have them use the left-hand side.

1. During the month just passed, how many specific times can you remember when you:
   a. Thought about someone's needs and tried to think what you could do for him?
   b. Asked yourself, "What would Jesus do?"
   c. Sacrificed something you wanted to do in order to do something for someone else?
   d. Made a specific plan to help someone or give some thing to someone?
2. What does the Golden Rule mean to you?

Remember to save the tests for reuse at the end of the month.

B. *"Think service"* (to begin the process of training children's minds to notice needs and to look for opportunities to serve). Families that get involved in various kinds of service together tend to become the closest families we know, and they also teach each other, through example, to love as Christ loves. The entire balance of this book leads up to the goal of giving service, but now (in Month Three) is the time to begin forming the right attitudes.

Giving service exposes children to different life-styles, different family situations, and different kinds of needs. Such exposure increases children's appreciation for what they have and puts their own smaller problems in clearer perspective.

We recently heard a parent say, "I'd like my family to be involved in some kind of service but we're all so busy, and there really isn't anyone around who needs that much help. Everyone in this community is pretty similar; even the kids look like they all came out of the same cookie cutter."

Such thinking contains more excuses than facts. There are elderly people, there are lonely people, there are students from foreign lands, there are new move-ins, there are people out of work, and there are always ordinary, everyday people

whose lives would be brightened by a good turn or a spontaneous favor.

Sit down with your children and get them involved in the thought process that precedes service. Brainstorm together and make a list of people you know of who could use a visit or some assistance of some kind. Make a second list of others you could contact who might know more about people who need help (such as the foreign student office at a university, the Salvation Army, various community service organizations). Pick some targets. Decide what to do, and do it!

C. *Traditions* (to further increase children's perception of themselves as service givers). Forming service-oriented traditions within a family can have great positive effects on the attitudes of children.

1. At Christmastime, be Santa's helper for a less fortunate family.

2. Have a tradition of always stopping when you see someone needing help (a stranded motorist, someone with car trouble, a child who looks lost).

3. Do anonymous good deeds for other family members and then, at Sunday dinner or some other set time, see if they can guess who did what for whom.

4. *"Gifts to Jesus"* (to help children make the connection between loving Jesus and serving fellowmen). Emphasize that Christmas is Jesus' birthday by having each family member write a "resolution of service" on a slip of paper to be folded over and put in a special wrapped box of "gifts to Jesus" (examples: "I will shovel Mrs. Pitcher's sidewalk whenever it snows" or "I will be a peacemaker in my family by refusing to argue or fight in the home").

Each family member folds the slip and puts it in the box so that no one else sees it. Do this now, regardless of what month it is. Next Christmas, the box will be opened and everyone will read his gift aloud, discussing how he has done on it during the past year.

D. *Variations on the Golden Rule* (to get children thinking about how dependent people are on each other and how

much we all need each other). Hold a discussion (perhaps some evening at dinner) on the Golden Rule. Ask what it means, why it works, why Christ was the greatest example of it, and so on.

Then read the following list of similar codes of conduct that have evolved in other societies. After reading the list, discuss why the same rule sprang up in so many different places. Then ask for personal examples during the past week where family members used (or should have used) the Golden Rule.

VARIATIONS OF THE GOLDEN RULE

Do as you would be done by. – Persian

Do not that to a neighbor which you shall take ill from him. – Crecian

What you would not wish done to yourself do not do unto others. – Chinese

One should seek for others the happiness one desires for one's self. – Buddhist

Let none of you treat his brother in a way he himself would not like to be treated. – Mohammedan

The true rule of life is to guard and do by the things of others as they do by their own. – Hindu

The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves. – Roman

E. *Give responsibility.* Sociologists have demonstrated through cross-cultural studies that there are strong and direct connections between responsibility, maturity, and extra-centeredness. In societies where children are given little responsibility, they become self-centered and insensitive. Where they have more responsibility they also have more awareness and interest in and concern for other people.

Another deep dimension of this principle is the fact that children who have responsibility over something become better able to understand Christ's love for us, as we are, in a sense, his responsibility. Farm children, for ex-

ample, who have charge over an animal, learn to love the animal in a special way because it is dependent on them.

As we give our children responsibility for certain things, from a portion of the house or yard to the baby-sitting of a younger sibling, we are expanding their capacity to love and to care.

F. *One-on-one "need search"* (to tutor your children personally in the skill of seeing needs). Look for opportunities to go places with *one* of your children (to the store, or on a walk, for instance). Decide together to try to "spot needs" during the trip. You might find something as obvious as an elderly person needing help crossing a street or a woman lifting something heavy or a ragged child selling newspapers on a street corner. More likely, you will see people who look as if they need a smile and a "hello," or who need a compliment, or who need help reaching a can high on a grocery store shelf.

Each need you spot is a chance not only to teach by example but to start or further a discussion about Christlike love with the child you are with.

G. *Your own methods.* List any other thoughts you have concerning how you can assist your children this month in finding ways to love as Christ loves.

_____

_____

_____

_____

H. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned). On the fast Sunday that ends this "month," retake the test from last fast Sunday. Then discuss how much more aware family members have been during the month of the needs of others and the opportunities they have had to help. Discuss specific instances when family members have asked, "What would Jesus do?"

IV. Family Focal Point

Awards and awareness building (to give children an effective weekly reminder to do what Jesus would). Children of any age, right through the teenage years, tend to do what they are recognized for and what they receive attention for.

This is the first of several family focal points that center on a weekly "award" given to one family member following a discussion at the Sunday dinner table.

This award is called the "What Would Jesus Do" award. It consists of a sheet of paper with the initials *W.W.J.D.* artistically arranged like a logo and then mounted on cardboard. The family member who earns the award posts it on the door of his room for one week until it is awarded again the following Sunday.

At the Sunday dinner table, say, "Who is in the running for the 'What Would Jesus Do' award?" Everyone then thinks back over the preceding week (including mom and dad) and tries to remember an incident when he acted or reacted as Jesus would have. For a smaller child, it might be not retaliating when someone hurt him or called him a name, or letting a friend go first in line, or helping around the house without being asked. For an older child it might be stopping to visit a widow or a shut-in, or talking to someone in school who looked lonely or shy, or leaving someone an anonymous note of compliment or praise.

During the discussion, children may either mention things they have done or nominate other family members whom they have observed doing what Jesus would do.

The value lies in the discussion. As children think back and remember, they also program themselves to look for the same kind of service or helpfulness opportunities in the future. Some teenagers will be a little skeptical of the award at first, and may call it silly or immature. Surprisingly quickly, however, especially as they see their parents participating enthusiastically, they will get themselves "in the running" (and into the discussion) every week.

Father or mother determines who is to receive the award each week after the discussion, taking care to give lavish praise to everyone who is in the running.

V. Summary

Washington Irving said, "Love is never lost. If not reciprocated, it will flow back and soften and purify the heart."

Families that consciously look for ways to love and serve each other as well as others seem to develop a softer, more peaceful atmosphere and attitude.

As Dante said, "In thy will is our peace." Without question, God's will is that we strive to learn to love as he loved.

Developing love within our children is not as simple as loving them, and the fact that we love them is no guarantee that they will become good at loving others. As mentioned before, the truism says, "We love whom we serve." It does not say, "We love those who love us." Thus, we must provide opportunities for our children to serve us, to serve each other, and to serve others.

As we do, their self-centeredness will fade away, carrying with it many of the ego-centered problems of teenagers. What will remain is children who know how to love others, and who are therefore more capable of loving themselves.

This chapter concludes the "understanding" part of the charity formula. In some ways, this is the easiest part, and it prepares us for the rest of the book. These first three "months," properly implemented, can raise a family's awareness of what charity is and of why it can be the solution to nearly all problems. It is hoped that this awareness makes us all more anxious to develop the actual skills of charity, and it is to the development of these skills that the rest of this book is devoted.

SECTION III

OBSERVING

We begin to turn mirrors to windows only as we learn how to see realities rather than reflections, to see people instead of prejudices, to see others rather than ourselves.

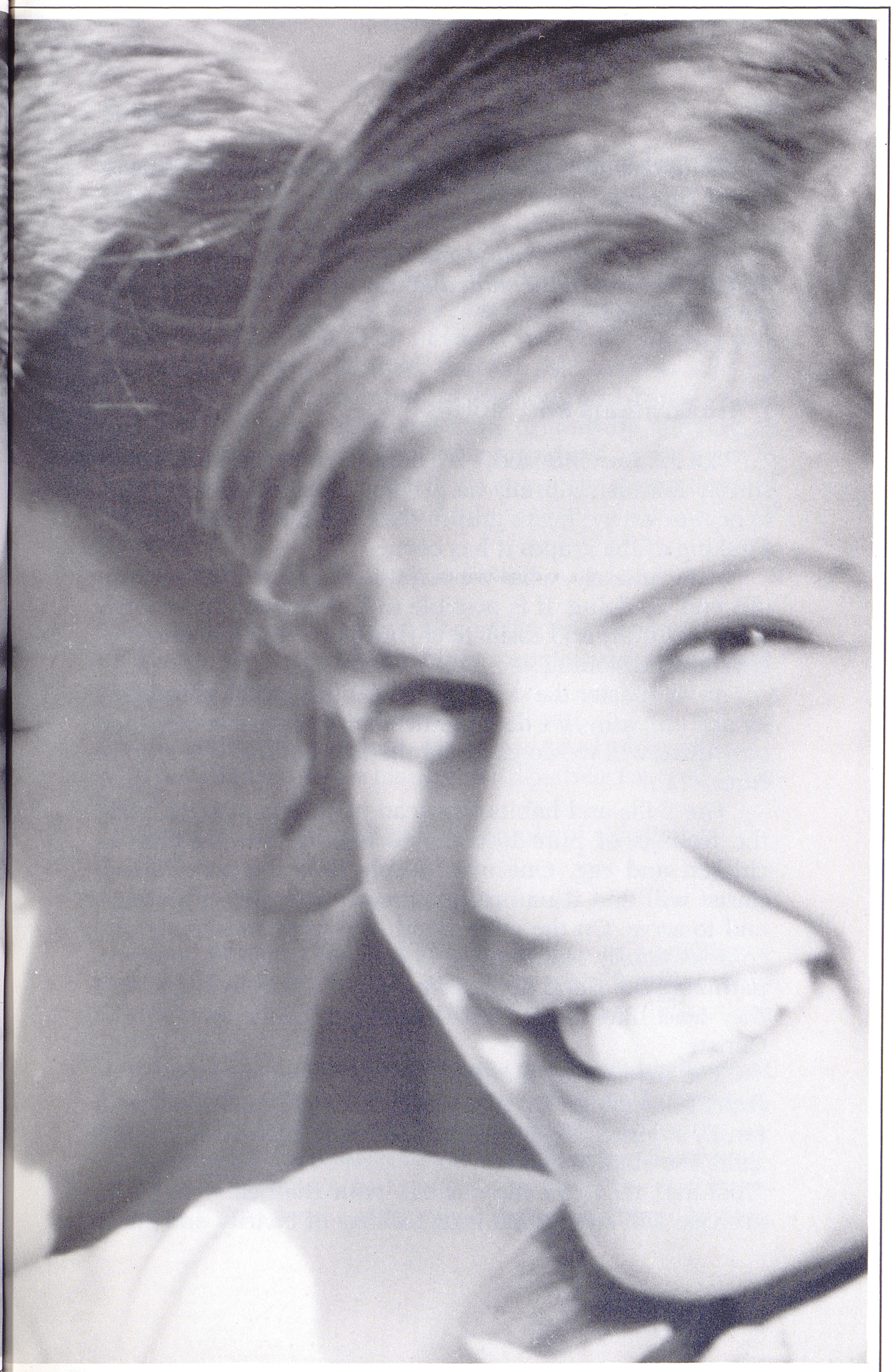
In time, and with practice, we come to see with our ears as well as our eyes and to listen with our eyes as well as our ears and to involve our spiritual perceptions in both.

MONTH

4

Seeing

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity



"Only that day dawns to which we are awake." (Henry David Thoreau.)

Charity is both a feeling and a skill. The feelings motivate the development of the skill, and the development of the skill deepens the feeling.

I. Illustrations and Stories

Marcus Aurelius said, "We ought to do good to others as simply and as naturally as a horse runs, or a bee makes honey, or a vine bears grapes season after season without thinking of the grapes it has borne."

Unfortunately, what we ought to do is not what we usually end up doing. It is possible to have service and charity come naturally and easily to us, but not without a long process of conditioning.

As we master the skills of seeing, of listening, of sensitivity and empathy, we develop the habits of service; then, and only then, will we do good to others as naturally as a horse runs.

The skills and habits that lead us to acts of service and the feelings of pure love that constitute charity are like chicken and egg. One who deeply feels the pure love of Christ will find it natural to care, to listen, to empathize, and to serve. On the other hand, one who consciously and conscientiously learns these observing, listening, and empathizing skills and develops habits of service will find that they lead him to an even deeper and more pure love of Christ.

The first three "months" of this book concentrated on feelings—feelings that hopefully strengthened both your family's desires to give service and your interest in gaining skills that better enable you to serve. The remaining nine "months" focus on these skills, with the belief that their exercise will strengthen your feelings of charity and elimi-

nate or cut down the self-centeredness of teenagers which is the cause of so many of their problems.

We learn to love by loving. It is the *doing* that develops the *feeling*. St. Francis De Sales said it well: "There are many who want me to tell them of secret ways of becoming perfect and I can only tell them that the sole secret is a hearty love of God, and the only way of attaining that love is by loving. You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so you learn to love God and man by loving. Begin as a mere apprentice and the very power of love will lead you on to become a master of the art."

So, how does one apprentice at the art of loving?

He thinks more about other people and about their needs, and less about himself.

How does he think more about others?

He notices them more. He learns to observe others—with his mind as well as his eyes, with his heart as well as his brain.

Seeing is the first skill in the formula of charity?

Yes!

Most people have had the experience of watching a movie that was filmed in a place they were familiar with. Yet they notice things in the movie that they did not see when they were there in person.

Often, in fact, movies seem more graphic to us than real life. We observe beauty, colors, characteristics about people, and subtle messages in facial expressions. Part of the increased awareness may be due to the skill of the cinematographer and the actors, but part of it is due to the very interesting fact that we see more when we're not able to be seen

by those we're watching. Since we are not aware of or concerned with what others are seeing in us, we can focus all of our attention on them—thus we see more, notice more, understand more.

We have only a certain amount of awareness. If a portion of it is focused on ourselves, there is less left to observe others with.

There are people who have learned to become "transparent," to become invisible enough to themselves that they can see through themselves—and out at others—using *all* of their attention and awareness to do so.

For them, life is somewhat like a movie, not in the sense that they are not involved and "present," but in the sense that they are able to see and observe fully without the distraction of self-consciousness.

We have a friend who is a doctor in a small Idaho town. He practices every kind of medicine on every kind of patient. He told us once that he occasionally runs onto someone who has become such a proficient observer that he can detach himself and watch everything, even himself. Such patients, says the doctor, can rise above not only their emotions and self-consciousness, but even above their pain. They *observe* the pain. It is, in a way, interesting to them. They wonder if the pain will increase, how much it will increase, how they will react if it does increase. It is as though they were watching a movie of themselves.

We once knew a basketball coach who talked in much the same way about some of his best players from over the years. In pressure situations, instead of clutching and becoming stressed and tense with self-awareness and with the possibilities of being a hero or a failure—instead of this, they become interested in how they will respond, what they will do, whether they have what it takes to make the right play. They watch everything, even themselves, with the interested, entertained, insightful eye of the trained observer.

It is ironic that we say, "Don't just be a spectator, an observer of life—get involved." In reality, those who have learned to truly observe are the very ones who do become meaningfully involved.

There is a best-selling tennis book called *Inner Tennis* that applies many of the techniques of Zen and of meditation to the game. One of the most interesting points the book makes is that if we can learn to truly watch what is happening, including what *we* are doing, we will know exactly what to change, what to do, where to improve. Tennis players, in other words, have seen enough good tennis to know how to hit shots properly. Their body, their inner self, knows how, but their mind is telling them, "Pull your racket back, don't overhit, keep your knees bent, watch the ball," so insistently that they become nervous and self-conscious.

Just learn to watch, to observe, the book says. When you see what you are doing you will make your own adjustments.

Life is the same. When we are always judging ourselves, comparing ourselves with others, wondering what so-and-so thinks of us, concerned about how we look, we become unable to observe: unable to see what is happening around us, unable to notice what others are doing, thinking, needing, and even unable to accurately and objectively see ourselves.

A law of mathematics is: "If you can clearly and accurately see and define the problem, you can solve it."

A law of baseball is: "If you can see the ball clearly as well as the spin that's on it, you can hit it."

A law of life is: "If you can see people clearly, you can love them."

There is an ancient Persian fable about the three princes of Serendip who go out into the world to seek their fortunes. As the story unfolds, none of the three actually finds the fortune he was seeking, but each, through his own awareness and through a certain amount of luck, finds something better. One finds love, one finds loyalty, one finds truth. All find opportunities to be of service and to help others, and thus, all find happiness.

Horace Walpole, the eighteenth-century British writer, once read the fable and became so impressed with the principle involved that he coined a new word. "Serendipity," he said, "is that ability, through sagacity and good fortune, to find something good while searching for something else."

Those who develop their sagacity, or their powers of observation and awareness, end up gaining the almost magical quality of serendipity. They see not only things that most people miss, but also opportunities: opportunities to achieve, to progress, to learn, to help, to serve, to be charitable.

"If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, an unfailing antidote against boredom, disenchantment, preoccupation with things that are artificial." (Rachel Carson.)

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Write poetry.* This may seem, at first glance, like a rather strange suggestion, particularly to put at the top of a list, but the writing of poetry, even the attempt to write poetry, is one of the most dramatically effective ways we know to sharpen awareness and observation skills.

Good poets are essentially people who look at the same things everyone does, but who see more. They see inter-

relationships between things; they see intense form and color; they see (or at least the good ones do) the inner, unexpressed feelings of people around them.

We are convinced that many of these "watchers" have not learned to be poets because they can observe—rather they have learned to observe because they are poets.

Attempts to capture beliefs or beauty, sentiments or situations, in a small number of carefully chosen words—such efforts are efforts at poetry, and they cause one to look hard and to really see.

We are not suggesting that parents must write the kind of poetry Emily Dickinson spoke of when she wrote: "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?"

No, the poetry we amateurs write doesn't have to take anyone's head off; it doesn't even have to be shown to anyone! It can be private. The benefit is in the process of writing (and observing).

Try an experiment. Start modestly. Decide to write two poems a week for the next month, about anything. Just the commitment to do it will cause you to start noticing more and to start thinking about what you observe.

B. *Journals.* An alternative to writing poetry (or better yet, a companion to it) is journal writing, particularly if you attempt to describe your experiences and philosophies. Description is the fruit of our observation. We can describe only what we have observed. Our journals, in addition to being a living record of our lives and times, can be the evidence of our observations and can actually cause us to notice more in our children and in other associations than we otherwise would.

C. *The "blank books."* Still another writing method, and the one we like best of all, is the "blank book." Linda decided to get some lovely, hardbound books of manuscript paper, one for each child, and to begin to write her observations of

that child periodically, every few months, in the form of an ongoing letter to that child. When the children are married, one wedding present will be this book—containing their parents' lifelong observations and feelings about them.

Our motive for starting the blank books was to create something nice for our children and to cause ourselves to think very thoroughly about each of them as they were growing up. In addition to these functions, the blank books have produced in us a very exciting and very useful by-product. It is the motivation to notice and to make observations that are thoughtful and insightful enough to be worth retaining. Often what we see, and what we write in describing what we see, becomes a process by which we discover and solve needs.

D. *See the humor in life.* Next to poets, comedians may be our most observing group of people. One needs to notice and closely observe things before he can be funny about them.

Cultivating a sharper sense of humor and learning to observe more closely are two parts of another chicken-egg situation. Each leads to the other.

Perhaps the most valuable kind of humor to develop is the kind that allows us to laugh at ourselves, to avoid the heavy overseriousness that usually indicates we are thinking (and worrying) too much about ourselves.

G. K. Chesterson said, "A characteristic of the great saints is their power of levity. Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly. One 'settles down' into a sort of selfish seriousness; but one has to rise to a gay self-forgetfulness."

Take the time to sit around and do nothing with your children once in a while. Change your perspective a little and get on their level. Just talk. Joke with them, laugh with them. Fit in with them. Relax and find some easy, natural humor in the day-to-day situations.

E. *Watch children.* The simplest method for observing your children is the best one. It is simply to set aside a half-hour to do nothing *but* watch. Follow them around but stay

back so you are not a participant or an interferer, but a non-threatening observer. Then watch, watch! What interests a child; how does he approach different situations; how does he react to others? Think about what you see. Make notes on it.

F. *Your own methods.* Make a list of other ways that you can become more aware and observant during the month ahead.

III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to establish, within the minds of all family members, the goal of seeing and observing more closely during the coming month). After retaking last month's test, tell the children that you have concluded the month of focusing on loving others as Christ loved, but that you hope everyone remembers to continue to ask himself, "What would Jesus do?"

Tell them that during the coming month you want to concentrate on a skill that will help you to love others more. It is the skill of observing. Discuss why the power of observation is so important. Make a list:

—adds enjoyment to life
—helps us live more in the present
—causes us to recognize opportunities
—prevents us from missing things
—helps us notice the needs of others
—is the best method of education
—gives us more to talk about
—makes every day interesting

Point out that observing is fun, and that it is fun to have a goal together as a family (the goal of improving powers of observation). Mention that the goal can only be reached if family members help each other. Several people can observe more than one person and you can remind each other to observe.

Continue the discussion on the following points:

1. Read the Rachel Carson quote from the first section of this chapter and ask what it means.

2. Ask if anyone knows what *serendipity* means. Read and discuss about Horace Walpole and the three princes of Serendip. Ask what serendipity has to do with this month's goal of observing.

Test: As usual, take this test in the left-hand column of a divided page.

1. How many times during the past month have you
   a. written a poem?
   b. described something or written an observation in your journal?
2. Write the most detailed description you can of
   a. the room you sleep in
   b. your school room, home room, or office
   c. your best friend
   d. the most interesting nose you saw last month

Save the tests so you can retake them next fast Sunday.

B. *Nature walks* (to practice observation skills and create peaceful teaching moments). The best place to practice observing is the place where there is most to observe. Nature is a great teacher. There are things to be learned from everything we see, and metaphors for life everywhere we look.

Dostoevski said: "Love all of God's creations, both the whole and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the animals, love the plants, love each separate thing. If thou love each thing, thou will perceive the mystery of God in all; and when once thou perceive this, thou wilt

thenceforward grow every day to a fuller understanding of it: until thou come at last to love the whole world with a love that will then be all embracing and universal." Dostoevski is essentially describing charity—and he claims that observing and loving nature is the gateway to it.

George Washington Carver said, "I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only listen."

You don't necessarily have to go to a national park or a vast forest or to climb a high mountain to experience and observe nature. But you do have to be somewhat alone with a child, and to have a focused feeling of calmness and solitude. A park, a creekside, a stand of trees, a garden, even a backyard or a sunset can provide the proper setting. We don't have to look very hard to find nature. We just have to look hard to really see it.

Take a walk and see what you can observe with your child. Make it a game if you wish, seeing who can point out what to the other. Try to notice things you have never seen before. Think (and talk) about why they are the way they are. Look for comparisons to make between what you see and some aspect of your life.

A short example: We were walking (two daughters and their dad) along a small, narrow trail in a summer canyon. The girls were picking flowers, seeing who could find the most different kinds. We were comparing them, noticing their petal structure, trying to decide where each kind would grow, observing how strikingly different each flower type was from every other variety. We came to some large dandelion-type flowers that had gone to seed and started blowing the tiny parachutes into the blue sky and watching them float on the breeze. The twelve-year-old picked a large, perfectly round one, held it up to the sun so that the knob in the center of the radiating parachute seeds covered the sun in her eye. She showed us how the sunlight dazzled the white seeds, turning the flower into a shimmering round

crystal. The fourteen-year-old said she thought each dandelion had over a hundred seeds and that each one was just slightly different from all the rest. That led us into a little discussion of individuality and of how every person is completely unique.

C. *"Close eyes and describe" game* (to make family members more consistently aware of their surroundings). Form a little family tradition of spontaneously asking a child (or letting him ask you) to close his eyes tight and describe what is around him.

Play the game whenever you are in a new place to see how much of his environment a person has observed. If you are eating in a restaurant, for example, can someone (without preparation) close his eyes and describe the carpet, the wallpaper, the lighting, the waitress, the plates and utensils, or the table?

D. *The "interesting things" game* (to encourage children to observe—and to share what they observe). At the dinner table, or at some other opportune time, take turns thinking back and relating the most interesting thing you saw during the day.

Another variation on this is to have a book of blank paper at some prominent place in the home, called an "interest book." Instead of money or bank interest, the book is for people's interest. Any family member, upon noticing something interesting, can write a sentence or two about it in the interest book. Other family members, especially when feeling bored, can pick up the book and read about these discoveries.

E. *Poetry writing* (to improve observing skills and descriptive ability). Just as it helps parents become more observant, an attempt to write poetry can greatly increase children's ability to see. Take a poetry class together if you have a chance. Or invite someone who does some writing to come to dinner some evening and have him give you a little instruction.

Read to your children a poem or two that you have written. Explain to them the connection between poetry and your objective of becoming more observant. Encourage them to give it a try. Give lavish praise for any effort they make.

F. *"Perspective trips"* (to increase children's opportunities to observe). As time and resources allow, travel with your children. Trips need not be long or expensive to accomplish the purpose of giving children a broader perspective. Children who grow up in one single place may have the advantage of security and "roots," but they also have the disadvantage of limited perspective and of getting the impression that "all the world is just like this."

As you travel, make observation and conversation your goals. Notice new things, new ways of doing things, different styles, and so on.

G. *Looking into eyes* (to help children begin to learn the art of observing feelings). Teach your children that the very most interesting place to watch and look is into someone else's eyes. The eye really is the window to the soul, and those who learn to look directly into the eyes of others tend to observe more about other people and to be less self-aware and self-conscious. Have a family tradition of looking at each other's eyes when you talk, and in any one-on-one conversation.

H. *Optical illusions* (to increase interest in observation and to teach children that quick, careless observation can fool people). Look in any library for books with interesting optical illusions (such as the old woman/young woman picture where some see one face and others see another, or pictures where two equal lines appear unequal). Such books can promote lively interest and discussion and can open opportunities to talk about observing and looking carefully at things.

I. *Mirror-window game* (to impress children with how different the world can look when we are more aware of

others than of ourselves). Glass stores will usually sell a small piece of "one-way glass" that acts as either a mirror or a window, depending on the light. Using such a piece of glass or, alternatively, an empty picture frame or window frame that you can see through, play the following game:

Hold the glass (or frame) up in front of a family member's eyes so that he sees another person. Ask him to describe the person: what he is doing, what it looks like he wants, and so on. Then pretend that the glass (or the frame) is a mirror instead of a window. Have the person describe what he sees now (himself).

Point out that we can't have it both ways. We either see ourselves or we see others. We can't be observant if we are thinking about ourselves. We will miss much of the beauty in the world (as well as the chances to help others and make them happy) if our glass is always a mirror.

A quote from George Bernard Shaw helps make the point: "This is a true joy in life . . . the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

Those who see through windows are a force of nature, a force for good, a force that enjoys life and helps others to do the same. Those who see into mirrors are the "selfish little clods" of which Shaw speaks.

J. *Game: "Observing Noses"* (an enjoyable way to practice observing skills and to impress children with how much variety and uniqueness there is in the world). Pick a certain day and have everyone in the family observe noses. Tell the children that you will discuss that night at supper the most interesting noses each person saw that day. Have them look for long noses, hook noses, "ski-jump" noses, pug noses, and so on. Ask them to remember the noses they find interesting so they can describe them. You might also teach them a little lesson in discretion before they embark: "Subtle glances, please."

K. *Your own methods.* Once again, as you finish this "month," take a few moments to think of other ideas that would teach your children to be more observant.

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L. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned). On the fast Sunday that ends this "month," retake the test from the beginning of this section. If you have done most of the exercises for children during the month, they will find that they do far better on the test than they did last fast Sunday.

Then talk about the need to continue to observe and be sagacious even as you shift to next month's goal. Discuss the family focal point that follows as a way of continuing what you have learned.

IV. Family Focal Point

The serendipity planning system (to make observing skills a daily habit). It's hard to practice what you preach, and there are certainly many things we have written about and recommended to other parents that we don't do a very good job on ourselves.

One thing we have been very consistent with (perhaps because we enjoy it so much and learn so much from it) is the practice of Sunday goal-setting sessions. We just sit down together and everyone plans his or her coming week. For smaller children this consists of a couple of simple goals and of deciding when they will do them.

We are now, with our children age twelve and older, also using a very simple form of daily planning. We call it "serendipity planning," and it consists of a blank piece of paper on

which a child writes out his schedule for the day. He does this on the left-hand side of the page, leaving the right-hand column to write the things he has observed, and the things he did differently than he had planned because he observed and noticed another (greater) need or opportunity. The left column is labeled "plan" and the right column is labeled "serendipity."

Remember that *serendipity* means "finding, through *awareness*, something good while looking for something else."

Children, by the time they are twelve or so, and particularly as they get to the midteens, can understand and have a lot of fun with this principle. A fourteen-year-old, for example, might have had a plan for a given day to get up early, study for a test, go to school, come home and practice piano, call her friend, do homework, and go to bed. During the course of the day, however, by trying to be observant and aware, she might also make a new friend in her civics class, notice that auditions for the school play had been set, or even discover a new sweater she loved and find out where to get it. She might also observe that a girl in her gym class was feeling left out because she was the "odd number" and had to sit out the volleyball game.

Her planner might look like this:

Plan:	*Serendipity:*
6:30 – study	
breakfast	auditions for "Mousetrap"
8:00 – school bus	start next week
10:00 – math test	Suzie's sweater—
(get A)	only $18 at dress shop
	met Evelyn—just
	moved from Boston
	cheered up Patty in Gym
3:30 – practice piano	
	walked home with Evelyn—
	did homework together
do homework	shifted piano practice
	to here

Many parents, even if they use day timers or planning books themselves, don't think very much about their teenage children using them—perhaps because they think children should be allowed to be less structured and have more fun.

The serendipity planner really *promotes* fun, however, and increases children's awareness. The sheets also become a sort of journal as well as a planner. The children can put them in a looseleaf binder at the end of the week if they want to save them.

In the Sunday planning sessions, parents have a chance to look over the planners from the past week and praise the child and reminisce about the serendipity that occurred as a result of observation.

In our family, definitions of a "good day" and of an "even better day" have evolved. A good day is one in which you get done all the things that you had planned. An even better day is one in which you noticed some opportunity or had some "serendipity" that made it a better day than you had planned.

V. Summary

Not many people in the world are consciously or intentionally self-centered. We are not insensitive or selfish because we intend to be that way or because we do not wish to be better.

The reason we do not do more good things is that we don't think of them. The reason we don't think of them is because we don't see the needs or the opportunities that lead to them. If we could see what was wrong in a given situation, and if we could see what to do about it, we would usually do it. But we are isolated by not seeing: by our unawareness and by the self-centeredness that not only makes it hard to see, but also makes us unhappy and self-worried at the same time.

Seeing, then, is the first step, the first skill to be mastered in the equation of charity. We can train ourselves (and our children) to observe. We get good at it by practicing it.

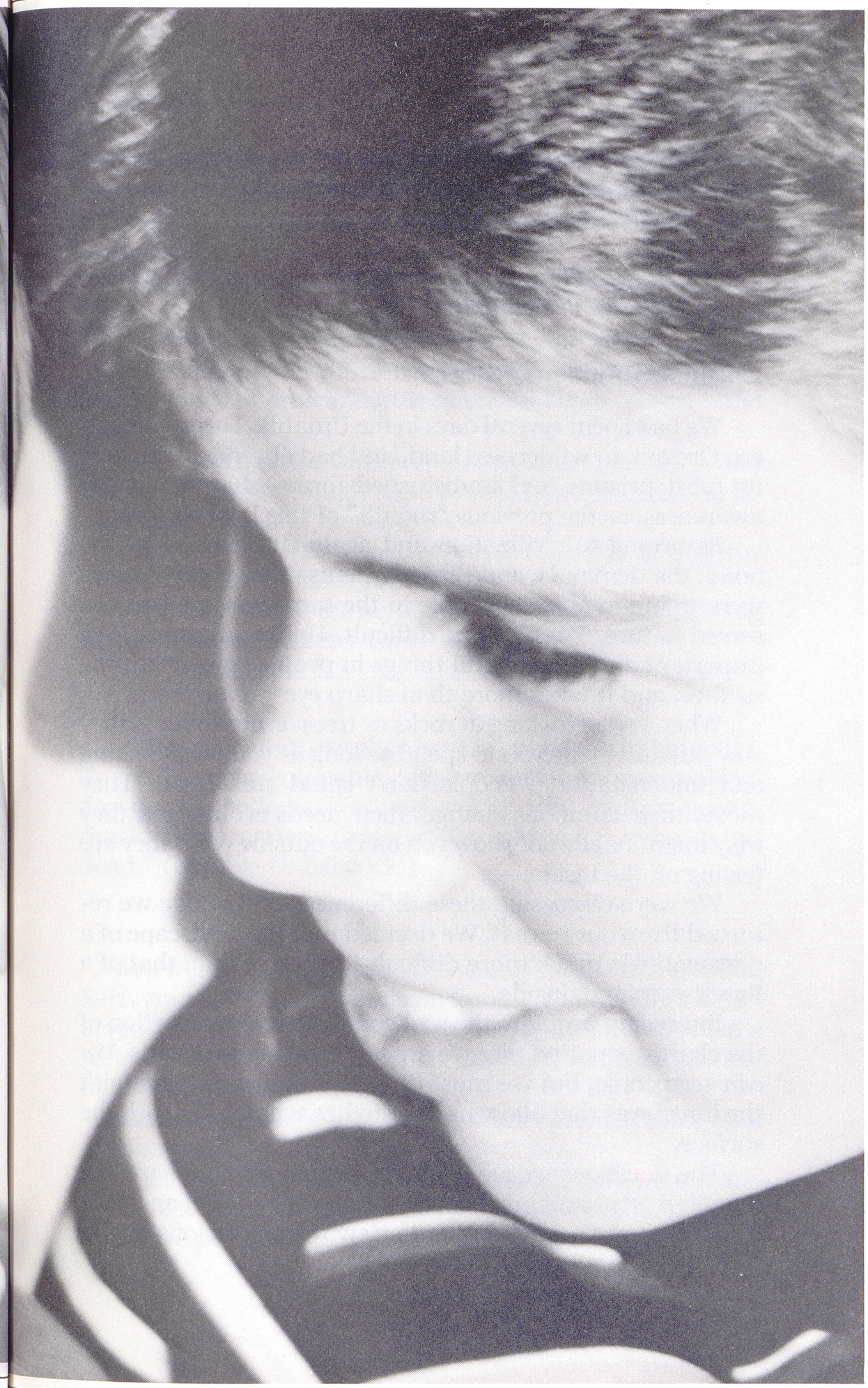
As it becomes a more natural part of us, we can progress to the next level of seeing, which involves listening and visualizing and understanding what is beneath the things that we see.

MONTH

5

Listening and Visualizing

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity



"Those who are quick in talking are not always quick in listening. Sometimes even their brilliance produces a kind of stupidity." (G. K. Chesterton.)

"No man really becomes a fool until he stops asking questions." (Charles P. Steinholtz.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

We had spent several days in the Umatilla Forest in Eastern Oregon, in wilderness land, and had observed nature in its most pristine and undisturbed form—sharpening our awareness, as the previous "month" of this book suggests.

Returning to civilization and again surrounded by the noise, the demands, and the judgments of everyday life, we were trying to observe people in the same way we had observed nature. We found it difficult. Unlike in nature, the important and meaningful things in people lie beneath the surface, and it takes more than sharp eyes to see them.

When you're looking at rocks or trees or mountains, they stay put and invite you to spend as long as you wish looking and understanding. People don't stand still at all. They move, their emotions change, their needs evolve, and they may intentionally not show you on the outside what they are feeling on the inside.

We were discussing these differences on the day we returned from our retreat. We decided that the landscape of a personality is much more difficult to observe than that of a forest or mountainside.

But seeing people is the real goal, and it is the portion of the charity equation that we are now seeking to discuss. We *can* see people, but we must do so with our ears, and with the inner eyes that allow us to visualize what is beneath the surface.

The questions we ask and the interest we show are like the robot arms and pinchers that grasp our subject and turn it different ways, allowing us to view it from various angles

and to perceive what it really is and what it contains. Our ears and our thought receptors are like the microscope through which we take in information and zoom in for a closer look.

Wilfred A. Peterson attempted to define awareness:

"It is identifying yourself with the hopes, dreams, fears and longings of others, that you may understand them and help them.

"It is learning to interpret the thoughts, feelings, and moods of others through their words, tones, inflections, facial expressions and movements.

"It is stretching the range of eye and ear; it is taking time to look and listen and comprehend.

"It is discovering the mystic power of silence and coming to know the secret inner voice of intuition."

"Life is what we are alive to. It is not length but breadth. To be alive only to appetite, pleasure, pride, money-making, and not to goodness, kindness, purity, love, history, poetry, music, flowers, stars, God and eternal hope is to be all but dead." (Maltbie D. Babcock.)

We were on a yacht once in the Caribbean with Graham Kerr, gourmet cook of television fame. He told us that he believed all truly good cooks had the ability to carefully read a recipe, and, without so much as touching or mixing a single ingredient, taste the outcome.

Great composers hear music while reading notes on a printed page.

Poets feel the wind they are describing with their pen.

Artists see their picture in their mind's eye long before they have put paint to canvas.

Good bowlers see the path their ball will take before they release it from their hand.

And parents—those who observe their children and listen to them—begin to visualize the type of persons they can grow to become long before the years pass that lead to their vision.

Visualizing is a form of spiritual creation. It is seeing something as real in its future state as it now is in its present state. It is the seed of faith. It is the power of the mind manifesting itself!

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Alter social habits.* As we seek to improve our own listening and visualizing skills (so that we can be effective in teaching the same abilities to our children), we might first concentrate on some of our social habits.

Much of the socializing we do consists either of "small talk," where the objective is just to keep the conversation going and avoid awkward silences, or of "impressing," where most of what we say is designed to enhance the other person's opinion of us.

If these habits can be altered, great benefits are available. Three guidelines can help:

1. *Ask and listen.* Seek for areas of interest, areas in which another person has expertise and you have interest. Ask, and let one question lead to another. While you are learning, the other person will be flattered by your interest and your attention.

2. *Praise and compliment.* As you listen, listen for things you genuinely admire or like. When you find one, *mention* it. A specific, relevant compliment is often the most valuable thing we can give someone.

3. *Smile and remember names.* A smile is the most easy

and natural way to tell someone you like him. And a person's own name is the most important word in the universe to him. When you meet someone, repeat his name three times in your conversation. Then write it down as soon as you part company. Review and remember all the new names you've collected at the end of each week, fixing them in your permanent memory.

The three foregoing points are good general social advice—but now try this thought: They all work and they are all important for use with your own adolescent children. Listen to *them* and find specific things to admire and compliment them on, and let them see your smile as often (at least) as you see theirs.

B. *Active listening or "Rogerian Technique."* Children (and adults, for that matter) will tell you a remarkable number of important and personal things *if you let them.* In most conversations (and particularly those with our children) we are too directive. We ask about this or that (our own interests) and fail to let the person get to *his* interests.

Rogerian technique (named after the great pioneering psychologist Carl Rogers) is to simply listen actively, to repeat what people have said (in your own words), thus reinforcing that you have heard them and are interested. You listen with your eyes and body too, tuned in, focused on the person and on what he is saying.

People will go on and on when put in this secure, "nourished" situation, and what they say will often be much more interesting (and give you much more insight into them) than what they would say if you were determining the direction of the conversation.

With adolescent children, the technique is particularly effective. Just say, "Mmmmm" or "I see" or "so, in other words, you just didn't feel good about . . ." or whatever you can to demonstrate that you are really hearing—and they will go on and on, eventually telling you all you wanted to know and more.

C. *A related "argument technique."* Next time you are embroiled in an argument with your spouse, try this: Have a rule that before you can make your next point you must repeat or restate his last point back to him accurately enough that he will agree that it *was* his point. Having done that, you may return to your side of the argument and state your next point.

You will find that the argument is defused and that you suddenly understand each other. Use the same rule when you are debating with one of your adolescent children.

D. *Relationship goals—relationship descriptions.* Most of us assume that, although our relationships are the most important thing in our lives, we can't really set goals for them in quite the same way as we set goals for the things we want to do and achieve.

The fact is, however, that we can set relationship goals, in much the same way as we set achievement goals. For both, the key is beginning with the end in mind. With a "people goal" we can sit down and describe a future relationship that we want to have. We can visualize it, study its components, fix it in our minds. Then we can go out and make the vision into reality.

Try sitting down with pen in hand and visualizing the relationship you want to have in five years with your ten-year-old son, who will then be fifteen. Describe on paper what you visualize. Read that description over every month or so and gradually it will "program" you right into the relationships you want to have.

E. *The husband-wife "detective" game.* Many social occasions these days tend to function on a "small talk" level. People talk about the weather or gossip about other people.

An enjoyable way to break this trend, when you attend any function as a couple, is to have a contest between yourselves to see who can accumulate the most information about any of the other people in attendance. To win, you have to be a better questioner and a better listener than your

spouse. Each spouse attempts to ask the kind of questions that get them into whatever the real interest is of the person they are talking with. Once they get to that level, there is much to be learned.

After the function, on the way home, husband and wife compare notes, tell each other what they learned about what (and about whom), and see who found out the most.

F. *Taking notes.* Anyone who has ever made the attempt to be a serious student knows how much careful note taking can enhance and improve and preserve his listening ability. If you could take notes in your personal conversations, you would probably ask better questions and remember much more of what you heard.

Well—you can! Or at least you almost can. What you can do immediately after a conversation, as soon as you have a moment, is to make a note or two in your day timer, on a pad in your purse, or on the partnership planners that will be discussed in Month Seven.

After you meet a new person, as soon as possible after parting company, jot down his name. Do the same when you learn something interesting about someone, or when your listening informs you of any new or significant fact. If you use a day timer or appointment book, try to put whatever notes you make on the day and the time when the conversation happened.

Here is the interesting point. Studies have shown that any form of new information, when it is reviewed twelve to twenty-four hours after it has been learned, will stay in one's mind approximately ten times as long as it would if it were never reviewed. This applies to the notes we make about people—one review several hours after obtaining it will lock it permanently in the memory.

So, each evening (or the next morning) simply review any "after-listening" notes you have made. The information will then become yours and will be available to your memory when you need it.

G. *Your own methods.* Pause for a moment and write down any additional ways or techniques you can think of that would help you learn to be and practice being a better listener and a better asker of questions.

III. Exercises for Teaching Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion of month's objectives and pretest* (to interest children and get them involved and to make them more aware of the goal and focus of the month ahead).

By now, your children are most likely aware of the objectives of developing a new skill each month. It is not crucial for them to know that the ultimate combination of these skills is charity, although it's fine if they *do* know that. What they need to understand is that these are skills that *you* desire and are working on. They also need to realize how valuable and useful these abilities are.

Begin this month with a brief discussion of the importance and benefits of being an excellent listener:

— it will raise your grades in school

— it will win you new friends and make your existing friends like you more

— it will make every day more interesting

— it will make you less self-conscious

— it will give you chances to help other people

— it will make you a good conversationalist—someone that others like to be around

— it will make you more "popular"

— it will help you in your occupation—no matter what occupation you choose

Also define *visualization* as the ability to see with the mind's eye, to mentally picture things as you would like them to be. Point out its benefits also:

— it can make you an effective goal setter
— it can help you see the best in other people
— it can enable you to become what you want to be
— it is the key to developing true faith
— it can make you more poetic and sensitive
— it can help you discover better ways to help others

Test (on left half of divided sheet of paper)

1. Write down any questions you remember asking during the past month.
2. Write down the names of persons you tried hard to listen to during the past month.
3. What do we listen with?
4. How can you get someone else to really talk to you?
5. Whom did you learn something from this month?
6. Did you discover a need that anyone had this month (by listening to him)?

B. *The question game* (to focus attention on questions and on the skill and enjoyment of asking them).

Occasionally, when you are in a conversation situation with your children (at dinner, riding in the car, and so on), play the "question game." You mention a topic and see who can ask the best question on that topic. Choose topics that are relevant to the moment and praise every question that is asked, particularly the thoughtful, difficult ones.

Explain when you get the chance (even repeatedly) that asking good questions is even more important and relevant to learning and education than giving good answers.

Questions, children should realize, are also the tools by which we get to know others and discover their interests, their talents, and their needs.

When children think hard enough about a topic to ask a difficult question about it, they become interested—often so

interested that they will amaze you by actually looking for the answer in an encyclopedia or other "never voluntarily approached" source.

One effective variation on the question game is to have the topic be a *feeling* (such as loneliness, discouragement, or enthusiasm), or to hold up a picture that expresses an emotion and have the children pose questions that they would ask that person. Such a variation on the game is a good preparation for the upcoming chapters on feelings and empathy.

C. *The listening game* (to help children recognize that listening is a learned skill). An alternative game to play in similar situations is the listening game. Tell a story or situation or experience involving as many details as you can think of (but not more than you can remember). Then ask about those details one at a time and see who has been the best listener.

D. *The one-two punch of compliment and question: putting people at ease* (to help children understand one of the purposes of good questions).

Both through your example and through any discussion you can muster, help children see that they can put others at ease by asking people good, relevant questions and by finding some small thing to compliment them on. Explain that an important skill in life is putting people at ease so that they can relax and talk openly about what they feel. Give some examples of how interest-showing questions and a thoughtful compliment can accomplish this.

A good way to capture children's interest is to present this concept in the form of an equation:

$$Q + C = AE$$

Put this equation on a piece of paper and post it on the wall or on a bulletin board for a day where it will get noticed. When someone asks what it means explain (Questions + Compliments = At Ease) and tell him that it is a

skill you are trying to learn. Invite the child to learn it with you.

E. *"What could you learn from him?"* (to teach children a new way of looking at people).

Get in the habit, whenever you are with your children, of pointing out someone (on the street, in stores, on various jobs) and asking, "What might you be able to learn from him? If you could ask that person just one question, what would it be?" (Our four-year-old usually asks, "Where do you sleep?")

F. *Argument technique* (to teach listening skills at the same time as you solve arguments).

Adapt item C from this chapter's "Approaches for Parents" section to your children's situation.

G. *Play "twenty questions"* (to hone children's analytical questioning skills).

To play this traditional old game, one person thinks of some object or thing known to both players and tells whether it is animal, vegetable, or mineral. The other player may ask twenty yes-or-no questions to determine what it is. The game teaches children to ask carefully thought-out questions that narrow the field of possibilities.

H. *Game: "looking and listening for needs"* (to begin focusing the "seeing" and "listening" skills on opportunities for service).

Tell the children that this game is an extension of the "observing noses" game you played last month. But tell them that this time they'll be looking not at people's noses but at their needs. Explain that needs are a lot harder to see than noses. To see needs, you have to look hard and listen hard. Someone might just be feeling a little discouraged and need some encouragement, or a little insecure and need a compliment. Or someone might feel left out and need a friend, or useless and need to be asked to help. Or there might be more obvious needs, such as those of a hungry child or a lonely older person.

Select a day for the game, a day when you can be to-

gether for dinner in the evening. During the day, keep track of how many needs you can notice and identify. Take notes. At dinner that night, report on and discuss and compare those notes.

I. *Your own methods.* Take a few moments and think about what other things you could do to teach the skills of listening. Think hard—ideas will come.

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J. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned).

On the fast Sunday that ends this "month," retake the test from the beginning of this section. Then discuss the progress everyone has made in becoming a good listener, questioner, and visualizer.

IV. Family Focal Point

The "Ice Breaker" award (to regularly encourage and reward children in their efforts to ask and listen).

Nothing gives genuine recognition and praise as clearly and strongly as an award. In an effort to have some regular way of discussing our children's efforts to ask good questions and listen carefully to others, we added the "Ice Breaker" award to the "What Would Jesus Do?" award that we had been giving to one of the children each Sunday. (See Month Three.)

The new award consisted of a large *I.B.* lettered on construction paper and mounted on cardboard. After Sunday dinner we ask, "Who is in the running for the Ice Breaker award?" Children think back over the week and remember

the times they took the conversation initiative and asked good questions in their efforts to get to know others. Whoever can tell of the best instance of listening and asking the kind of questions that gave them insights and information about the person they were speaking to wins the award and posts it on his bedroom door for the coming week.

As with the "What Would Jesus Do?" award, the real benefit is in the discussion and in everyone's efforts to think back and recall their own efforts to ask and listen.

V. Summary

Asking and listening is a form of analysis, a form of exploration, a form of discovery! And it is the most exciting form. Our questions and our interest collect the "specimens" of information and insight, put them on slides, and prep them for a closer look. Our listening is the microscope through which we become aware and in tune.

A listener is a learner. And a listener is fulfilling one of the prerequisites of charity.

SECTION IV

FEELING

Understanding feelings accurately is at least as important as, and much more difficult than, seeing clearly or hearing precisely.

Congruence is the ability both to know and to admit how you feel. *Concern* involves taking the same level of interest in the persons you are with. *Empathy* implies an extension of the sensitivity to those you are not with or have not even met.

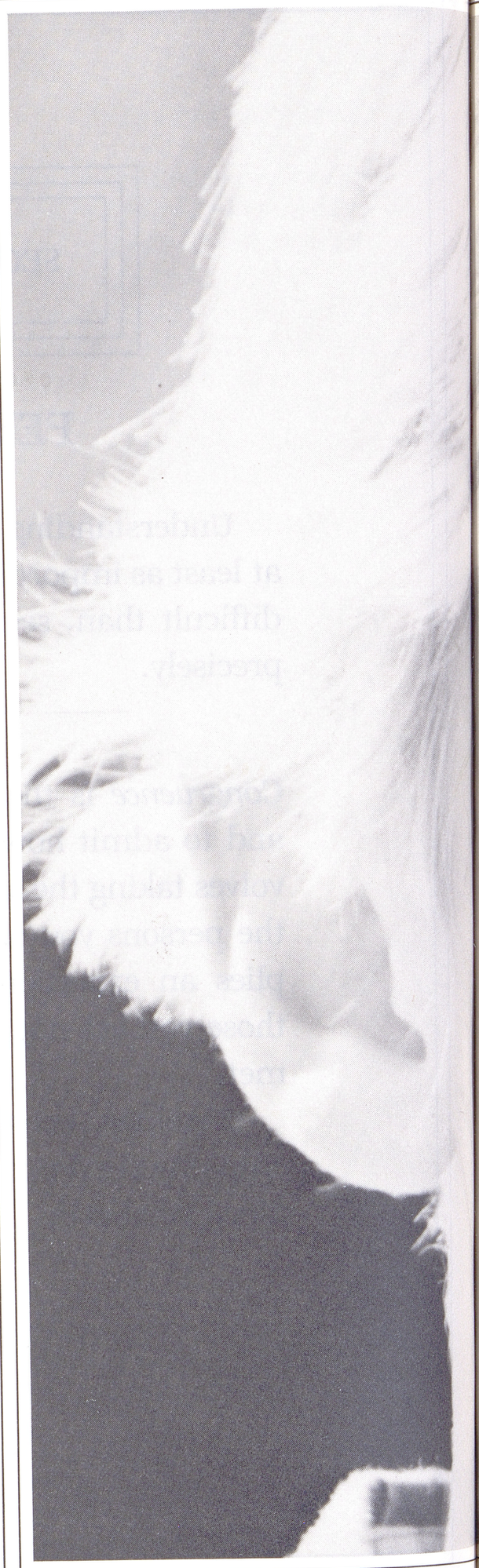
Together, congruence, concern, and empathy are the threads in the emotional fabric of charity.

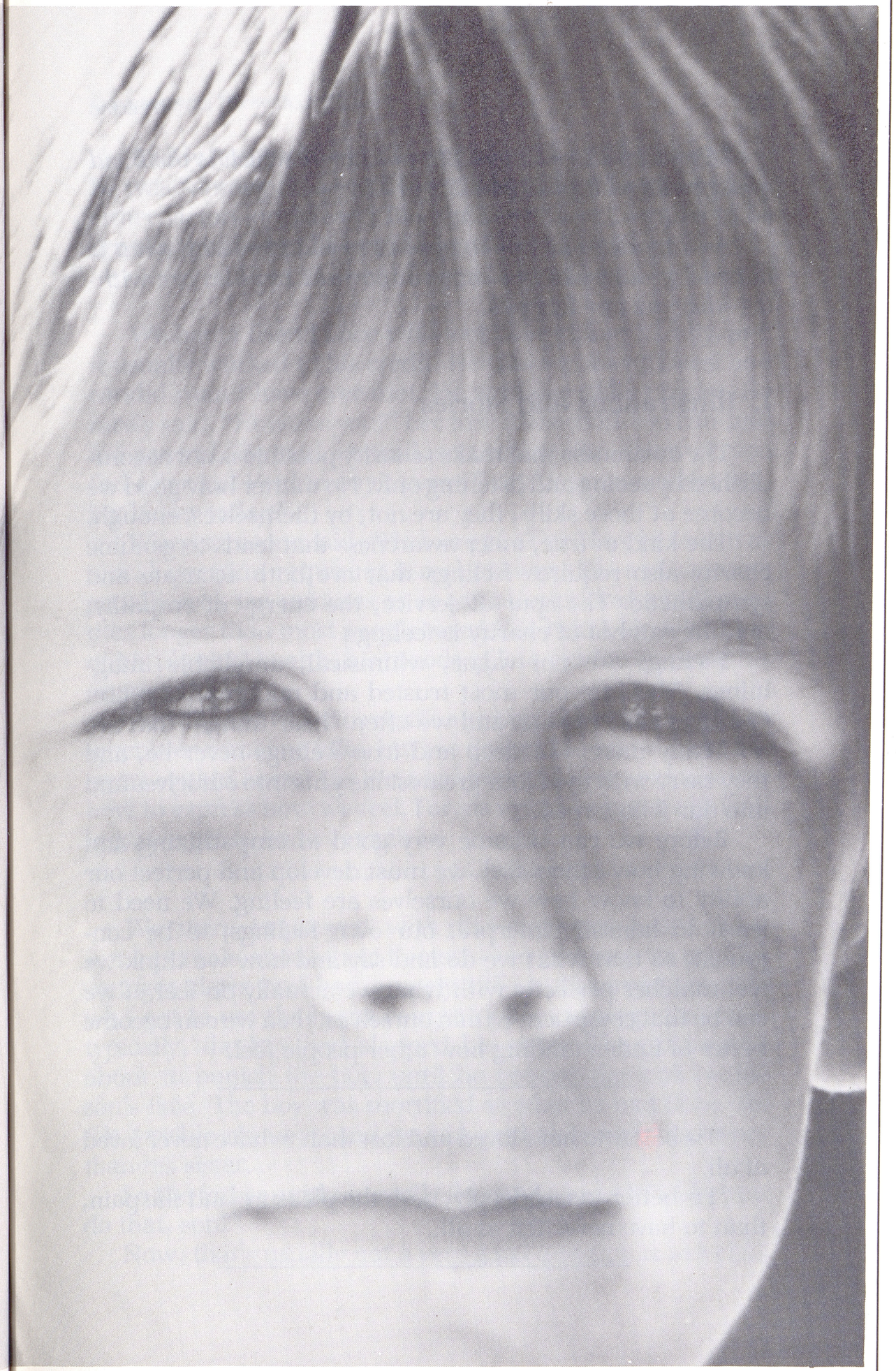
MONTH

6

Congruence: "How Do I Feel?"

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity





"Above all these things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness." (Colossians 3:14.)

As important as it is to observe and understand what is outside of ourselves, the more important realities are within—they are our feelings.

I. Illustrations and Stories

The awareness that makes charity possible is not accomplished by seeing and listening only. No matter how good we become at those skills, they are not, by themselves, enough.

The kind of true, inner awareness that leads to genuine charity also requires feelings that are both accurate and sympathetic. The spur of service, the energy of empathy, and the catalyst of charity is feelings.

Feelings are not vague, whimsical, unreliable imaginings. They are our most trusted and undeceptive sense. Our eyes can trick us, and we often "hear things" that are not really there. But deep and true feelings never lie, and they carry with them our greatest insights into ourselves and into our fellow men.

Before we can become very good at empathizing and knowing how others feel, we must develop and perfect our ability to know how we ourselves are feeling. We need to learn to honestly interpret our own feelings, to be congruent, so that what we do and say and how we think we feel matches perfectly with what we actually do feel. If we can be that congruent within ourselves, then we can become better at understanding how other people feel.

'Tis better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all.

'Tis better to feel deeply, both the pleasure and the pain, than to have never felt at all.

Teddy Roosevelt said that the place he would least like to be was "among those cold and timid souls who never knew either victory or defeat." He, like most of us, wanted to be among those who dare to live, and dare to feel!

We had a friend once who took everything literally, and it usually worked to his credit. He was the most honest and candid man I have ever met. He was also quite precise. He rarely said, "How are you?" because it was both too trite and too general. He said, instead, something like, "How do you feel after last Wednesday's game?" or, "Is your mother feeling better today?"

When someone said, "How are you?" to him, he took it as a real question requiring a real answer. His real answers usually took ten minutes or so (about nine and a half minutes longer than most people wanted to hear). He told them of his physical health, his moods of late, his family, even his finances.

We may not want to reevaluate every facet of how we are whenever someone asks, but we do need to know those answers within ourselves. We need both to know and to know how to express how we feel. For, as we get to know our feelings, we get to know ourselves!

We were impressed with the story we heard from some parents about their thirteen-year-old son. He and his younger sister had had a nasty tiff—a disagreement over who got to use the home computer one evening—and, untypically, the boy had slapped his sister. The father was about to punish the boy, until he noticed the look on his son's face. The boy was mortified at what he had done. He felt terrible about it, and he was probably suffering more than his sister.

So the father, without really thinking, said, "Why did you do that, son?"

Now, that's usually not a very good question to ask chil-

dren, particularly younger ones. We say something like, "Why did you pour out that cereal?" and of course the child doesn't *know* why he did it.

But with this boy, the question was more meaningful. The father really did wonder why he had done it, and so did the boy. No answer came to him, though, and he only said, "I'm really sorry, Dad. I'll make it up to her."

About an hour later, the boy came to his dad and said, "I've been thinking about your question and I think I know the answer."

The father looked at his son, obviously proud of him, and asked him to go on.

"Well," said the boy, "I went to my room to think about it, and I remembered that my math teacher embarrassed me in front of the whole class today. I was so mad at her, but I couldn't do anything about it so I just kept all those bad feelings inside of me all day. I think I just let them out at Sis. I told her all this—what I'm telling you—and she said she'd forgiven me for slapping her."

Teens and even preteens are pretty good at talking about how they feel—and even at knowing why they feel that way and at being able to explain it to others. And they get better at it if we praise their every attempt and ask them often, "How do you feel?"

We have another friend who delights in putting everything into categories. He likes to mentally "box things up" nice and neat, and he is a little distressed when he finds something that won't quite fit anywhere.

One day he said to us, "You know, I think you can categorize people by what they think first thing in the morning just as they are waking up." He went on to explain that he thought there were three groups. The first group, the real achievers and doers, wake up and say, "What can I accomplish today?" The middle group is people who say, "What do

I have to do today?" And the third group (and probably the most common) says, "I wonder what will happen to me today?"

The point he was making, of course, is that it is better to act than to react, and that we really can control our own destinies.

We don't disagree with that conclusion or with those categories. But we think there is a fourth category, a better (and happier) way to look forward to a new day. The fourth type of person wakes up in the morning and says to himself, "What can I enjoy today? What opportunities does this day afford me to *feel?*"

Such a person is capable of enjoying failures as well as successes, capable of taking joy in someone else's accomplishments and good fortune as well as his own, capable of watching for serendipity or happy surprises, capable of living a rich and full life, regardless of circumstances.

When we stop to think about it, our ultimate goals are all feeling goals. We want to be happy; we want to be fulfilled; we want to be loved; we want to be kind; we want to have inner peace. All these goals are feelings. We may say we want to earn money, to build a new house, to finish college—but these are all secondary goals. The reason we want the money or the house or the college degree is because we believe it will make us happier, because it will make us feel better.

The best thing to say then, when we first open our eyes, is, "What can I feel today?" and "How can I enjoy those feelings?" If it is a day filled with work responsibilities and difficult tasks, we can derive feelings of accomplishment, completion, even purposeful fatigue. If it is a day of relaxation, we can derive feelings of rejuvenation and peace. If it is just a routine, drab, ordinary day, we can resolve to observe more and notice more, thus deriving feelings of interest and appreciation.

Memories are not years or days.
Memories are moments.
Memories are not sights or sounds.
Memories are feelings.

We were cross-country skiing on a sparkling white and blue and golden Saturday. As we glided along, stretching our legs, pushing our poles, huffing our steamy breath, we felt a sense of simple elation. "You know," Linda puffed, "this is a pretty good 'now.' "

Since then, we have used that phrase often. Sitting around the dinner table enjoying each other's company, enjoying a conversation with friends, watching a sunset, peeking in on a sweet, sleeping child, one of us will look at the other and say, "This is a pretty good 'now.' "

Learning to identify, recognize, and appreciate our inner feelings is good training for appreciating the "now." Please don't brush off this notion. Don't say, "Well, I think I already know how I feel." Most of us don't, most of the time. We don't know how we feel because we never ask ourselves.

Oh, we know how we feel in those very rare moments when we are struck with extreme sadness or filled with intense excitement. But most of the time we just feel "fine," or "okay," or "all right, I guess," or, if you live in England, "not *too* bad."

It is a skill to be more consistently in tune with how you feel. To do so, you must be aware and you must be honest—honest with yourself.

There is nothing that gives you more control over your feelings than being able to identify them: "I feel a little bit jealous of Frank." "I feel kind of proud of myself for fixing that thermostat." "I feel intense frustration when the boss asks me to stay for these late meetings."

Just knowing a feeling sometimes makes it your friend

rather than your enemy. And, once you're acquainted with it, it is easier to ask the feeling either to stay or to leave.

Back to our laws:
In baseball, if you can see the ball, you can hit it.
In math, if you can define a problem, you can solve it.
In life, if you can see people clearly, you can love them.
Within yourself, if you can clearly identify a feeling, you can either keep it and build on it or get rid of it.

If our goal is to teach our children charity, then the subject matter of the course really is feelings. The place to start (with children as well as with ourselves) is with our own feelings. Once we have a handle on those, we can use them like a net to catch the feelings of others.

Storm Jameson said that happiness came not from comfort but from the capacities "to enjoy simply, to think freely, to feel deeply, to risk life, to be needed."

Of her five "capacities," the middle one, "to feel deeply," is the fulcrum for all the others. Each of the other four produce happiness only as they create within us deep feelings.

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Be real.* We ought to learn to drop our façades and be honest about our feelings to ourselves as well as our children.

In fact, when you stop to think about it, the expression of real feelings benefits all concerned. Parents, by articulating what they are feeling, gain training in knowing themselves and also "depressurize" their emotions by telling about them. Children, as they hear their parents discuss their feelings, become reassured of their parents' honesty and of the

fact that their own feelings are okay and need not be hidden or suppressed.

In much recent parenting literature, experts have come to the consensus that the best way parents can respond to their children is to express how they feel. Instead of saying to a child, "You're bad for doing this," or "You're good for doing that," we say, "I feel upset when you do this," or "It makes me feel so good to see you do that."

Any alternative to being honest about your feelings amounts to some degree of dishonesty.

We are always troubled, for example, by a father who tries too hard always to act as if he were calm, when he is, in fact, livid or highly upset. This type of parent, when one of his small children has done something flagrantly naughty, takes him in his den and says (as he grits his teeth), "Now, Johnny, Daddy's not mad, and Daddy loves you, but you're going to have a little spank for what you did."

It's more honest to say, "Johnny, I feel very angry at what you did. In fact, I feel so upset by it that I think we had both better just sit here for a minute while I calm down before we talk about what the punishment should be."

So, approach number one for parents is, as usual, set the example! Try hard to recognize and identify your real feelings, and to express them to your spouse and your children.

B. *Learn to figure out the source of your feelings.* As we practice identifying and expressing our feelings, we ought to work on understanding where they come from. When Mom says, "I feel upset because Billy spilled his milk on my one good tablecloth, and he's old enough to be more careful!" She might want to ask herself *why* that upset her so much more than when the same thing happened last week. She might find that it's the fact that the checkbook didn't balance that really upsets her, and that Billy's milk just triggered the latent feeling.

Trying to identify the real source of feelings also helps us to be more accurate in naming them and expressing them. For example, you might say in the situation just mentioned,

"I feel really upset because I had some frustrations with my checkbook and now I've got this mess to clean up." On the other hand, if, instead of just spilling his milk, Billy had wilfully disobeyed you by stopping at a friend's house instead of coming straight home to babysit his brother as he was told to do, you might say, "I feel a little angry, Billy, because you broke the family law of obedience and caused me to miss an important meeting." In the first case *upset* is an accurate word, and the thing you are upset at is the *situation.* In the second case, *angry* is a more honest word, and you are angry at what your child did.

C. *Separate negative feelings about behavior from positive love for the child.* It is so important to be aware enough of this differentiation to make it clear to children. Sometimes the best way to be aware of it is to *say* it as simply as possible. Say, "I love you, Jennifer, but I'm very aggravated by what you just did!"

D. *Be open and candid about positive feelings.* Frustration, anger, and irritation are not the only feelings we ought to be honest about. Positive feelings such as pride, love, and concern should be expressed with equal honesty (instead of taken for granted and not mentioned, as is often the case).

When a child does well, gives something his best try, shows sensitivity, or exhibits any other good behavior, we should take every opportunity to tell him how good that makes us feel. Say, "I feel so happy when I see you sharing with your sister," or "It makes me feel proud and excited when I see a test paper like that."

This type of "I feel" expression is much more beneficial to a child than saying, "You are so smart in math." Children need to draw their own conclusions about themselves, and knowing how they made you feel will help greatly in this process.

Perhaps the most important place of all to be real and genuine is in the love we show for our children after we have disciplined them or shown our disfavor with something they have done. No words say it more clearly and directly than

those in D&C 121:43: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy."

Make no mistake, there are times when children perceive parents as their enemies, or at least as barriers to what they want to do and as constant critics who are forever disciplining, correcting, and finding things to be displeased with.

But when parents make a conscious effort to "show forth an increase of love," it completes the circle, making it very clear that it was the *behavior* that the parent was displeased with, and that no behavior could ever dilute the love he has for the child himself.

E. *Once you can recognize and express feelings, learn how to alter them.* Norman Cousins, whose book *Anatomy of An Illness* tracked his own battle with cancer, concluded (with himself as the evidence) that the mind can control what goes on in the body, even the correction of illness. Mr. Cousins believes the body is a "walking apothecary" that can release any number of different chemicals into the bloodstream, thus altering both a person's physical condition and how he feels.

Feelings are often a somewhat complex combination of the psychological, the mental, and the emotional man and of the situation he finds himself in. Thus we can change how we feel either by changing our situation or by changing something within us.

We can often change our situation by accomplishing something—by disciplining ourselves to get something done. It is remarkable how much even a small achievement can alter how we feel. Many times, though, it is easier to change ourselves than to change our situation.

Some people become experts in meditation, or in a relaxation technique, or in an exercise or aerobics type of activity, or in taking a brief nap, or in praying briefly but deeply—and each of these can substantially alter the mental state, pushing certain chemicals into the bloodstream and changing very dramatically how we feel.

All of us ought to find our own ways of consciously altering or changing the way we feel so that we do not have to endure damaging and dangerous negative moods or depression for long periods of time.

F. *At the same time, we should appreciate our moods and realize that most, if not all of them, have a positive side.* Our goal to be able to change how we feel should not extend to the point of wanting always to feel happy, optimistic, and outgoing. Everyone needs pensive times, quiet times, times for reflection, for reevaluation, even for sadness and worry.

All of these feelings have their uses. It is often in our deeper and perhaps less pleasant periods that we resolve to improve, search our hearts for real purpose and meaning, and become sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Christ was the perfect example of one who "descended below them all" and felt the deepest depths of sadness—and yet also felt the greatest of all joy. Usually the depths of a person's "valleys" match the height of his "peaks."

And there is something worse than feeling bad. It is not feeling at all.

The real goal to be worked toward this month is to feel more and to be more aware and more able to define and talk about what you feel.

We have come to the conclusion that no feeling is inherently bad. It's just that some feelings often manifest themselves in negative ways.

One might think of loneliness as a bad feeling, yet it could, if handled right, be the motivation for greater friendliness and more social effort. Anger, if controlled, could produce positive change, as could frustration or even disillusionment.

Practice, this month, learning to: (1) ask yourself how you feel; (2) answer the question to yourself; (3) find the positive aspects of that feeling and appreciate them; and (4) identify the negative aspects of the feeling and try to get rid of them.

G. *Relish those moments when you feel moved.* We saw a movie during the time we were writing this book that had a

particularly moving scene in it. As we drove home afterward, we began to discuss the phenomenon of being moved.

What happens when we hear an emotionally beautiful piece of music, or watch a performance of such excellence, or hear a testimony so touching that it brings tears to our eyes? We feel psychological changes within us. A thrill goes down our spine; we feel a tingling sensation; a lump comes to our throat, moisture to our eyes. Is this a chemical change? Does the sensation received by the mind secrete a chemical into our bloodstream that causes these reactions? Or is it really more of a spiritual phenomenon? Does our spirit, which is used to a more pure, higher realm of perfection and emotion, react to these higher things, to these beauties that seem a little beyond our world? Perhaps when we are moved, it is just that our spirit feels more at home in that brief moment of intense beauty or perfect performance, and we feel the thrill of returning home ever so briefly.

Whatever the explanation is, we all love to be moved because it is the deepest of feelings. And that thought reinforces the goal of this month—to deepen, better define, and better recognize our own feelings.

H. *Your own methods.* Take a few minutes and list any other approaches or methods you can think of that might help you to be more aware and more appreciative of your own feelings.

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III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to firmly establish, in everyone's mind, the objective for the month ahead of becoming more aware of your own feelings).

As usual with a new "month," begin with a discussion involving all family members eight and older. Build it around the following points:

1. *How important are feelings? and how real?* (In a way, feelings are more real than anything else because what we feel is what we are! And sometimes feelings are more reliable than any other sense. Our eyes can trick us, and our ears too, but our deepest feelings, if we can identify them and know them, will never lie to us.)

2. *Why is it important to be aware of our feelings and to try to know why we feel the way we do?* (If we can identify our feelings and their sources, we can appreciate them, we can control them better, and we can begin to develop the ability to tell how others feel as well.)

3. *Talk about goals for the month ahead.* (We're going to try to think more about how we feel, to tell each other how we feel, to identify and name our feelings.)

Test: As usual in opening a "month," have everyone (including parents) take a brief test in the left-hand column of a divided piece of paper.

1. Name as many different feelings as you can that you have experienced during the month just passed.

2. Pick out one feeling you remember having and explain why you felt that way—what made you feel that way.

3. Would it be good if we could always feel happy—if we could "get rid of" all the other feelings? Why or why not?

B. *Use the word "feel"—in telling and in asking* (to help children become more generally aware of your feelings and of theirs). As you form the habit of saying, "I feel," also form the habit of asking, "How do you feel?"

Move away from asking children so many "why," "when," and "where" questions and start asking more, "How do you feel about" questions. Encourage them to identify their feelings and express them to you, and praise every effort they make to talk about their feelings.

C. *Themes and speeches on feelings* (to give children additional opportunities to concentrate their thoughts on feelings they have experienced). As mentioned earlier, the best

way to focus our thoughts on something is to write about it or give a brief speech about it. Ask each family member to give a one-minute speech on a topic like "How I felt when Dad got home from his business trip," or "How I felt when I didn't make the Pep Club," or "How I felt last Wednesday when I finished my midterm test."

Pick subjects where feelings were quite obvious. Later, with some experience, you can pick situations where feelings were more subtle and harder to define ("How I felt yesterday afternoon at school") and where the children will have to think hard to remember and conclude how they felt.

Do the same thing with short, one-half-page themes.

Be sure *you* participate. Let them (the children) give you your speech or theme topic.

D. *The adjective game* (to assist children in defining their feelings and to increase their ability to verbalize those feelings).

As a family, make a long list of adjectives that describe how people can feel. Start with the most basic feelings ("happy," "sad," "mad," "frustrated," "embarrassed") and move to more specific and interesting adjectives ("murkey," "jumpy," "agitated," "perplexed," "elated").

Try to list at least one hundred words before you are finished. Explain that a good vocabulary helps us figure out our feelings as well as express them. Put the list up in a visible place and invite family members to add to it whenever they think of another good descriptive adjective or whenever they feel a certain way that is not described by any word on the list.

The list will add another dimension to the speeches or themes mentioned in item C and will also be useful whenever the question "How do you feel?" is asked in your family.

E. *The survey approach.* During your next family meeting have some fun with the insight gained from a family survey. Ask each child to write down a four-word description of each of his brothers and sisters and of both parents. Next ask him to write about how he feels about each one. You will be

fascinated and amazed at some of the results. Sometimes the best way to look at the world through your children's eyes is to ask them to write it down. (You may want to have your little ones that don't write verbalize this exercise for you.) You'll find that some aspects of your children's perspective of each other may be very different from your own because of the place where they fit in the family. This exercise may also reveal why some children behave as they do in the family constellation. It will also be excellent practice for the children in deciding and articulating how they *feel* about others.

F. *Humor* (to help children see that a sense of humor can modify their own bad feelings and also help others to feel better).

Get in the habit of thinking (and saying) "Was there anything funny or amusing about it?" Ask the question whenever someone is describing a feeling. Learn to look at the lighter side of things.

One formula says, "crisis plus time equals humor." And it is true that we look back on some of our biggest frustrations as rather humorous situations.

By consciously looking for the lighter side, we can inject some of the humor right into the crisis, and we can teach children how to modify their moodiest moods.

Also, encourage the telling of good, wholesome jokes and of laughter in general. The observation and listening skills of the last two chapters often lead to the noticing of something that is humorous and funny. Take the time to laugh and to encourage laughter. It is the nearest thing we have to a cure-all medicine. (Latest studies by Norman Cousins and others show that laughter actually *is* medicine. It causes chemical charges and secretions that overcome pain and cure illness.)

G. *Tracing your feelings* (to help children identify the sources of their feelings). After any of the foregoing methods which challenge us to define feelings, ask the question, "What caused the feeling?" Practice with your children the skill of identifying where feelings started and what factors led to them.

Help them to see the connection between physical things and feelings. For example, if you didn't eat breakfast your blood sugar is low and you may be more irritable, or if a woman is pregnant, her hormone balance might shift and rather drastically alter her moods and how she feels.

Tell the two following brief stories to illustrate that feelings can build and can be transferred to unrelated objects or situations:

1. Charles was walking home from basketball practice one day, dribbling his basketball on the street. The ball hit a sharp piece of glass and developed a slow leak. Charles had just bought the ball three days before. When he got home his younger sister was in his room. Charles got very upset at his sister, whom he had told never to go in his room without permission.

2. Mr. Raymond had a bad day at the office. Several of his clients were behind on their bills, and his secretary had to leave early because she was sick. When he came home, he was short-tempered with his wife.

Mrs. Raymond felt bad because of how her husband treated her and ended up yelling at Billy, who forgot to wipe his feet when he came home from school. Billy was upset so he shoved his sister, Suzy, when she bumped into him in the hallway. Suzy was angry at Billy so she kicked the dog when he walked in front of her as she went outside. The dog yelped and took a nip at the cat that was usually his best friend.

Isn't it interesting how a sick secretary can cause a cat to get bitten by a dog?

H. *Poetry and journals* (two other ways to use writing as a vehicle to identify and understand feelings).

The writing of poetry, as described in previous chapters, is a truly remarkable way not only to become more observant but to become better at identifying and describing how we feel.

Using the "adjective list" from item D, have each family member write a poem about the feelings he had at a certain moment. As an alternative, describe a hypothetical situation

to the children and have them write a poem about how they think they would feel in that situation.

If there is anything even more useful than poetry in the clarifying of feelings, it is journal writing. As discussed earlier, journals can greatly increase both our observing and listening abilities. The privacy of a journal makes it an appropriate place to record the deepest of our feelings, whatever they are.

Encourage children to begin many of the sentences in their journals with the words *I feel.*

I. *Ancestors* (to use people the children can really identify with as "case studies" in identifying feelings).

If you have used the "ancestors" methods we have suggested in other writings (telling children stories based on actual experiences of their ancestors), you are well prepared to ask your children to describe the feelings they think a certain ancestor had in any particular situation that he was in. Trying to describe these imagined feelings (verbally or in writing) also serves as a bridge into the next two chapters, which attempt to teach children (and parents) to focus on the feelings of others instead of just on their own.

J. *Handling worry* (to help children worry less about their worries). Explain that there are two basic kinds of worries, the ones we can't do anything about, and the ones we can. Have a goal as a family to spend any "worrying time" that you indulge in on the second kind. Point out that there are plenty of things to worry about that you *can* do something about, so there is no point in worrying over those things you can't do anything about.

K. *Your own ideas.* List any other ways or means that you think would help your children become better at identifying and understanding their own feelings.

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L. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what you have learned during the month).

On fast Sunday, retake the test you started the month with. Praise everyone for doing so much better on it (as they will) than they did a month ago.

Discuss the benefits (and the enjoyments) of being more aware of your own feelings, and then move on to the family focal point as a way to stay in the habit of identifying and expressing how you feel.

IV. Family Focal Point

Testimonies (to provide monthly an atmosphere in which the deepest feelings can be expressed).

The thing that we call testimony bearing in the Church is, at its best, a truly unique phenomenon. It is people telling other people their deepest feelings—feelings of conviction, of gratitude, even of fear or grief.

Family testimonies can be even more deep and candid expressions of feelings, and a regular family testimony meeting can be a recurring means of finding and expressing feelings.

For our family, fast Sunday is the best time to hold such a meeting. Whether or not anyone has borne his or her testimony in church, everyone does in the family meeting that follows. We encourage each family member to use the words "I feel" as often as possible, and to be as accurate as possible about their feelings and absolutely honest about them.

V. Summary

A person who knows how he feels and who can be honest both with himself and with others is a person of character and strength.

It takes courage to admit feelings to ourselves and to talk about them to others. A person who learns to do so will

begin to find life's experiences more meaningful; he will become more sure of himself and of his dreams and ambitions; and he will become far more capable of identifying the feelings of other people—which is the object of the next two "months."

A side benefit of becoming better at understanding what we feel and why we feel it is that we grow to think of ourselves as more responsible for our own feelings. We gain a measure of confidence in our ability to decide for ourselves how we will feel and how we will think, rather than letting other people or outside factors determine our feelings, beliefs, and preferences for us.

S. D. Gordon said: "Shoes define men into three classes. Some men wear their fathers' shoes. They make no decisions of their own. Some are unthinkingly shod by the crowd. The strong man is his own cobbler. He insists on making his own choices. He walks in his own shoes."

As we progress, we learn that one of the choices we can make relates to how we feel. And we learn that our feelings can be unique and individual, made up of our own attitudes and beliefs as well as the results of what happens to us.

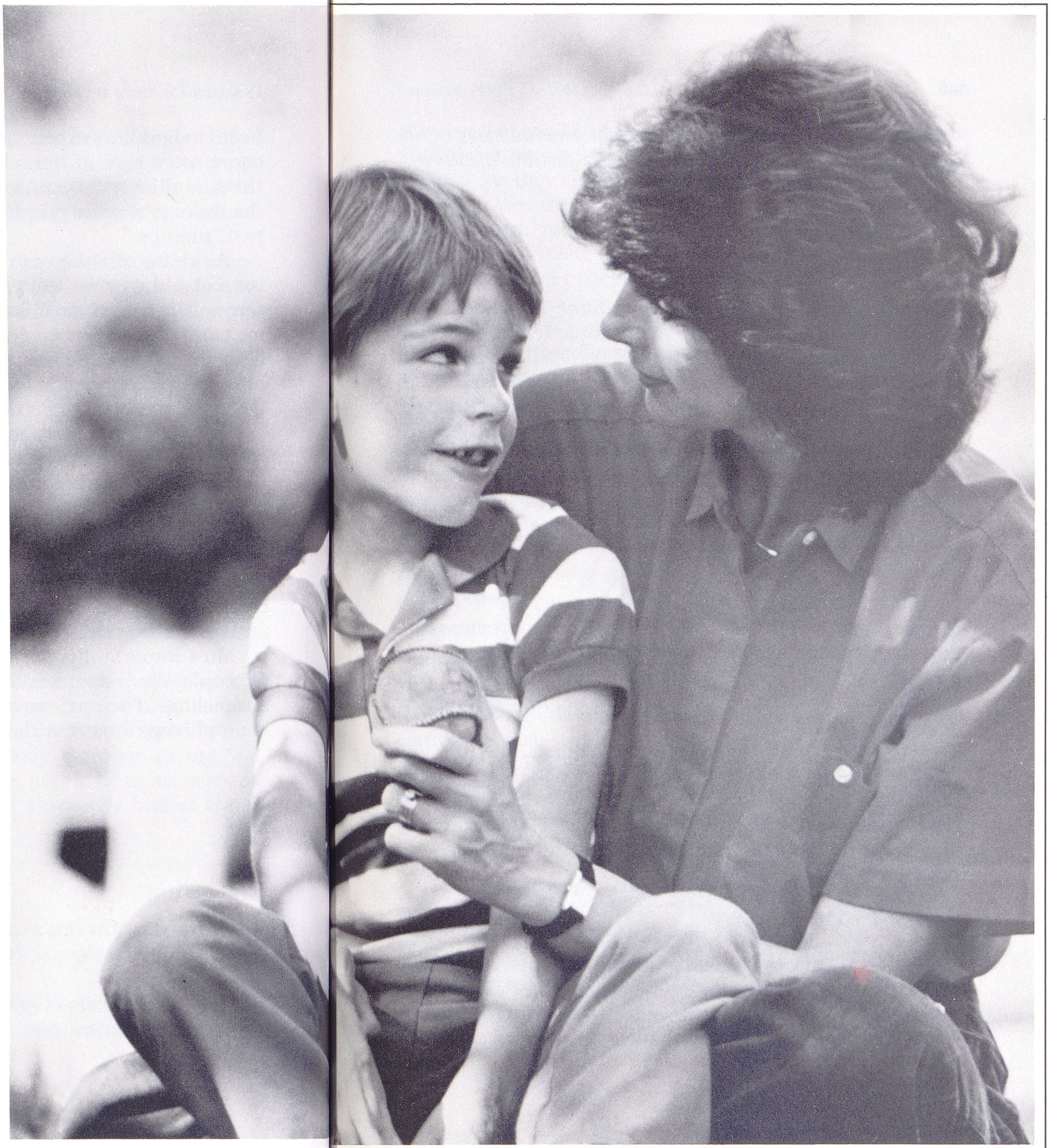
Most importantly, we learn that feelings are at the core of people. We first understand ourselves by learning to know our feelings. Then we can attempt to know others by grasping and empathizing with their feelings.

MONTH

7

Concern: "How Do You Feel?"

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity



"One of the sanest, surest and most generous joys of life comes from being happy over the good fortune of others." (Archibald Rutledge.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

Ponder the Archibald Rutledge quote that opens this "month." It contains a remarkably simple truth. There are not enough moments of pleasure and personal fulfillment in our own lives to keep us always happy, but if we can learn to truly feel the joys of others—then we can be forever happy.

The other side of the coin is also important: When we are truly empathetic and able to feel what others feel, we have the pain that they have as well as the pleasure.

Yet both are, to us, great blessings because both expand our experience and teach us the lessons of life.

If it is true (and it is) that there is no progress "from ease to ease," and if it is true (and it is) that we progress and grow only through challenge—that muscles strengthen only through use and "pulling"—then we must experience personal crisis, hardship, pain, or despair before we can grow or develop. Right?

Wrong! We will all experience these things, and they will be opportunities for learning and for growth. But there are other ways to grow—ways that involve the challenges and crises and needs of others. As we learn to feel the feelings of others, we not only put ourselves in a position to help—we put ourselves in a position to grow.

As they begin to read this "month" some readers will say, "Ah, now we are coming to a real skill of charity, because charity can't start until we feel what others feel."

In fact, this month is just another step toward charity. It

is a step that can't be taken until people have improved their abilities to see and to listen and to be aware of their own feelings. As they learn to do those things, they become prepared to learn the skill of feeling the feelings of others. That skill, in turn, prepares them for the communicating and doing that complete the abilities of charity.

It is not hard to believe in our ability to feel what others feel. All who have truly loved someone know that it is possible to feel for someone. When our child is sick and we feel his pain more than he; when our spouse is hurt and we wish we could remove the pain by taking it on ourselves—in situations like these we do, through our concern, know how another person feels.

The skill to work for is to feel that empathy more commonly and more frequently, to know more accurately how the person we are talking to feels, to be aware on a constant and ongoing basis of the feelings of the person we are dealing with. The literal definition of sympathy is to feel sorry for someone. The literal definition of empathy is to feel sorry *with* someone.

Remember our earlier reference to Graham Kerr, the "Galloping Gourmet," and his claim that he could read a recipe and actually taste—in his empty mouth—what the completed dish would taste like. The deepest form of empathy is similar. We look and listen to the make-up or symptoms or "recipe" of a person and are able to feel what he feels as though we were inside of his skin.

True maturity is the end of self-centeredness and selfishness and self-consciousness. It is being able to turn the mirrors which surround us into windows.

Angela Morgan, perhaps thinking of empathy, said, "I will hew great windows, wonderful windows, measureless windows for my soul."

The question of "how do you feel" is not as easy as it sounds. Sometimes we think we know how someone feels because we know how *we* would feel in their shoes. Not often, but sometimes we have to come to grips with the fact that the Golden Rule does not always apply.

When we were first married, I (Linda) remember distinctly learning this lesson when we visited the beautiful home of some older, established friends. Richard settled down to watch a football game and leisurely rested his feet on the coffee table. The hostess was not pleased. Richard felt sorry to have upset her and insisted (to me, not her) that he was only doing what he would want someone to do in *his* home.

Another example: While my mother would love a surprise visit from a long lost cousin, I would be embarrassed if she showed up unexpectedly on one of those days when things are disheveled everywhere and I'm trying to get a child through a crisis.

We need to consider that people have vastly different perspectives and needs. We need to consider *their* feelings and try to anticipate what would make *them* happy, rather than assume that they are "just like us" and would appreciate the same things we would.

We heard a very amusing speaker once who was talking about oxymorons. An oxymoron, he said, is a subject phrase containing two words that contradict each other and that should mutually exclude each other. He gave some examples: "airline food," "military intelligence," "postal service."

There is another oxymoron of a slightly different type, which people use often and usually with good and pure intent. It is when we say, "I know how you feel," or "I see how you must feel." These are oxymorons because you can't empathize or truly identify with a feeling by seeing it or by knowing it. You can understand it only by feeling it. True

empathy, accurately expressed, would therefore have to be, "I *feel* how you feel."

I was coaching a "biddy basketball team" of kids ages five to seven which included two of our boys. A new boy joined the team just before one of the games. His parents dropped him off and left him with us. As a crowd of spectators assembled and the gym became noisy, the new boy started to cry and to say that he didn't want to play. I did all I could to encourage him, but he was afraid. The best I could do was to get him to quiet down and sit on the bench and watch, with the assurance that he wouldn't have to play unless he wanted to.

A little later I noticed my five-year-old, who had been taken out of the game, sitting with and talking to the new boy. I angled myself closer on the bench so I could hear. Our boy was saying, "I felt a little scared the first time, too, because there's so many people, but I got used to it, and now it's fun. Don't worry, you'll get used to it, too."

Even small children can feel and express empathy when the time and the situation are just right (and particularly when they have recently been in the same situation as the person they are empathizing with). Adolescents can go a step beyond this, with effort and encouragement. They can learn to observe and listen and feel what others are feeling even when it is not something that has happened to them. But it is not easy and it does not happen overnight.

George Merriam said: "At the time when you cannot see God, there is still open to you this sacred possibility, to *show* God. For it is the love and kindness of human hearts through which the divine reality comes home to men. Let this thought, then, stay with you: There may be times when you cannot find help, but there is no time when you cannot give help."

Those who learn to feel empathy and to focus a major portion of their attention on the needs of others and on their own possibilities for meeting or assisting in those needs—such people are not complainers, but doers. As Merriam says, we have much more control over the help we give than over the help we get.

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Desire.* The first method for knowing how others feel is to *want* to know how they feel. Most often, we do not know because we don't want to. This is not to say that we want *not* to know—we simply don't want to enough to try hard enough to know.

I had an employee once who was unhappy in her work, and it looked as though she might quit. I spent some time with her, talked things over with her, and tried to make her feel better about her job. I was, or so I supposed, exercising some concern and empathy by dealing with her feelings.

As I thought back about the experience later that evening, I realized that what I had been doing was not empathy, at all, or if it was, it was the lowest form of the word. Actually, my concern was for myself. I had realized that, if this person quit, my own life would become more difficult. I would have to train another person; it would be inconvenient and time-consuming.

Now, there is nothing inherently wrong with being concerned about your own inconvenience. But this is not empathy—nor in this case did it give me any real insight into what the employee was feeling.

And thus we are presented with a classic dilemma and question: If you can't feel with others until you really care about them, how do you develop that caring—which itself is a feeling?

The answer, simple as it sounds, is to want to. Want to care! Remember that Alma said that if we want faith we must first simply desire to believe. It is the same with em-

pathy. If we start with a desire to care, that desire alone will be enough to make us try to feel what others feel. And once we really begin trying that, we will feel it.

B. *Pray.* Tying in with desire is prayer. If you want to feel what others feel, you should ask for the ability or the gift to do so. We believe that this is exactly the kind of prayer God responds most readily to. In essence, you are asking Him to help you do something that He very much wants you to do. This kind of asking is extremely helpful.

Of all the admonitions in scripture, the most frequently repeated is to ask. God, our loving Father, wants to help and assist us in things of righteousness but, because of his commitment to our agency, he does not help us in some things until we take the agency-preserving initiative of asking.

But we must be careful not to ask without accompanying mental effort. If we think hard about others and try hard to feel what they feel, and *then* ask, we will receive. But if we simply ask without making much mental effort, it may be that the only way God could have us feel what another feels is through having the same things happen to us that happened to him.

Linda had an experience that is humorous in retrospect but that at the moment it happened, provided some insight as to why God asks us to ask.

One Sunday morning when our three youngest children were small, I realized that our two little girls, whom I had just put in the bathtub, needed to practice a song for the Mother's Day program that morning. We had been out of town over the weekend and I soon realized in my search for the songbook that I had left it in the car along with the suitcases after our arrival in the wee hours of the morning.

My step quickened at the touch of the cold cement on my bare feet as I tiptoed to the car, thinking it was better to get half my foot cold than the whole thing. I located the book amidst leftover paper cups and cold french fries and ran back to the door—in a hurry to get out of the cold spring morning air—only to dash my nose into the door. I then

realized that my fourteen-month-old baby, who had a fetish for pushing in buttons, had followed me to the door and pushed the "lock" button. He was at an age where he could push, but not turn, and I realized within a minute that no amount of coaching could teach a baby how to turn a knob without at least one demonstration on the same side of the door. I knew that all the other doors and windows were locked.

I looked down at my tattered, old, white nightgown and first thought, "Well, I'll just have to stay here until Richard gets home from his meeting in half an hour." At that moment I also realized with horror that I had left the water running in the bathtub where I had left our two other preschoolers splashing with glee.

Swallowing a big lump of pride, I tiptoed around the house, onto the balcony, and to the bathroom window. I reached the window with no apparent onlookers and heard the water running. Tapping on the window, I tried to whisper in a hoarse voice, "Saren, Saren, get out of the tub!" She heard me knocking and of course couldn't hear what I was saying over the running water, but yelled back, "Mom, it's getting hot." Every time I hissed, "Get out of the tub and come to the door," she replied the same thing, "It's getting *hot!*" On the fourth try I cast modesty to the wind and screamed, "GET OUT OF THE TUB AND COME TO THE DOOR!" I felt the curtains of the neighbors' homes part behind me but I did not turn around to wave!

At last I saw her appear at the sliding glass door on the balcony, but my joy turned to panic again when I realized that I had never taught her the complicated maneuver of pressing the lever in the right place to open the door. At last she could see me, however, and after two more minutes of going through all kinds of contortions, she pressed the right spot. I threw open the door and rushed to the bathroom, where I found two-and-a-half-year-old Shawni with a toy boat bobbing at about nose level!

With both little girls a little redder than usual and still

dripping in their birthday suits, I pulled them onto my knees and I hugged them tightly.

That afternoon, after rehearsing the scene in my mind for the tenth time, I realized in one flash of inspiration that at the second Saren opened that door I felt exactly like our Heavenly Father must feel when he can see us in danger. He is aching to help, but *we* have to open the door. Another illustration of this is in the famous painting of Christ holding the light at the door. We realize after looking for a few moments that there is no doorknob on his side. The initiative must come from the poor, floundering person on the other side! I understood more fully than ever why he asks us to ask.

C. *Mental effort.* As powerful as asking can be in helping us to feel what others feel, it is the effort we make mentally that qualifies us for answers to our prayers and that actually gets our thoughts close enough to another person's thoughts that we empathize. Through hard thought we are capable of getting inside the feelings of someone else.

Joseph Smith said, "When we work by faith we work by mental effort rather than by physical force." Our minds actually do have the power to "see" through the eyes and through the feelings of others, but it takes hard mental work. It takes faith!

Form the habit of asking yourself, as you talk to another person, "What is he feeling right now?" Asking yourself will cause you to see and to think in a different way—in a potentially wonderful way.

D. *Apply this mental effort to your children.* Theoretically, it should be our children who are the easiest to empathize with. We do love them enough that their pain is very literally our pain. And they are enough like us that it should be easy for us to re-create in our minds the thoughts and feelings that are in theirs.

But it is not easy, simply because of the mental effort it takes. We can get good at it, however, if we put forth the effort and practice.

It's worth it! Once we begin to see through our children's eyes, a whole new world of understanding (and of potential to communicate) opens up to us.

We need to learn to think back. We need to ask ourselves, "How did I feel when I was in eighth grade? What experiences did I have that were similar to these? How did the world look to me at that time? What worried me?"

After we go as far as our memory will take us, we have to go still farther by climbing into the child's shoes and imagining his own vision. "How does this look to him? What is he thinking?"

Effort in this kind of thought can pay great dividends. We knew one father who was terribly upset at the argumentative, rebellious attitude of his son. The boy was not doing anything seriously wrong. He was just disagreeing with his father on everything, arguing just to be contrary, putting forth counterpositions about anything, even when they were silly and illogical.

The father decided one day to simply sit down in a quiet room and try to think what his son was thinking and feel what his son was feeling. After less than an hour, the father developed a powerful new insight. He realized that the adolescent was struggling very hard to feel independent, to begin to become his own man. To do this, the boy felt that he first had to separate himself a little from his dad, to disagree with him on some things, to have his own position, to remove himself far enough from his father to have space of his own in which to become his own person. This made him say some things that hurt the father and gave the father sad feelings of not being respected or needed.

Nonetheless, once the father really began to think from the boy's perspective, he realized how natural it is to try to break away from one thing before you can become something on your own. He realized that he wanted his son to be his own man, and that a little independent opinion now and again was an indispensable part of that process.

The point is that many of the problems of our children

are not really their problems, but ours. We need to learn to empathize with them before we can really expect them to empathize with us and with others.

E. *Find and use one-on-one time for adolescents and teenagers to express feelings.*

Our school system brings our high school students home before the younger children. As their mother and one who cares about them, I take that precious time we have alone before the younger kids "bombard" us to ask our teenagers how they feel—what happened at school, and so on—rather than throwing the preschoolers at them so that I can run an errand. The time is pure gold.

Another mother recently changed my opinion about my dreams of a chauffeur to take the kids to and from music lessons, dance classes, and basketball practice. "Oh, I wouldn't give up that time for anything," she said. "We turn on the classical music and talk about feelings." I suddenly realized that one of my trials could become one of my greatest blessings! The time I was complaining about not having was really there if I just set the stage and used the time well for feelings to be expressed.

F. *The argument-ending technique.* Remember and use the technique of repeating the other person's position first as discussed in Month Five.

For review: A couple sets this rule of communication: In a disagreement, we speak in turn, and one party may not make his next point until he has repeated or paraphrased the other party's last point to the satisfaction of that other party.

This method promotes a kind of communication and empathy (even if it starts as a kind of grudging empathy) that cools tempers and brings people back together.

G. *Delay "advice" until after "empathy."* Often, adolescents complain about something or engage in some behavior their parents disapprove of and the parents rush to advise them, to set them straight, to correct the situation.

Our twelve-year-old daughter was bemoaning the feel-

ing she had that no one really liked her, that she had no real friends, and that she felt left out of many of the groups at school.

My first impulse was to give her fatherly advice—to tell her she had to quit thinking so much of herself and to "be a friend if she wanted to have friends." Instead, luckily, I just listened, and then sat back and told her of a very clearly remembered day when I was twelve, walking home from school by myself, excluded by three boys who seemed to be shunning me. I told her all I could remember of my own similar feelings I had experienced at her age.

She was interested, curious. I never did give any advice or solutions that day, but she felt much better, and we felt much closer.

Another day our seven-year-old son, Jonah, told me how worried he was about a bully in his class that pushed him every time he walked by and told him he was dumb. I tried to curb my instincts to "solve" and to interfere. I told my son about a boy named Melvin who used to terrorize me in grade school, who told me he was going to beat me up, who took my homework away every chance he got. I told my son that the next fall when we started school I had grown bigger than Melvin and he walked up to me, started to say something mean, noticed that I had grown, and just mumbled a quiet "Hi."

Jonah thought that was funny. It made him feel that he could live with his "Melvin" in the days that followed. I would ask him, "How's your Melvin, Jonah?" and we would smile at each other.

Often we are mistaken in thinking that we can solve our children's problems for them. What we can do is understand them and support them and give them the subtle encouragements that increase their ability to solve their own problems.

H. *The "partnership planning system."* The most important "you" in the question, "How do you feel?" is your spouse. There is an effective daily planning system that can,

when implemented by a husband and wife, greatly expand their awareness of each other's activities and feelings as well as of the sights and sounds and opportunities around them.

The system involves the use of a daily planning sheet similar to this:

Awareness: Date: _____

sagacity/ serendipity	Priorities		Priorities	sagacity/ serendipity
		6		
		7		
		8		
		9		
		10		
		11		
		12		
		1		
		2		
		3		
		4		
		5		
Carryover:				

Each evening, prior to praying together, take five minutes to plan the coming day. Use a piece of carbon paper so each partner will have a copy.

Each partner lists his or her three top priorities for the day and then writes down the anticipated schedule. Discuss events or situations that need coordination.

As discussed in the family focal point for Month Four, each partner has a "serendipity" column in which to write (the next day) things that come up spontaneously: the unexpected surprises, the happy accidents that frequently happen to people who are trying to be aware and sensitive to what is going on around them. Such occurrences (from a chance to make a new friend to an opportunity to watch a sunset) are consciously chosen over whatever had been planned for that time, and the displaced item on the plan is either rescheduled for later in the day or pushed back to tomorrow. Write the "serendipity thing" on the planner at the hour it occurred so you can share it with your partner before prayer when you review the day and plan the next day.

As mentioned in Month Five, when you use the serendipity columns, the "perfect day" is not one in which you checked off everything you planned to do. Rather, it is the day in which your observation led you to find some things to do that were better than what you had planned.

Adding the partnership aspect to the system and planning together each night stimulates and increases individual awareness, improves communication, lets you share each other's day, allows you to know where your partner is at any given time, and permits you to more consistently answer the question, "How does he/she feel?" (Note: A more complete explanation of the "partnership planner," along with a one-month supply of self-carbon planners, is available from Homebase, 1615 Foothill Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah 84108.)

9. *Your own methods.* List any other ways you can think of to make yourself more interested in the feelings of those you deal with, and more capable of knowing how they feel.

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III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to establish the family goal for next month of trying to know the feelings of the other people we deal with).

Hold a short discussion with family members age eight and older:

1. Read and discuss the Rutledge quote that opens this chapter. What does it mean? Why are his thoughts important?

2. Discuss the story about Graham Kerr and about the five-year-old on the basketball team. Is it possible to feel what others feel? How do we do so?

3. *Why is it desirable to feel what another person is feeling?* (It gives us chances to help him. Also, since we can't experience everything ourselves, feeling the feelings of others can expand who we are and what we know.)

4. *What is the key to knowing how another person feels?* (*Wanting* to know, *thinking* hard about him, and *watching* and *listening.*)

Test: As usual, begin the month with a short test. Save the right-hand column of everyone's paper so you can retake it at the end of the month.

1. Make a list of anyone you spent time with last month, and beside their names write down any feelings you thought they were experiencing while you were with them.

2. About how many times, during the month that just passed, did you ask someone, "How do you feel?"

3. Pick out some person you were with sometime during last month and describe (in as much detail as you can) how you think he felt.

B. *The family tradition of asking (and answering) "How do you feel?"* (to help children become more constantly aware of how other family members feel).

Assuming that you have spent the previous month working on Month Six ("How do I feel?"), family members will be at a peak in terms of being able to verbalize how they feel when other family members ask.

This month, your emphasis should shift from knowing how you feel to wanting to know how other family members feel.

Set the example by simply asking the question often and being genuinely interested in the answer, and in what you can do to help whenever the feelings you listen to are sad or negative.

Asking other family members how they feel may seem like something too obvious and simple to mention, but it is (against the backdrop of last month's work on knowing and expressing our own feelings) the most effective and useful place to start.

C. *Give extra doses of praise* (to give children the self-esteem that is a prerequisite for being interested in how others feel). Before a child can become very interested in the feelings of others, he needs to have a certain base level of self-esteem and confidence in himself.

The whole bottom-line objective of this book is to help children worry less about themselves by worrying more about others, but the process involved is a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation. People do think less about themselves as we help them to notice and feel for others, but it is often impossible to raise their awareness of others until their own self-image is strong enough to allow it.

So all along the way, through every "month" of this book, we must seek ways to build and nurture our children's self-image.

The most direct way to do so is praise. Find as many specific little things as you can, every day, to praise them for. And to the verbal praise, add physical touch. A hug, a pat on the back, an arm around the shoulder—this touching reinforces and helps give children the sense of inner well-being that allows them to notice and to care how other people are feeling.

Bedtime is a particularly good time to praise a child and reinforce his self-image. Compliments at bedtime cause children to go to sleep feeling happy, and the security and

well-being they bring often carry over into a child's dreams. Try to find time this month to think of specific compliments to give your children as you tuck them in.

D. *Role-reversal games* (to give another direction to parents' and children's perspectives of each other).

Early adolescent children often enjoy assuming the role of parent for an evening, particularly if parents will play the role of children. If you really get into it, both sides can learn a lot. Let them (children playing the role of parents) ask whether you've done your homework, push you to clean your room, and try to get you to go to bed on time. Respond to them with the emotions that their demands cause you to feel. Try hard to project yourself into what their feelings would be and encourage them to do the same with yours.

After you have tried this role playing for an evening or two, try to use the skills and ideas of it in day-to-day life, and encourage your children to do likewise. For example, the next time your son is out too late, try projecting yourself into how he might feel. (Maybe he's having too much fun to remember the time; maybe he's concerned that he's not home but the other guys he is with are persuading him to stay out.) Perhaps your son will be trying to project, also. (How are my parents feeling? Worried about me—trusting me but wishing I would call if I can't be home on time.)

E. *More specific and specialized forms of questioning and answering* (to help children discover the enjoyment of finding out interesting things about others). By example, by encouragement, and through frequent family discussion, train your children to find out all they tactfully can about other people—where they come from, what they like to do, what they're interested in, what their plans are, who else they know, and so forth.

Again, example is the most impressive teacher. As we write this chapter, we think back to earlier in the week when we picked up a man high in a snowy mountain pass. (We're cautious, but he looked safe and he looked to be in serious need, with his thin coat on a below-zero day.) During the

one-hour ride that followed, we became deeply interested in the man, asked him hundreds of questions, and found several ways that we could offer assistance.

After the experience, several of our children, each in his or her own way, expressed their feelings of empathy and concern for the man, and their very real interest in him. Our nine-year-old said, "Dad, that man was interesting! When we first picked him up I thought he was just a dirty old hobo, but by the time we dropped him off, I felt like he was my friend and I really wanted to help him!" She paused for a moment and then went on, "You sure thought of a lot of good questions, Dad!"

It is fun, around the dinner table or whenever there is a moment to talk, to ask, "Who found someone interesting to ask questions of today?" Get the children interested not only in asking questions, but in telling the rest of the family what they have learned.

F. *Game: "Listen, Paraphrase, and Add Feeling"* (to improve children's listening and interpretation skills). Explain to children that the listening ability your family worked on in Month Five is just the start of being able to understand other people's feelings. You have to listen, to understand, and then to try hard to put yourself into their shoes and imagine what they feel.

Then introduce the game, in which one family member asks another what happened to him that day. The second person tells some experience and the first person repeats back or paraphrases back the experience, visualizing it as though it had happened to him. He then indicates how he thinks the other person felt.

Example: Twelve-year-old James says to ten-year-old Pat, "What happened today?" Pat says, "Oh, we had a math test and I thought it would be easy but he asked a lot of questions from the chapter I didn't study and hardly any from the chapter I did!"

James says: "So you thought you were prepared for the test, because you did study, but you mostly studied one

chapter and when you took the test, most of it was on another chapter that you hadn't studied. I'll bet you felt kind of frustrated, and maybe you felt a little bit mad at your teacher for tricking you, or for not telling you what chapter to study."

It's surprising how much children enjoy this kind of discussion (once they get the hang of it) with their siblings or their parents. And there is no better training for the development of empathy.

G. *Visit old people, people from other cultures, and so on* (to give children opportunities to empathize with people who are very different from themselves).

When children are around only their peers, it is easy for them to assume that others feel pretty much the same way (and have the same emotions) they do. On the other hand, when they are exposed to very different people, they have wonderful opportunities to expand and stretch their ability to empathize.

As we write, our own family has recently been involved with some young students from Malaysia and with a very elderly man whom we have been trying to help. As the children talk to these people, ask them questions, and try to guess how they are feeling, they begin to see from a very different perspective many of the things they have taken for granted. They learn new ways to feel by feeling vicariously for the other person.

H. *"The Bench" argument-resolving technique* (to teach children to recognize their own contribution to a fight or disagreement, and to appreciate how what they have said could hurt someone else). Whenever two children in your family (of any age) are fighting or arguing in an uncontrolled or unpleasant way, try the following technique:

Sit them both on a bench or couch or together on two chairs. Tell them that it "takes two to tangle"—that they were both at fault in the argument, and that neither one can leave the bench until he can tell what *he* did wrong (*not* what the other person did wrong).

We have a five-year-old who often ends up on the bench but who never knows what he did wrong. He hates to sit there, however, so he always asks the other child (whom he was fighting with) what it was that he did wrong. The other child tells him, he repeats it to us, and gets off the bench!

I. *Give more responsibility.* We mentioned earlier the Harvard study which found that, in cultures where adolescents are given more responsibility, there is more altruism and extra-centeredness and less self-centeredness among them.

It is in societies like our own, where too much is given and too little is expected, that teenagers show such propensity to be insensitive to others and wrapped up in their own needs and wants. We must recognize this connection and realize that one purpose of giving responsibility is to help children get their minds off of themselves.

J. *Your own methods.* List other ways that you can think of to help your children feel more interested in the feelings of others.

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K. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned).

On fast Sunday, retake the test you started this "month" with. As normal, review everyone's answers and discuss how far you have all come in wanting to know others' feelings, and in asking and finding out what others are feeling.

IV. Family Focal Point

"Collecting friends" (to make children more consistently aware of the fact that finding out about how others feel is

the key to making friends and to feeling good about yourself).

We have a big chart by the dinner table called the Friend Chart. On it there is a column for each member of our family in which he can write the name of each new person he meets and finds out about. The rule is that no one can list a name unless he has found something out about how that person feels.

At the end of the year when we're doing greeting cards (in our case it's Thanksgiving cards rather than Christmas cards) we go through the "friends" list and be sure they all get a card.

V. Summary

Deep within us is the potential to see and hear everything and to feel every level of every emotion.

We are stopped from fully seeing, from fully feeling, by the filters and blockades and blind spots that our egos and our self-centeredness put in front of us—by our windows turning into mirrors.

The goal is to become "transparent," to become less and less aware of ourselves and of our problems as we become more aware of everything around us.

As we ask ourselves more often, "How does this person feel?" we will have less time to ask ourselves (or to worry about)how *we* feel.

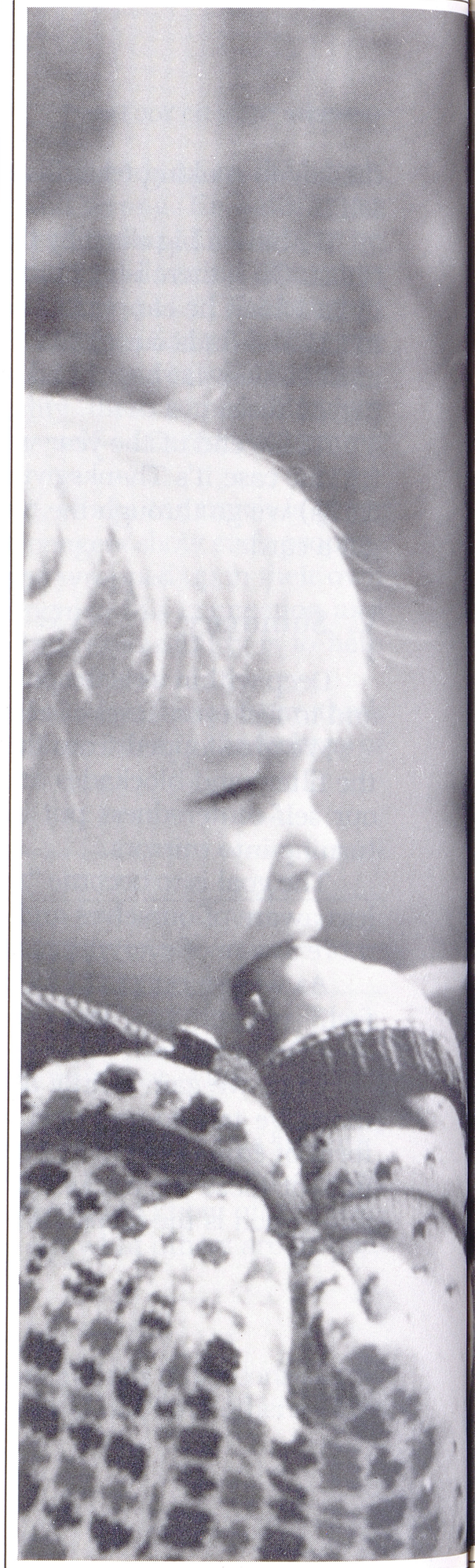
Once we gain a little ability in knowing the feelings of those we talk to and deal with, we can move to a higher form of empathy where we try to become aware of the feelings of those we are not in direct contact or conversation with. Such is the focus of the next month.

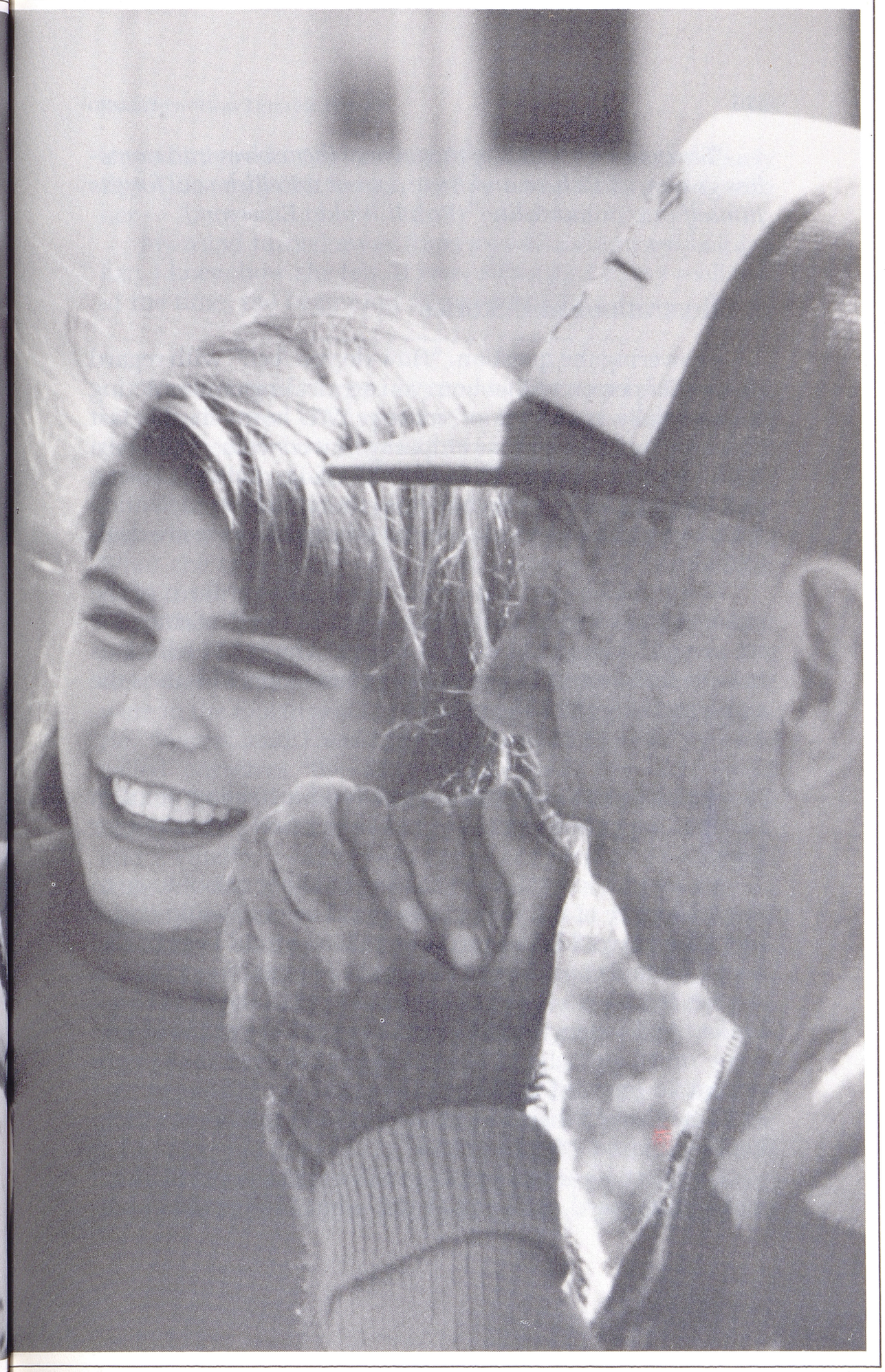
MONTH

8

Empathy: "How Does He Feel?"

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity





"See how the masses of men worry themselves into nameless graves, while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality." (Ralph Waldo Emerson.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

Answering the question, "How do you feel?" with regard to another person with whom you are dealing or interacting is essentially a matter of *concern.* We have, in the last "month," referred to it as empathy, but *concern* would be a more accurate word. Through observing, through asking and listening, and through caring, we remove our attention from ourselves and focus it on the other person we are dealing with.

A still higher and somewhat more difficult form of the same skill involves asking, "How does *he* feel?" of someone we are *not* interacting with, someone who is not telling us how he feels, someone whose only connection with us is the *empathy* we feel for them.

One of Linda's favorite stories (and a turning point in her life) happened when she was in her first year of junior high:

My mother knew I was debating whether or not to go to the first dance of the year. I was afraid no one would notice me, afraid I would have no one to talk to, afraid I would feel awkward and conspicuous. She made a suggestion to me, or maybe it was a challenge. She said, "Go ahead and go, Linda. And when you get there, look all around and find some other girl who looks as though she feels even more miserable and self-conscious than you do. I promise you she'll be there! When you see her, go and talk to her. Help her feel relaxed. Make a friend."

One part of me wanted to go to the dance so badly that I went. And, hard as it was, I did what Mother had chal-

lenged me to do. I found her. She looked so lost and lonely that I instantly felt better, just by comparing myself with her.

My mind turned away from myself and toward helping her. I knew how she felt. It was, although I didn't realize it at the time, the beginning of real empathy.

We sometimes forget, as parents, how cruel children can be to each other. We forget until something reminds us and then we realize how important it is to teach our children to ask themselves often, "How does he feel?"

We were reminded rather forcefully of the need one Sunday when we heard a thirteen-year-old girl speak in church. What she said made such an impression that we had her write it out for us.

"When I was in the third grade I'd just moved to Salt Lake and I became friends with a girl named Sharon. We were 'best friends' and inseparable at school. By the time we were in the fourth grade we had another friend, Carrie. Carrie, Sharon, and I were the very best of friends. We even called ourselves 'the three musketeers!' We were great friends for two or three months and then it seemed that only Sharon and I were friends, or Carrie and Sharon, or Carrie and I. Finally, it ended with Carrie and Sharon. They would tease me day in and day out. They called me up just to tell me how ugly or how stupid I was. At recess they would call me names and tell me I was dumb, or fat, or ugly. They would constantly tell me that I wasn't capable of anything, and I believed them! The last day of school they called me up and said, 'We are so glad that school's out because now we don't have to look at ugly people like you.'

"In fifth grade I was in a different class than them, for obvious reasons. Every time I saw them I hated them for what they had done to me. Eventually I forgave them, and I learned a real valuable lesson from this experience: I learned to always listen to your friends, and never put them down;

always be there when they need you; and always care, no matter what. When I do these things I have a better relationship with my friends, and I feel better about myself. These two girls taught me to care about people and their feelings.

"My mother has always told me that 'to have a friend, you must be a friend.'

"In every elementary school, in every class, there is a class 'reject.' Well, our class reject was Dora. I was always friends with Dora and as a result people thought I was a reject too. In seminary in ninth grade, we had a thing on Valentine's Day where we could write a note to someone else in another class. Well, Dora wrote one to me and it said: 'Dear Dawn, Thank you for being my only friend.' I was so grateful that I had been her friend even though people thought I was dumb too.

"Christ told us to love one another and I hope we can all remember to do so."

We once saw a movie called *Brainstorm* that contained an interesting central idea: a machine that could be hooked up to two people and allow one to see, hear, and feel everything that the other person was feeling, as though he were actually in the mind and body of the other person.

The movie was science fiction. But in real life there is a device that allows us to "transform" into the perception and feelings of another person. The device is not a machine—it is an almost magical quality and skill called empathy.

Assuming that others see things the same way we do is as silly as assuming that our eyeglasses would work for everyone else. The Golden Rule is a marvelous, virtually universal code of conduct. Because of the differences in people, however, and the differences in their perceptions and needs, the law reaches its highest and most beautiful level not with

the words "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," but "Do unto others as *they* would wish to be done unto."

Our daughter Shawni, (age eight) had gone along on her brother Josh's sixth birthday party to "help out." It was a snow sledding party in January and there were about a dozen little six-year-old boys.

We had become occupied with getting the hot chocolate ready and were standing with Josh when Shawni came up, tapped Josh on the shoulder, and in a very concerned voice pointed first at one boy and then at another and asked Josh their names. Then she said, "Well, Billy doesn't look very happy. Two of the other boys wouldn't let him go on their tube and I think he is about to cry. And John looks a little scared. He still hasn't gone down the hill. You should go talk to them, Josh, and make them both feel happy, because you don't want anyone to be sad at your party."

Shawni said all this with the utmost concern, and Josh took her suggestion very seriously. He went right over and talked to John, then got a big tube and went down the hill with him and Billy.

The day and the experience is clear and vivid in our memory because of the simple, sure example it provided of young children's ability to be highly empathetic.

Crabs have an interesting instinct to "pull each other back." When catching crabs on the beach, you don't need a high-sided bucket to put them in. A shallow pan will do—as long as you have at least two crabs in it. If one tries to climb out, the other instinctively will reach up and pull him back. People, especially adolescent and teenage people, behave much like crabs. If someone gets ahead of us, outachieves us, or seems more popular, our instinct is to pull them down in some way—perhaps by gossip, or by rationalizing that whatever they have done is not that important.

Our nature is to think of others as various kinds of mirrors for our own reflection. People of whom we are jealous often reflect us as inadequate, so we try to stop looking at them, or to pull them down, at least in our own minds.

The ability to shift into "windows" and to see people for what they are, what their feelings and needs are—and to take pleasure in their accomplishments as we would in our own—involves the most profound change of perspective that a man can undergo.

The opposite of empathy is envy. It is much easier to notice what someone else has (that we want) than to notice what he needs (that we could give).

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Visualization.* We discussed, in Month Five, the importance and value of the skill called visualization. That skill has even greater application this month as we try to understand how others feel. In various cultures, for widely varying purposes and through widely varied techniques, human beings have proven their ability and potential to visualize or to imagine something in a way that makes it as real as if it were real.

In the myth of Camelot, Merlin the magician taught young Arthur to see all perspectives by becoming the eagle or the stag, or even the tree—to feel what they feel, see what they see, grasp what they grasp.

In the highest form of martial arts, the levels *above* the black belt, the Ninja masters learn to sense and visualize things their eyes cannot see, to feel and anticipate the energy of movement, even from behind themselves, and to defend against it even before it occurs.

Many popular current writers tell us how to visualize our illnesses as cured, our bodies as healed—and the results are both tangible and remarkable. The advocates of self-improvement, from meditation experts to positive mental

attitude speakers, tell us that thoughts can become specific and focused enough to control things. And the scriptures put this idea in its most basic context when they tell us that as we think, so we are.

The gift and skill of visualization is at the heart of our potential ability to feel as others feel. We have the power to observe something (or somebody) closely from the outside and then to transpose ourselves inside of that thing or person to observe what things look like to it, or to him.

Practice this, and see how quickly you get good at it. Observe a tree intently. Look at it from bottom to top, studying its trunk, its bark, its limbs, its leaves. Then imagine yourself as the tree—inside the tree looking out. See the landscape around you, feel the wind blow your branches, feel the sap flowing inside of you. Try this with objects and with people. It is a learned skill, and takes practice. But as you become capable at it, your capacity for charity will grow dramatically.

B. *Turn the eye into a camera shutter.* It is people's faces, particularly their eyes, that give us our best clues to their feelings and their needs.

Our own eyes, when trained to do so, can "read" a face in an instantaneous glance. One interesting way to train the eye is to walk along a busy street and take "eye snapshots" of each person you pass.

Look at a face—intently—and then blink, fixing the face in your mind as a "still shot," as though you had just pressed the shutter of your camera. Let your mind interpret and analyze the face you just took a snapshot of. What did you see? What was in the eyes? The lines of the face? The tilt of the head? Just think about the image.

Our own minds surprise us when we really turn them loose and simply let them imagine what each person might be thinking.

On a crowded street, your eyes may take a "snapshot" every couple of seconds, so your first impression of a face will be your only impression. Just look at a face, blink,

and let your mind give you the quickest interpretation it can make: "worried," "excited," "intense," "confused," "lost in thought."

As with the development of any skill, practice will make you better. Somewhat like a muscle, the mind's interpretive powers strengthen with use. Before long, you will find that one quick glance can give you very strong impressions about what another person is feeling. And you will feel quite sure that your impression is correct. It is almost as though your mind has the power to make quick contact with another mind through some sort of eye contact or wave transmission that we can't understand.

This kind of "snapshot thinking" is hard mental work, but it is the best and simplest form of empathy training we know. As mentioned earlier, Joseph Smith said that when we work by faith we work by mental effort. Perhaps the mental effort required to try to know how a stranger feels just by looking at him produces a certain kind of faith, or brings to us a "higher power" sensitivity that allows us to know.

C. *The temple.* An exciting and very spiritual form of empathy training is available to us whenever we do vicarious works at the temple. As we do work on behalf of another person, we can try very hard to "be" that other person, to sense how he feels about the work being done for him and what he thinks about what he is learning through the temple ceremony.

In this case, since we can neither see nor hear the person we are trying to empathize with, it is clear that any insights or impressions we are receiving are spiritually transmitted. This insight helps us to realize that all true empathy, even with people we can see and talk to, is really much more of the spirit than of the body.

D. *Be an "optometrist."* The reason a nearsighted person can see well with his glasses is that the optometrist started with that person's perspective and vision, not with his own.

It is much more difficult to do this in regular, normal

life. We rarely start with what the other person sees. Rather, we insist that he should see the way we see.

During this month, try to be an "optometrist"—try to be interested enough in other people that you actually start with what you imagine that they see.

E. *Practice putting your desire to understand above your other desires.* Picture in your mind a father who is upset at his son for not finishing some tasks he was assigned to do after school. The boy wants to explain. The father is interested in why the boy didn't do anything, but he is more interested in shaping the boy up. Therefore he doesn't really listen.

Often we don't really listen because we have other desires that are much stronger than our desire to understand. This month, make a conscious effort to put your desire to understand above any other wants. It will make a remarkable difference in how much you understand and empathize with other people, particularly with your children.

F. *Your own methods.* List any other ideas that come to you concerning how to better ask and better answer the question, "How does he feel?"

III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to shift family focus, for the coming month, to the goal of becoming able to sense how others are feeling, even when we are not with them or talking to them).

As usual, begin this new "month" with a discussion among all family members eight and older.

1. Discuss what it would be like to have a machine like

the one in the movie *Brainstorm* (see this month's illustrations section).

2. Tell the stories of Linda at the dance and Shawni at Josh's birthday party and discuss what happens when we watch for how others are feeling.

3. Remind everyone that you worked last month on knowing how the person you were talking to felt. This month you will be trying to know how people feel without asking them or even talking to them. Will this be harder? Is it even possible?

4. What are the ways we can know how another person feels? (One way is to experience exactly what he is experiencing, to "walk in his moccasins." Another way is to think hard about him and to use our minds and imaginations to know how he feels.)

Test: in writing; remember to save everyone's paper for the post-test next fast Sunday.

1. List as many people as you can whom you noticed last month (but didn't talk to), and write down how it looked like they were feeling.

2. Describe the most interesting face you saw during the month that just passed. What was interesting about the face? What feelings might have made the face look like it did?

3. Whom have you noticed lately who needed help? What kind of help did he need?

B. *Fasting* (to help children empathize physically and to become more acquainted with the basic idea of trying to feel others' needs).

From age eight, and often earlier, children are capable of abstaining from at least one meal. With the kind of discussion and observations that parents can add, this can be one of the most basic and meaningful early empathetic experiences they have. Talk about the feeling of hunger as it is experienced, and how it might feel if it went on for days—if they, like nearly one-third of the children in the world, went to bed hungry each night.

Occasionally, it is especially instructive to fast for the needy of some specific area or, still better, for a specific person. In addition to their Church fast offerings, some families sponsor a child in a Third World country through one of the reputable relief organizations. This way they can have pictures and letters from a real human being who is being fed by the money they save by fasting.

As children come to understand and appreciate the fast, the physical empathy they have learned can be a good analogy by which to begin feeling their deeper forms of emotional, social, and even spiritual empathy. As you talk about how hunger feels, ask also how they think people feel who have no friends, or whose parents don't care about them, and so on.

C. *Example* (as always, the best method of all). Simply make yourself more aware of others, and talk about your awareness in the presence of your children. Notice the looks on people's faces and comment on them. Watch things like the posture and mannerisms of people as well as their circumstances and situations.

We observed a mother one day in London sitting on the upper level of a red, double-decker bus with her daughter, who looked to be ten or eleven years old. As the bus picked its way through the crowded city streets, the mother, in a voice that had more interest in it than authority, was saying things like, "Look at that older man, at his face. He looks awfully worried about something," or "Those two girls look like they're having a good time. What would you guess they're talking about, just by watching them?"

D. *Lavish praise* (to reinforce and bolster even the smallest evidences of empathy so that it will occur again).

One of our daughters came to the dinner table one night with tears in her eyes. We asked what was wrong and she tried to shrug it off and say she was okay. When we persisted, she broke down a bit and said she had been looking at a magazine with pictures of starving children in Ethiopia. She fought back the tears of her very genuine concern and

quietly added that she wanted to send a hundred dollars (most of her bank account) to help out.

Her whole attitude was so beautiful that we found ourselves praising her for days—not always in open, verbal ways, but with a look, an arm around her shoulder, a glance of pride, and an added desire to be with her and do things with her.

Thinking back, we realize that our natural reaction to our daughter during that week did more to motivate her brothers and sisters toward similar efforts at empathy than any method or technique we had ever tried.

Watch for extra-centered actions. Listen for comments that indicate efforts to understand others and their situations. Praise these insights and actions with lavish and specific compliments.

E. *Game: Put Yourself in the Picture* (to let children practice at empathizing with someone they have never met or spoken to). Watch for pictures in magazines showing people in situations that are unusual to you and your children. These could range from a man on a horse in the mountains to a girl in a magazine clothing ad. Almost any magazine has several pictures or advertisements that will work.

The game consists of looking at the picture and attempting to describe how the person feels. This can start on a physical level as you try to imagine what he sees and hears, whether he is cold or warm, and so forth. Then try to go beyond the physical and speculate how he might feel emotionally. Have a discussion, with each person imagining how the subject feels and expressing his own ideas.

A variation of the game is to give each player a different picture to study—then have him give a short speech or write a brief theme on what the subject feels.

F. *Broaden perspective with travel and experience* (to allow children to observe firsthand the different situations that others find themselves in and to appreciate their perspective). We mentioned in Month Four how much perspec-

tive and insight children can gain through travel and exposure to various other ways of life. Travel can go a step beyond perspective and provide empathy.

As interesting as the "magazine perspective" game (item E, above) can be, real people from different environments are much more instructive and educational. Any form of travel, when parents make the effort, can be an "empathy experience" for children. The more different the situation of the people observed (from what children are used to), the more interesting it is to attempt empathy. Simply observe together and ask children the right questions. (How would that feel—to do what that man does every day? What do you think makes that person look so happy? What are the main differences in his typical day and yours?) These same techniques can be employed while watching a TV documentary or in any other setting where you are observing cultures and people very different from yourself.

Be careful not to emphasize the negative or to breed criticism or excess pity in your children through this type of observation. Lean in the opposite direction by looking for the good and the positive. Say, "Yes, it is dirtier here, and the houses are smaller, but what makes that person look like he feels so good?" or "Why do you think these people are so friendly and open?" or "Is our way of doing that really better, or is it just different?"

Our eight-year-old provided a classic example of how profound a child's observations can be as we were returning from a trip to Mexico. "What is the most interesting thing you learned?" was my question. Her answer: "I learned you don't need to have shoes to be happy."

G. *Closer-to-home experience* (for the same reasons as item F, but without travel, new environments, or even TV documentaries). In almost every community, large or small, there are people who are potentially very interesting to your children because of their different life-styles and perspectives. Again, the differences are valuable because they stretch and develop skills of empathy.

As mentioned earlier, we once "adopted" four eighteen-year-old Malaysian students who attended the university near our home. They needed American friends, and we decided we needed them to broaden our family's circle of acquaintances. We had them over or took them some place with us two or three times a month. Our children had a whole new world opened to them as these students became our friends. They were Moslems. They had different traditions, different styles, different goals and plans. Their curiosity in us sparked our children's curiosity in them and gave us endless opportunities to ask our children, "How do you think they feel?"

H. *"Face reading"* (to stimulate children's interest in trying to empathize by sight). Explain to your children that just as it takes some time to learn to read letters and words, it takes time and practice to learn to read faces, but it is possible. Tell them of your own efforts to do this and of any experience you had with the kind of "camera shutter" eye blinking suggested in item B of this month's approaches for parents.

Encourage them to practice face reading whenever possible. Do it with them. Discuss together how to do it. Simply look hard at a stranger's face. But instead of just noticing features and expressions and the amount of light in the eye, try to look beyond the surface of the face and see the emotions. Look for stress, for love, for insecurity, for confidence, and for every other observable emotion.

I. *Retard your children's social growth* (to keep them somewhat out of the peer-group selfishness syndrome).

One of the blessings of "holding children back" on things (such as not dating until age sixteen or not being out late with friends) is that it automatically increases the scope of family influence on them and decreases peer-group influence.

Many of the ways of observing and ways of thinking suggested in this and previous chapters work best and "take" best when children spend major blocks of time with their parents and brothers and sisters.

We were visiting once with a General Authority of the Church and his wife—a family whom we think of as a model. We asked them for advice on rearing children, and their very interesting response was "retard their social growth." We have found many useful interpretations for that phrase over the years, but perhaps the most useful one is limiting an adolescent's social schedule to give him more time to be influenced by his own thoughts and by parents' example.

Attempt to make popularity a "non-goal" among your children. Point out that those who seek to be liked, to fit in, to be like everyone else are thinking too much *of* themselves and not thinking enough *for* themselves.

J. *Look for motives rather than blame* (to help children to shift from their own negative feelings to the more positive mental energy of trying to understand others).

When your child tells you of having been hurt or offended by another child, resist the temptation to overprotect or to become angry or vindictive toward the other child or the other child's parents.

Instead, sit down with your child and try, together, to figure out why the other child would have said or done what he did. Say, "What might have made him angry enough or jealous enough or upset enough to do that?" If no reason is obvious, speculate on what it might have been. (Maybe his father was mad at him today. Maybe he felt left out in some social situation. Maybe he flunked a test.)

Whether you discover the true motive or not, you will succeed in turning your child's attention from his own problem to the possible problem of someone else.

K. *The "Interesting Person" game* (to bring about greater interest in the "how does he feel?" question by sharing an "interesting face" with other family members).

Start a tradition at dinner of occasionally saying, "Tell us about the most interesting person you saw today." Each person should try to recall his "face reading" activities of the day and describe to other family members the most interesting person he observed that day.

A sample answer from a ten-year-old: "At the bus stop I saw an older lady who had been shopping. She was short and a little stooped over, but she was kind of wide and strong enough to carry two big shopping bags. Her face looked pleasant. It had deep smile lines by her mouth and her eyes. She looked over at me and when I smiled, she smiled and said hello. I think she's probably a grandma with some nice grandchildren. I think she likes her life and I don't think she minds being old."

L. *Your own methods.* List any other ideas you can think of for training children to watch others and empathize with what they may be feeling.

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M. *Post-test* (to review and reinforce what has been learned during the month).

On fast Sunday, as you complete this "month," retake the test from the beginning of this section. Everyone will do much better on it. Discuss your answers and ask if it is important to keep on looking for others' feelings even as your family goes on to the next chapter. As family members respond positively, you can then introduce the family focal point as a way to "keep us all doing it."

IV. Family Focal Point

"Ask-for things" in prayers (to keep children aware on an ongoing basis of the special needs of other people).

As many parents do, we became concerned with the repetitive, semimemorized, "low-thought" prayers that our children often offered in our home. A string of "bless-

the-needy-and-those-with-cause-to-mourn" and "bless-the-Lord's-anointed-from-the-greatest-to-the-least" began to sound less and less sincere and meaningful.

We decided that we would, at Sunday dinner, decide on one particular blessing to ask for during the coming week that was especially timely and needed.

As it turned out, this involved thinking about people's needs, and trying to come up with something very specific. We would end up discussing several needs that various family members had noticed or become aware of (from very broad things like peace in a war-torn part of the world to very narrow and specific things like recovery for the older lady next door who had fallen and broken her hip).

The point was that the weekly discussion became a weekly reminder to think about "how does he feel?" and the daily prayers, which always included that week's special "ask-for thing," became a daily reminder.

V. Summary

A popular cliché tells us that we can't know how another feels until we have "walked a mile in his moccasins." It is a good saying and a useful one if its purpose is to prevent us from judging another person. It is indeed impossible to know all of the motives and all of the inner thoughts of any other person.

It is not impossible, however, to feel with another person empathetically enough that we know much of how he feels. It is not only possible but productive. Efforts to do so are, in fact, the best training for charity that can ever be devised.

In Alma 7:11 we see clearly that Christ had perfected himself at being able to feel what others feel. Both Christ and many of his prophets empathized so completely that when they healed or helped others they felt virtue or strength go out of them.

In Alma 32 we are told that while all who are humble are blessed, those who reach humility without being forced

into it by their circumstances are more blessed than those who are compelled to be humble.

The implications are straightforward: The same blessings and attributes that come through deprivation or forced humility due to poor circumstances can be had without personal crisis if we are willing to "bear one another's burdens" and to exercise deep enough empathy to feel as others feel.

SECTION V

COMMUNICATING

Observations, insights, and empathetic feelings are of limited use without the ability to effectively communicate them.

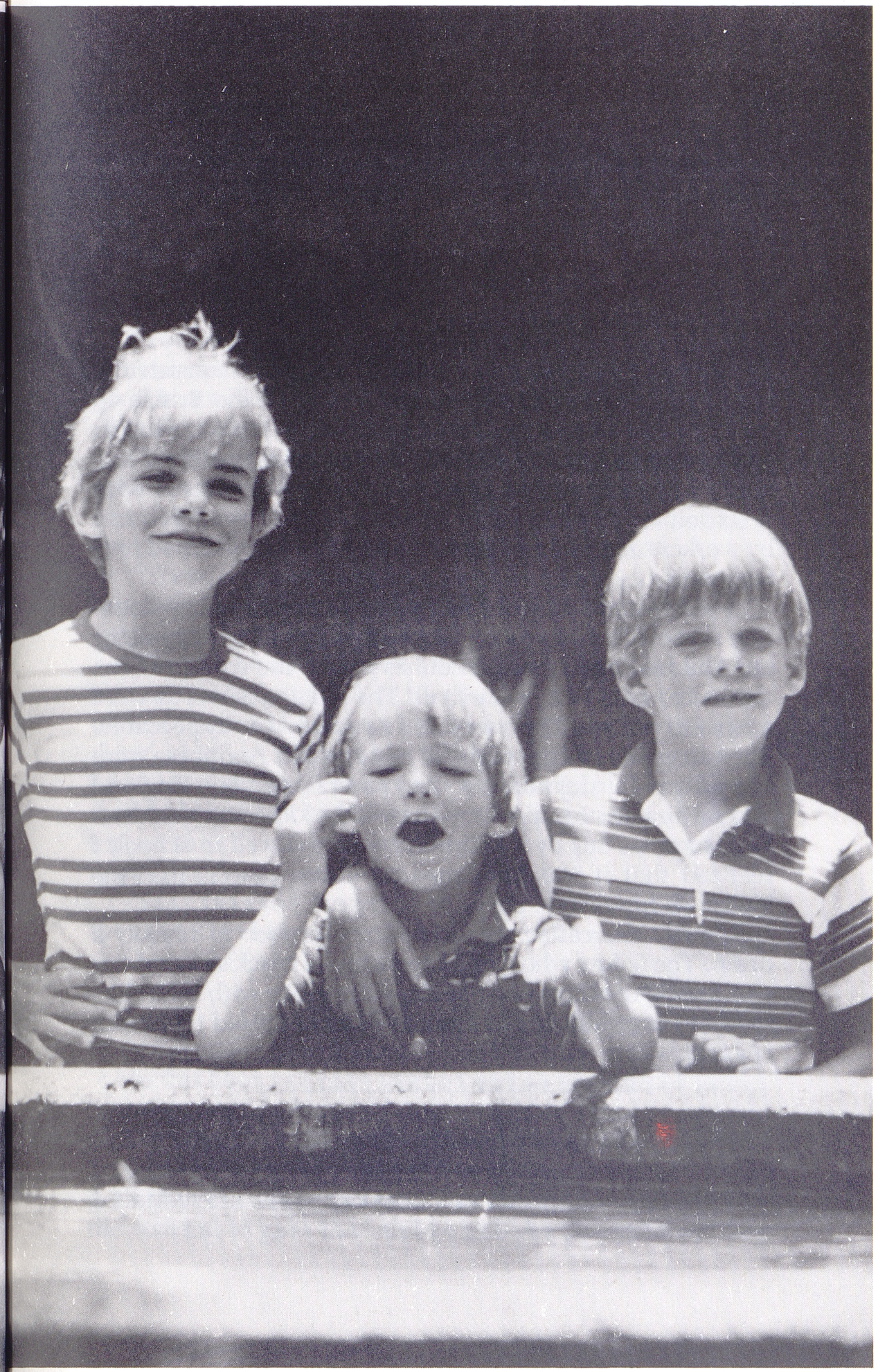
The ability to verbalize and express what we see, what we feel, and what we care about in others is what allows us to comfort, to help, to contribute, and to form deep relationships.

MONTH

9

Expressing What We See

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity



Communication is the thread that ties all men to each other. Remove it and there is no society, no civilization, and, in fact, no love.

I. Illustrations and Stories

During three years in England, we were consistently surprised (and delighted) by the ability of the British to correctly use their own language. Slang is seldom used in southern England, nor is fuzzy or imprecise speech of any kind. English is spoken clearly and articulately, used with precision and with pride by children as well as adults, and by workers and manual laborers as well as by educated professionals.

I recall standing in the hallway of our children's elementary school ("infant school," as the British call it) waiting for our children and tuning in on several of the conversations that surrounded me in the hall. The children's words were crisp and precise. Their sentence structure was impeccable. Their questions were insightful and specific. And these were second and third graders. It was our first month in England and my first assumption was that all the kids were geniuses. Very soon, as our own children competed well in school, I realized that it was language, not brain power, that the British children were superior in.

Shortly thereafter we needed a plumber to unstop a drain. The fellow who came (dressed in a black suit and tie) was a delightful conversationalist who spoke with such clarity that I kept him for an hour after he had fixed the drain, enjoying a conversation that covered several subjects.

An editorial that ran on KSL television and radio in Salt Lake City captured quite well the overriding importance of learning communication and language skills. The editorial read like this:

"One of the charms of the English language is its constant ability to change and evolve. We add new words and new expressions with relative ease, and we eliminate those which have outlived their usefulness.

"But illiteracy should never serve as the basis for the evolution of language.

"For example, the young starlet who insists on peppering her conversation with 'You knows' and salting it with 'He goes' is not likely to add to the flavor of the language or detract from the blandness of her thoughts.

"Neither language nor thought are improved by the radio announcer who consistently mispronounces 'consortium' as 'consorteeum,' or who redundantly reminds listeners it is raining outside. (Where else does it rain?)

"These examples seem minor—and perhaps they are—but there is a direct correlation between accuracy of language and accuracy of thought.

"George Orwell once wrote: 'A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fall all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought!'

"KSL believes language is never far removed from thought. Careless language leads to careless thought, and vice versa." (Used by permission.)

In this book, we have worked first on the skills of seeing, listening, and feeling and are now attempting to add the ability to communicate all of those feelings to other people.

It is well to remember, however, that once again we have a chicken-and-egg situation. The ability to communicate, the striving to gain that ability, and the practicing of that

ability all cause us to observe more, to listen better, and to feel more deeply.

Our oldest daughter, partly because her earliest schooling was in England, is exceptionally articulate. As she entered the stormy beginning of her adolescence, she was hit with her share of problems. They ranged from shyness to moodiness to various kinds of rebellion against authority. Many times our ability to help her with her difficulties hinged on her ability to conceptualize her thoughts and communicate them to us. She had (and has) a certain pride in her ability to verbalize things, and it has often been that pride and our confidence in her logical and articulate communication abilities that have caused her to express things, clarify them in her own mind, then give us the opportunity to help.

It is a basic fact of life that we can't do much about who we are or how we feel until we can describe it and communicate it.

This "month" is devoted to the pursuit of the ability to communicate what we observe—what we see and hear and take in and receive through our physical senses. The ability to communicate these things is a prerequisite for Month Ten, which focuses on the skill of communicating feelings.

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Careful speech.* Most of us are capable of speaking much better than we do. Conscious effort to precisely say

what we mean is the best practice for becoming more articulate.

A by-product of careful speech is that we don't speak so hastily. Once a person forms the mental habit of thinking for an instant or two before talking, two major benefits come about: He avoids saying things he shouldn't say, and he says what he does say more clearly and expresses more exactly what he wishes to communicate.

By "careful speech" we do not mean the use of more big words or more complex sentences. In fact, the opposite is often true. The best communicators (writers as well as speakers) usually use direct, simple language. But their words are well thought out and well chosen.

Simple consciousness of stronger effort to communicate clearly will lead to (1) clearer, more independent thought, (2) broader vocabulary, (3) more honest and stimulating conversation, (4) less slang, less meaningless generalities in language, and (5) children who follow your example and speak well also.

B. *Taking time to write* (whether you're good at it or not). It is only recently that we have begun telling people just how the books in this "teaching children" series came to be written. They actually were not originally intended for publication. We wrote *Teaching Children Joy* to ourselves because we needed a philosophy for raising our own children, and we felt that writing was the best way to clarify and complete our thoughts.

Writing has a way of organizing people's minds—of taking random thoughts and ideas and putting them together in ways that make sense.

During this "month" we challenge you as parents once again to devote a few minutes to writing each day. We made a similar challenge back in Month Four. The focus then was on observing. The focus now is on communicating more clearly and precisely about the things you observe. As you accept this challenge you will put yourself in a position to get your children to do more writing, as suggested in the next

part of this chapter. Try writing daily in one or more of the following ways:

1. *Journal.* Record your observations at the end of each day. Concentrate as much on the thoughts you have had as on the events that have transpired.

2. *Poetry.* Write a short poem about one thing that happens each day or about one observation you make.

3. *Letter.* Write all or part of a letter to someone each day. Strive to be descriptive and clear both about what you are describing and about thoughts you wish to express. This is especially good for mothers who want to describe the weekly adventures of their household. For years when we lived away from our families Linda's journal was her weekly letter home.

C. *Further develop the "Rogerian" technique of listening discussed in Month Five.* As you perfect the active listening method in which you basically repeat back what a child is saying to you in a way that encourages him to go on, you will have the best opportunity of all to improve both sides of the communication skill.

After all, communication involves two things: receiving or "taking in," and transmitting or "giving out." Make it a point this month to listen intently, then to refine what you hear and repeat it back more clearly and more articulately than you heard it.

Example: Your daughter says, "School was the pits today. Nothing but a lot of busy work—stuff the teachers give you to take up the time so they don't have to teach." You say, "The thing you're upset about is that you get assignments that take a lot of time without teaching you very much. And you feel teachers are being a bit lazy to do that rather than think of ways to challenge you and get you to think."

As you practice this "listen hard and repeat it better" technique, several things will happen: Your children will notice and appreciate the effort you are making to understand, and they will correct you and restate what they mean

if your interpretation is incorrect. And, over time, they will start saying what they mean more precisely so you will have less chance of misinterpreting it.

D. *"Stranger conversion."* In almost every facet of our lives and daily activities, there are people whom we rub shoulders with and whom we ought to know, but who remain strangers because neither we nor they take the initiative to convert each other from a stranger to an acquaintance.

Sometimes it is other parents we see at PTA or at school, or people who work in our building or ride the same elevator, or parents of other children on the Little League team.

Part of good communication is the ability to meet such people graciously and pleasantly. Form the habit of introducing yourself, of asking a question or two that places them in your mind, and of seeking and finding something you have in common that can serve as the basis for a friendship.

E. *Name, face, and "interest point" remembering techniques.* All of us admire people who are good at remembering names and faces. We especially admire such people when they remember *us.*

The ability to recall names and facts about people is an important part of communication ability, and it increases our opportunities to communicate effectively with more people. Turn back to item three of Month Five's three-step process for a simple technique that can make you remarkably good at this rather unusual skill.

F. *Articulate prayers.* As the reader has probably gathered by now, the ability to communicate is crucial in real charity for two reasons. First, we can rarely give people the help they need unless we can effectively communicate with them. Second, good communication clarifies and refines our own feelings so that those feelings can motivate us.

By the same token, in personal prayer, if we just think generally about what we're thankful for or what we need,

putting it into general words or not putting it into words at all, then our prayers teach us nothing.

But if we approach the Lord with respect, attempting to word our prayers carefully and clearly, we begin to be more clear about how we feel, we begin to better understand our own needs and the needs of others, and we end up asking the kind of specific questions that often lead us to specific answers.

G. *Your own methods.* Think for a moment about any other ideas you may have for improving your own ability to express yourself. List your ideas here.

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III. Exercises for Teaching Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to make children aware of the goal for the month ahead of becoming better at communicating what we observe).

Start this "month" with a discussion based on the following points:

1. Read out loud the KSL editorial from this chapter's illustrations section. Ask what it means. Ask if the children agree with it.

2. *How is our ability to speak and communicate clearly connected to our ability to think? How is it connected to our ability to help others?*

3. *What are some bad habits or patterns of communication that you notice at school?* (slang, bad sentences,

improper English such as "he goes" instead of "he said," and so on).

4. *How does writing help us to think better and speak better?*

5. *What are some ways you can think of that we could communicate better and more fully during the month ahead?*

Test: Have each family member take the following test on the left-hand side of a piece of paper.

1. Pick an object in the room and describe it as completely as possible in writing. Use as many adjectives as possible.

2. Pick another person in the room and describe him or her as completely as possible.

3. How many times during the month just passed did you: a. write a poem, b. give a speech, c. write in your journal, d. write a letter?

4. How many times did you pause and think about just how to say something before you said it?

5. How many times did you notice that someone you were talking to didn't really understand what you were saying, and therefore you said it again more clearly?

6. What's the best way you know to resolve an argument or disagreement?

7. How many new words did you learn during the month just passed?

B. *Communication with the written word* (vehicles for helping children to communicate effectively through writing). Of the following methods, pick those best suited to your children. Many of these are the same methods used in Month Four (on observing). They are intentionally repeated here with the emphasis on communicating. Think of this month as a second push to develop writing and expressing skills in your children.

1. *Journals or diaries.* Children should be encouraged to write not only about their activities but about their thoughts and observations. Encouragement is the key. Most adoles-

cent children enjoy keeping records. If you share your journal with them and praise their efforts, the chances of their enjoying it enough to stick with it are good. Some families find that it is a good idea to pick one dinner hour each week when family members are asked to share one short reading from their journals for the previous week.

2. *Poetry.* At one point, a few years ago, we became particularly concerned about how structured and scientific our children's education seemed to be, and how little of their day was devoted to any kind of sensitivity or art or personal expression. We were lucky enough to find some other neighborhood parents who felt the same way, and to find a poetry teacher who was willing to come once a week for a month to teach a group of children the joy of poetry.

In the neighborhood group were several adolescent boys to whom the thought of writing poetry was somewhere between ridiculous and repulsive. We persuaded them to try it—and the results were remarkable.

The teacher explained how "free" poetry could be, how they could write anything they wanted about anything. She pointed out that most things we do are governed by a lot of laws and rules. But in poetry there are no rules. You can spell and punctuate however you please. She got the children into discussions about favorite sounds and favorite feelings. She listed interesting adjectives and metaphors on a big chart and asked them to use some of them.

Not only did the children enjoy the class, but they learned how much fun it is to try to express oneself in a creative way. And we, as parents, gained many insights into the feelings, the perspectives, and even the fears of some of the children as we read their work.

The best way to encourage a child to write a poem is to write one of your own with him and let him see the enjoyment you feel.

3. *Letters.* We don't write enough letters in today's society. Using the phone is easier. And we often don't even call the people we ought to be caring about and staying in touch

with, simply because the phone is there, giving us an assurance that we could call, if we needed to—so we don't.

But letters are not the same as phone calls. Written words can be more carefully crafted and can say more precisely (and often more beautifully) what we wish to say. On the other end, they can be read and reread, pondered and thought about and cherished by a grandmother or relative or friend.

Some families we know set aside one evening each month to write letters as a family. They make photocopies of children's lettters before they send them and thus obtain a valuable, sequential record to go along with journals and other family writings.

4. *Ancestors' writing* (journals or letters). If you have any writings of your parents, grandparents, or other ancestors, be sure to read them to your children. Discuss what the people were saying, why they were saying it, and how they expressed it.

5. *Reading together.* Reading aloud is often thought of as something parents should do with small children. But the practice also pays tremendous dividends with adolescents.

Reading good literature together opens all kinds of good opportunities for discussion, not only about the subject matter but about the writing itself and about how the author expresses himself, what styles and forms of writing he uses.

C. *Communicating with the spoken word* (additional vehicles to help you and your children improve verbal communication ability).

1. *Speeches.* As mentioned in earlier chapters, giving short extemporaneous "speeches" around the dinner table provides excellent training for the ability to think on one's feet and to clearly express oneself.

2. *Debate.* The ability to take one side of an issue and craft a case for it, and to be able to clearly express that case in words, is a valuable (and increasingly rare) ability. One way to teach this skill to children is to set up small debates at the dinner table in place of speeches. Think of a debatable

topic and assign one child to speak for sixty seconds on the "pro" and another on the "con." Then give each child a thirty-second rebuttal opportunity.

Another debate opportunity presents itself when two children are fighting or arguing. Take the time to sit down with the two of them, formulate with them precisely what the disagreement is about, and structure and supervise a debate to solve it. Point out how much more educational and enjoyable a debate is than a fight or argument.

You can also set up a debate between yourself and your teenager the next time he wants to do something you don't think advisable. It's a good way to get all the facts and feelings on the table. To understand each other's view, trade sides and see if you can debate the other person's position.

3. *"Interesting things."* At the dinner table, ask each family member to think back over the day and recall the most interesting thing he saw or experienced (as suggested in Month Four). This time, however, ask each person to pause for sixty seconds and think (before speaking) of the most exact way in which he can explain his interesting thing.

4. *"Vocabulary words."* Try to be aware of useful words that you hear (or that you use yourself) that would enhance your children's vocabulary. Don't deal much with technical or difficult words, but with descriptive, interesting words that children would enjoy learning.

Write them down as you become aware of them, and invite other family members to do the same. Have a "vocabulary list" in the kitchen or family room. Use the words yourself, and give lavish praise to the children whenever they use them.

5. *The "would you rephrase that" tradition.* Start a habit or tradition in your family of challenging each other to rephrase things that are said ambiguously or sloppily. When a child asks if he can go over to Johnny's, ask him to rephrase his question, this time telling you why he wants to go, how long he'll be gone, and why he thinks you should let him go. Encourage the children to challenge you to rephrase also so

that if you say "no" they can ask you to say it again and include why they cannot go, when they might be able to go, and so on.

D. *"Bedtime chats"* (to open up an opportunity for some relaxed communication at the end of the day). Many parents find that bedtime is the best moment of the day to open up and talk about what has taken place and been observed that day. Our earlier books, dealing with younger children, recommend that parents tuck their children in as often as possible and ask, "What was your 'happy' today?" and "What was your 'sad'?" With adolescents the same principle applies.

Sometimes the best way to talk is to just talk! Tell your children what is on *your* mind (what you are worried about, what you are excited about). As the trust levels build, they will share their thoughts, too, and respond to your questions.

Adolescents and early teens ought to still have a bedtime. And they will accept a bedtime more readily if it is made pleasant by frequent opportunities to communicate one-on-one with one of their parents.

Obviously, you shouldn't feel guilty if you can't tuck everyone in every night. Schedules are not that simple. One or two nights a week, when you have the time to spend a few unhurried moments, produce the best results.

E. *Elimination of TV on weeknights* (to give children more opportunity to communicate, and to remove bad models of communication from their consciousness). Perhaps no single act or decision contributes more to both the quality and quantity of education in a family than the elimination of television. There is no need here to rehearse the well-known statistics about how much time children waste in front of TV sets. Two things, however, are certain: (1) They see very few examples of articulate communication (and a lot of examples of shabby English); and (2) they don't communicate at all during the big blocks of time they spend watching.

We believe the most effective and reasonable system is

simply to allow no TV on weeknights. If you own a VCR, you might consider recording special shows for watching on weekends.

F. *"Friend Chart" and name remembering* (to increase the number of people children communicate with). The Friend Chart that was discussed as the family focal point in Month Seven can be reemphasized this month. Try to teach children the same three-point method of remembering names that you are using, and encourage them to list on the friend chart the names of new people they have met.

G. *Your own methods.* Take a few moments and think about each of your own children—how good is each as a communicator? What things come to mind that would encourage them to speak more precisely, to take more pride in their language, and to want to communicate better? List the ideas you have.

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H. *Post-test* (to reinforce and recall what has been learned during this month).

On the fast Sunday that ends this "month" and begins Month Ten, retake the test in item A of this section. You will be pleased at how much better everyone does at describing things.

Discuss the value of communication. Ask who can think of a habit or tradition you could adopt as a family to continually improve your ability to communicate. Then introduce the family focal point.

IV. Family Focal Point

"England nights" (to reward children for their ability to ask questions).

During the three years that our family spent in England, we came to admire (and almost covet) the English system of early bedtimes for younger children. Most English families, partly because of how early it gets dark, feed their young children (those under eight or so) a light supper called "tea" when they come home from school and then put them to bed at 6:30 or 7:00. The parents and older children then enjoy a peaceful "supper" at 7:30 or 8:00, often inviting guests to eat with them.

We try, as often as possible, to have what we call an "England night" where we put our smaller children to bed a little early and invite someone interesting to eat a later dinner with us and our adolescent children. We select guests who have an expertise that our family is interested in. The dinner provides the children with a unique communication opportunity in which they can ask questions and be involved in an adult discussion about a specific area in which they have interest. We have had a couple who were experts in American Indian culture; we've had a doctor, a lawyer, a poet, a native of Latin America. We have a list of interest areas that the children have helped create and we are watching for acquaintances that could be invited to discuss each topic.

The children know that the key purpose of the occasion is to develop their question asking and listening ability. (In fact, they know that if they don't do a pretty good job of questioning and participating in the discussion, they will not be invited to the next "England night.") They write out a list of questions before a guest arrives so they will be well prepared to participate in the discussion.

V. Summary

Communication is most often the vehicle of charity. By communicating well we learn of the feelings and needs of others. By communicating well we are sometimes able to give the encouragement and help that constitute service and the deeds of charity.

On the first level, a good communicator must be able to communicate effectively what he sees and observes and must be able to listen well and converse about the observations and perspectives and expertise of other people. It is this first level of communication that we have dealt with this "month."

In Month Ten, we move to the second level of communication, which involves communication of and about feelings.

The vocabulary, grammar, and clear thinking we have tried to develop through this month's methods are the foundation for the deeper kinds of communication that we will take up next.

MONTH

10

Communicating What We Feel

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ Doing
= Charity

When we talk about feelings, we use God's language.

It is very hard to describe or define what an artist is, but a good attempt was made by one who said, "An artist is one who can express feelings in a way that others can understand."

"Unexpressed feelings never die. They just get buried and come forth later in uglier forms."

I. Illustrations and Stories

The story is told of a reserved Swedish couple, married for thirty years, named Alf and Anna. During one rare moment of communication, Anna said, "Do you love me, Alf? You never tell me you do." Alf's answer was, "I told you I did, Anna, thirty years ago. And if anything changes, I'll let you know."

Unexpressed, uncommunicated feelings are like bottled-up, unused fuel. They never move anything, and if they are left too long they begin either to sour or to lose their potency. At the very least, they lose the good they could do if they were expressed.

To enhance and refine and recognize our feelings is a good and useful skill, but communication of those feelings is often the actual transaction of charity. When we talk about how we feel, we are reaching deep into our soul. And when these feelings are communicated clearly and effectively, they reach into the soul of the listener.

If feelings could not be communicated, each person would feel only what he experienced or what happened directly to him. But through the transmission of feelings, we can "receive" and actually feel the emotions of the whole range of human observation and experience.

When you stop to think about it, feelings are what all great forms of art seek to communicate. The movies we like most are the ones that make us feel the most. It is the same with art, with music, and with literature.

All of these art forms, along with methods of personal communication (from words to gestures to looks in the eye) are the vehicles by which people transmit feelings.

We would like to suggest that the old cliché "some things are better left unsaid" may be more true for one whose goal is simply to avoid all conflict than for someone who wants to fully live and appreciate life and other people. As one of the quotes that opened this "month" reminds us, unexpressed feelings never die, they live on in the subconscious mind and often come forth later in uglier forms. A better saying might be, "Don't leave any feeling unsaid, but find the right time and the right way to say it."

I have a remarkably clear memory of a particular day in my childhood when I felt a special love for my father because of something he had done for me. I was probably about nine or ten years old, sitting in my bedroom, and my father was in the living room, reading the newspaper. I wanted to go in, give him a hug, and tell him I loved him. But it was hard to get up and do it. I guess I wondered if I would disturb him. And I felt a little embarrassed even though love was expressed openly and regularly in our family.

I remember thinking—analyzing, actually—what the "pros" and "cons" of the action would be. I finally decided that going out there and telling my dad I loved him really couldn't do any harm and would make us both feel happy. I remember making what may have been my earliest mental resolution: "When you feel something good for someone, tell him."

An interesting study done among 371 mothers in the 1950s measured and catalogued the parenting methods, techniques, and attitudes employed in each home. Nearly thirty years later, interviews were conducted among the adults and parents who had been the children in the homes where the study was done in the '50s. They were asked how happy their childhood memories were and how good a parenting job their mothers had done.

The central finding: Good parenting and successful, happy children could not be directly connected to any specific techniques or methods. What they were connected to was how much mothers had enjoyed their children, how much fun they had had together while children were growing up, and how much they communicated with each other about their feelings!

It has been said that parents would do better if they tried less to make their children good and tried more to make them happy. An extension and corollary of this truth is that parents would also do better if they tried less to communicate *to* their children and more to communicate *with* them—about feelings.

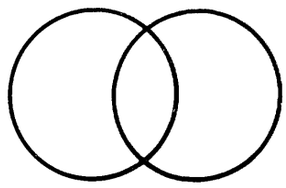
We have a thirteen-year-old daughter who is blessed with an active conscience and a constantly present desire to have everything resolved and straight in her mind. Two or three times a month she comes to one of us and with a little self-conscious half-smile says, "I've got a problem, could we talk?"

We find some privacy and she begins. She usually begins with the words, "I feel." What follows is always beautiful because it is always honest. And whether or not she learns anything from our advice, we learn from her sincerity and her openness.

One ward held a most interesting social event: It was a dinner to which only adolescents (from age ten to fourteen in this case) and the most elderly members of the ward were invited. The seating arrangement mixed the "oldsters" and the "youngsters." The resulting conversations were remarkable. At most tables, discussions were still going on over an hour after dessert had been served. Each age was completely fascinating to the other age. Questions were flying a mile a minute.

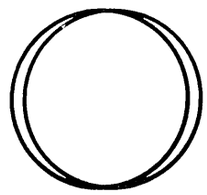
One who listened carefully quickly realized that the real conversation was about feelings—how it feels to be old; how it feels to be young; how it feels to share with each other.

Some marriage partners choose to share only a part of each other, to communicate only a portion of their feelings. The relationship could be diagrammed like this:



The "overlap" or shared portion is shaped like a football, and like the bounce of a football, the marriage is erratic, unpredictable. You never know if it will bounce to you or to the side or over your head.

In a marriage where virtually all is shared, the diagram looks like this:



The marriage is round, like a basketball. Its bounce is straight and true.

Communication about feelings is not only the tool that allows us to serve others, it often *is* the service we give. For the needs of many do not involve material or physical help, but emotional and social help, which is often given with words.

It is a skill, and it takes time and effort to learn, but one can teach himself to communicate accurately first about his own feelings, then about the feelings of the person with whom he is talking, and finally about the probable feelings of people he has observed but never met.

To communicate about feelings is to understand those feelings, to fully comprehend what they mean.

There is only one way to form a true friendship. It is to share and communicate feelings.

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Discover real feelings instead of scheming to overcome undesirable actions.* Sometimes our biggest problem in dealing with teenagers is that we forget to communicate, and instead we scheme when we see undesirable actions.

When one of our daughters started high school, her biggest problem, in our minds, was that she kept missing the bus. She had done this occasionally in junior high, but it was getting worse.

"This is ridiculous!" I (Linda) thought to myself. "My morning is timed to the very minute to get everybody to finish their practicing, get their rooms straight, beds made, homework packed up, notes written, and bodies out the door! I just don't have time to drop everything and run her down to the school twice a week, especially when a bus stops for her right outside our door."

My first plan of attack was to tell her that if she missed the bus she would just have to be late for school. I thought she would be mortified. I thought it would be agony for her to enter the classroom late, but she didn't say a thing—just got out of the car with her home excuse and said "thanks" and meandered on in.

The next time it happened (a few days later) I said, "You know, I just can't get you down there today. You'll just have to miss school." ("Surely that will get her," I thought, "she's such a good student and it will be difficult for her to make things up.") Foiled again! She seemed perfectly happy to stay home!

The next time it happened (a few days later) I premeditated, getting good and mad! "How can you keep doing this to me?" I demanded. "I've had it! You just get your things together and get out that door on time from now on," I yelled as I stomped off to get my boots. All to no avail!

The next time it happened (a few days later) I decided to hit her where it really hurt—the pocketbook! "Okay, two dollars every time I have to take you to school from now on," I announced. "That way everybody will be happier." ("At least she'll be giving me something for my efforts. That will make her think twice before she tries this again," I thought.)

This time *she* was mad! "This is just ridiculous to have to pay my own mother for a ride to school," she raved. "I can't believe this!" (I loved it! I had finally figured out something that worked!)

I held the line, and we both rode to school fuming. When she got out, she leaned over and said with a scowl, "Taxi drivers don't deserve thanks!" and slammed the door.

I was stunned. I couldn't believe she could think of something so smart-alecky to say to me! I immediately flung the door back open and told her to get back in. We had some talking to do!

In the course of our talk I discovered what had really been happening. We had not been communicating our true feelings with each other. I had been scheming behind her back, not telling her how I felt. She hadn't been communicating with me either. I found that she hated going to school! She felt as though she was doing busy work in many classes, and most of all felt desperately alone at lunchtime with no one to eat with or talk to. We spent a good long time really communicating—each being amazed at how the other felt.

"How scary," I thought that afternoon as I contemplated what had happened, and how easily I could have let our communication drift farther and farther apart and chalked it up to rebellion or insensitivity. What we *did* decide the basic problem was, was self-centeredness on both our parts (yes, me too—didn't I say "How can you do this to *me?*"). What we needed to work on was feeling with each other and keeping the communication lines open. I don't remember her missing the bus again, except on rare occasions.

B. *Observe and describe yourself.* It has been said that observation takes place on three levels. First, we learn how to observe nature and "things." Second, we learn to observe other people. Third, we learn to observe ourselves.

As we learn to watch ourselves, it is very useful to attempt describing what we see. This month, in a journal or diary, or perhaps in a notebook reserved for this purpose, try to write about the moods and feelings you have experienced during the day. Describe how you felt and why you felt that way.

It is through describing our feelings that we understand them and control them. Describing feelings somehow captures them and removes the worry from them, rendering them incapable of hurting us.

C. *Form the habit of asking "How do you feel?" and making it a specific rather than a general question.* During this month, as you did in Month Six, stay aware of how often you can ask someone how they feel—but like the man described in the opening part of Month Five, add some words to make it the kind of specific question that solicits a serious and specific answer. Say, "How do you feel about the decision your boss made?" or "How do you feel when your math teacher calls on you in class?" or "How did you feel right after the cheerleader tryouts?" or "How do you feel at 5 o'clock on Friday night when the weekend begins?"

D. *At the same time, form the parallel habit of telling others how you feel.* As we have mentioned, the words "I feel" have a way of opening up a high trust level in a conver-

sation. They also allow their user to say what is in his heart without judging or offending the person he is talking to. This month, refocus on saying how you feel, and be as clear and articulate as you possibly can about those feelings. For example, if you are upset with your thirteen-year-old daughter for not letting you know where she was after school, your impulse might be to say, "You are irresponsible when you don't ask and you'd better not let it happen again," when a more effective, less judgmental (and perhaps more accurate) thing to say would be, "I feel upset and worried when I have no idea where you are." The first response breeds defensiveness and resentment in the daughter and minimizes her inclination to apologize and try hard not to do it again. The second response breeds concern and maximizes her inclination to apologize and improve of her own initiative.

E. *Telling others how you think they feel.* Somewhere beyond the habit of asking how others feel and telling them how you feel lies the art of being able to "tell" others how *they* feel. As a person masters the skill of "face reading" (see Month Eight), he becomes capable of giving a very valuable gift to those he deals with. He can say, "You look as if you're feeling a lot of pressure," or "You sound as if you're even more excited about that than you're letting on!" or "I appreciate you saying that, but I sense that you still don't feel right about it."

As we make this kind of statement to people, we are talking to them about their feelings, and they will respond—to agree with our assessment, to disagree with it, or to expand or alter it. In every case, windows will be opened to us that allow us to see feelings and to notice opportunities to give encouragement or help that is tailor-made to the feelings and needs of the other person.

F. *The incredible gift of a well-conceived compliment.* Some of my most vivid (and valued) childhood memories are of simple compliments I received. I remember a hunting trip when my father told me how much fun it was to have me along and how sharp my eyes were at picking up distant

movement. I remember my mother praising specific grades on a report card and asking me where I had obtained my aptitude for math since I couldn't have gotten it from her. And I remember a little sixth-grade girl who coyly told me what a good dancer I was, and with that one simple sentence drastically changed how I viewed several things, including dancing.

Just as the body needs physical nourishment, the human ego needs the nutrient of praise. And the "fast food" of "Good game," or "You look nice" will not mean as much as a carefully prepared "gourmet" compliment like, "You did an exceptional job on that model, son. You've always been really talented with your hands, and the way you painted it shows you have a real feel for color and design," or "I was noticing you with your friends after Sunday School and you really have a way of keeping everyone involved and including all the other kids in your conversation. I could tell by watching how much they like you and respect you."

When you give a compliment, be sure it is completely honest, make it as specific as possible, and get as much eye contact as possible with the person so you can "say it" with your eyes as well as with your voice.

Children, particularly adolescents, thrive on praise and use it as fuel for their flame of self-esteem. Parents who consciously strive to communicate as many of the positive feelings and as much of their pride as possible find their children to be happier and more manageable.

Criticism is simply not an effective teaching method. When it is used at all, it should be focused on an action, not on a person, and it should be sandwiched between layers of praise.

G. *Orient personal conversations toward feelings.* In addition to talking about how you feel, and how the person you are speaking with feels, it is possible, in everyday conversation, to turn discussion about third parties toward feelings. Doing so elevates a conversation and gets it above gossip.

For example, your friend says, "Did you hear that since

Fred lost his job he and Mary are considering a separation or divorce?" You, rather than following the typical pattern of gossip, say, "I wonder what feelings Fred had to deal with in being laid off—probably felt some bitterness and maybe some insecurity. What do you think?"

By shifting the conversation to feelings, you end up empathizing rather than gossiping.

H. *Absolute honesty.* Nothing promotes meaningful communication more than candor and honesty. Honesty and openness are very disarming: They take down the other guy's defense and encourage him to talk and respond to you in a way that is equally honest and thus very revealing of his truest and innermost feelings.

Complete honesty means not exaggerating; it means saying what you really think rather than what is expected. And it means taking down façades and artificial images.

It is not easy, but it is rewarding. Commit yourself to total candor for this "month" and you will be amazed at the growing sense of power and inner strength that results.

I. *Your own methods.* List any other things that come to mind, ways you could improve yourself and concentrate more on the skill of communicating about your feelings and about the feelings of others.

III. Exercises for Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to help children understand this month's goal of communicating effectively about feelings).

1. Last month we talked about and worked on being able to describe and communicate things we see or observe.

This month we'll work on communicating *feelings.* Why is it important to communicate about feelings? (Read the "unexpressed feelings" quote that opened this chapter; then tell the Alf and Anna story and discuss.)

2. When do we need to be able to talk about feelings? (When we're upset, when we disagree with someone, when our own feelings are hurt, when we are happy and when we want to make someone else happy, and so on).

3. How can talking about feelings help other people? (By letting them know they are understood; by revealing ways in which we can help them.)

Test

1. How many times, during the past month, have you talked with someone about your feelings, or about theirs?

2. How many times have you written about your feelings (in your journal, in poetry, or elsewhere)?

3. How many specific compliments can you remember giving to other people during the month just passed?

4. Write down the best compliment you can think of right now for some other member of your family.

5. Based on what you can see right now and on what you have noticed lately, write a short paragraph about how you think some other family member is feeling at this moment.

B. *Example* (to give children a communication model to follow). It goes without saying that your children will begin to communicate feelings as they see you doing so.

Talk openly about your moods and feelings and ask often about theirs. You will thus teach your children two profoundly important principles: (1) it is okay to have feelings—the whole gamut of feelings; and (2) it is healthy and beneficial to express those feelings (in the proper place and at the right time, but soon).

C. *Adding feelings to active listening* (to encourage and draw out children's feelings in conversation). The active listening discussed in previous chapters reaches its highest form when it centers on feelings.

Listen carefully to what a child is saying, then rephrase it

back to him, and then add an assessment or supposition about how that thing must make him feel. For example: "I see what you mean, John. Your coach tells you to do it one way but then he praises Billy who is doing it a different way. That has got to be a little frustrating for you because you're the one trying to follow the directions, but not getting the praise. I think if I were you, I'd feel pretty confused about just what to do next."

D. *Bedtime chats* (to use a relaxed atmosphere for discussions involving feelings). We discussed in the last "month" what a good moment bedtime can be for communication, and we have mentioned various fun questions to ask children at bedtime. Try during this month to expand this idea a little so that it includes the expression of more specific feelings.

Start it off yourself by sitting on the edge of a child's bed and volunteering how you have felt about various things during the day. Let the child respond in kind. Prompt him along with questions, encouragement, compliments.

Don't expect feelings to flow as freely as you wish on the first few efforts. Be content to talk to your children about your feelings a few times and be patient about their own expressions.

E. *Writing and reading about feelings* (to repeat methods from earlier chapters that help children better define and articulate their feelings).

1. *Themes.* Write a list of feeling-describing adjectives on a blackboard or chart (such as enthused, somber, jealous, ecstatic, frustrated, embarrassed) and ask each child to write a one-page theme on "One time when I felt _____." Encourage him to describe the feeling as well as the circumstances.

2. *Journals.* Ask all family members to concentrate this month on writing about feelings in their journal entries—their own feelings, the feelings they perceive others to have, and so on.

3. *Magazine picture game* (an adaption of a method

from Month Eight). Select a few pictures from magazine ads that contain a central person or group of people. Point to a person in a picture, invite the children to study his environment and circumstances, and then have them begin stating adjectives that might express what he is feeling. Keep a list of all the adjectives that are mentioned.

4. *Ancestor records of journals.* If you have the diaries or records of grandparents or ancestors, locate any passages that describe either feelings they experienced or situations in which you can imagine or speculate as to how they felt. Read the passages with your children at dinner time.

5. *Build and expand an "adjective list" of feelings* (to help children realize how many moods, emotions, and feelings exist, and how interesting they are to experience).

Take the list started in the "magazine picture game" or used in writing themes (see 2 and 3, above) and expand it in a family discussion. As the list grows, explain that as we grow and mature we experience a wider range of feelings and emotions. Use the metaphor of an explorer who discovers new continents, new rivers, and previously unknown mountain ranges. Just as bold and successful explorers were unafraid of new territory, so we should be unafraid and unashamed of acknowledging and expressing our feelings.

F. *Feelings "clearing house"* (to assist children in having a vocabulary to explain their feelings and in realizing the advantage of expressing feelings rather than holding them in). During the month, find some opportunities to clear away any unexpressed feelings that any family member has. Go through the adjective list together and say, "Has anyone been feeling frustrated? jealous? angry?" and so on right through the list.

Preface the "clearing house" by quoting the phrase, "Unspoken feelings don't ever die; they simply get buried and come forth later in uglier forms."

Be sure children understand that this is just an exercise to help them identify feelings and to show them how much better they feel after feelings are expressed. Remind them

that there will usually not be this kind of game to provide a way to express how they feel—thus they should, on their own, think about how they feel and share those feelings with other family members.

G. *One-on-one opportunities* (to facilitate the most personal expressions of feelings—one-on-one, between parent and child).

Take a child on routine travel whenever possible. From a business trip to a simple visit to the grocery store, take a child along. One-on-one situations facilitate communication of feelings more effectively than any other setting.

A trip, whether it is across the country or just across town, is a particularly effective device for communication. Since you are on your way somewhere, you feel no pressure to be doing something. Therefore, you can talk, because there is essentially nothing else to do until you reach the destination. This relaxed atmosphere of time availability leads to easy and pleasant communication.

H. *Your own methods.* List any other ways you can think of to help children become better at explaining and communicating about feelings.

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I. *Post-test* (to reinforce and recall what has been learned).

Retake the test from the beginning of this section. You will find that the questions are easy this time rather than perplexing. Praise the children's improvement and go on to the family focal point.

IV. Family Focal Point

The "Comp" award (to keep children aware of trying not only to know how others are feeling but to help them feel better by communicating their own positive feelings—and to reward their efforts at both).

You will remember the "What Would Jesus Do" award discussed in Month Three and the "Ice Breaker" award from Month Five. We have found that a brief award ceremony each Sunday at the dinner table is an exciting and effective way to extend praise and recognition to children. At first we were concerned that teenagers would think they were a little above this type of activity. But, on the contrary, we have found that they want (and need) recognition as much as or more than the smaller children and always want to be in the running for the awards we give.

This month, we suggest a third award, called the "Comp" award. In our family, it came about this way: Grandma was visiting us and was involved one evening as we discussed this "month's" goal of trying to know how others are feeling. She told us of a teacher she once had, long ago when she was just a little girl. This teacher, she said, had a gift for knowing how children felt and for offering words of encouragement or praise when they were needed most. Grandma said she remembered how this teacher would come up to her and say, "I have a *comp.* for you. It's a good one and I'll give it to you after school." Grandma would then feel happy and excited all day, waiting to see what nice thing the teacher would say to her.

With Grandma's story in our minds, we discussed how powerful a good compliment can be. We talked about how a person has to observe and listen and try to know how the other person is feeling before he can give a good and thoughtful compliment. And we talked about a good compliment as the highest form of feelings communication.

We decided it was something important enough that we should remind ourselves of it each week. So we established this third award—called the "Comp" award. It consists of a

piece of construction paper with a carefully lettered "COMP" mounted on cardboard.

Each Sunday at dinner we say, "Who is in the running?" and the children think back, trying to recall any instance during the past week when they noticed enough about another person and sensed his feelings well enough to communicate a good compliment.

The children listen to each other's experience in giving compliments and become regularly more motivated to give better compliments themselves. The "Comp" award is presented to the person who gave the best compliment. He keeps the award on his bedroom door throughout the week until next Sunday when it is reawarded.

V. Summary

The ability to accurately and honestly communicate feelings is an essential part of charity. We must know of the feelings of others in order to serve them—and we often serve them best simply by expressing our feelings to them and for them.

This "month's" exercises and approaches attempt to help children (and parents) to sort out and better define their feelings by talking about them, and to better grasp the feelings of others by listening to them.

It is important to remember that the efforts we make to communicate what we feel actually expand and extend the range of what we feel. The thought it takes to articulate our emotions serves to enhance those feelings and to complete them.

SECTION VI

DOING

All of the observing, listening, feeling, and communicating skills we have tried to develop in ourselves and in our children over the past ten months come into their full beauty when they bring about the action of service.

James Russell Lowell said, "All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lonely action."

William R. Inge said, "Beautiful thoughts hardly bring us to God until they are acted upon. No one can have a true idea of right until he does it."

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Man's actions are the picture book of his creeds."

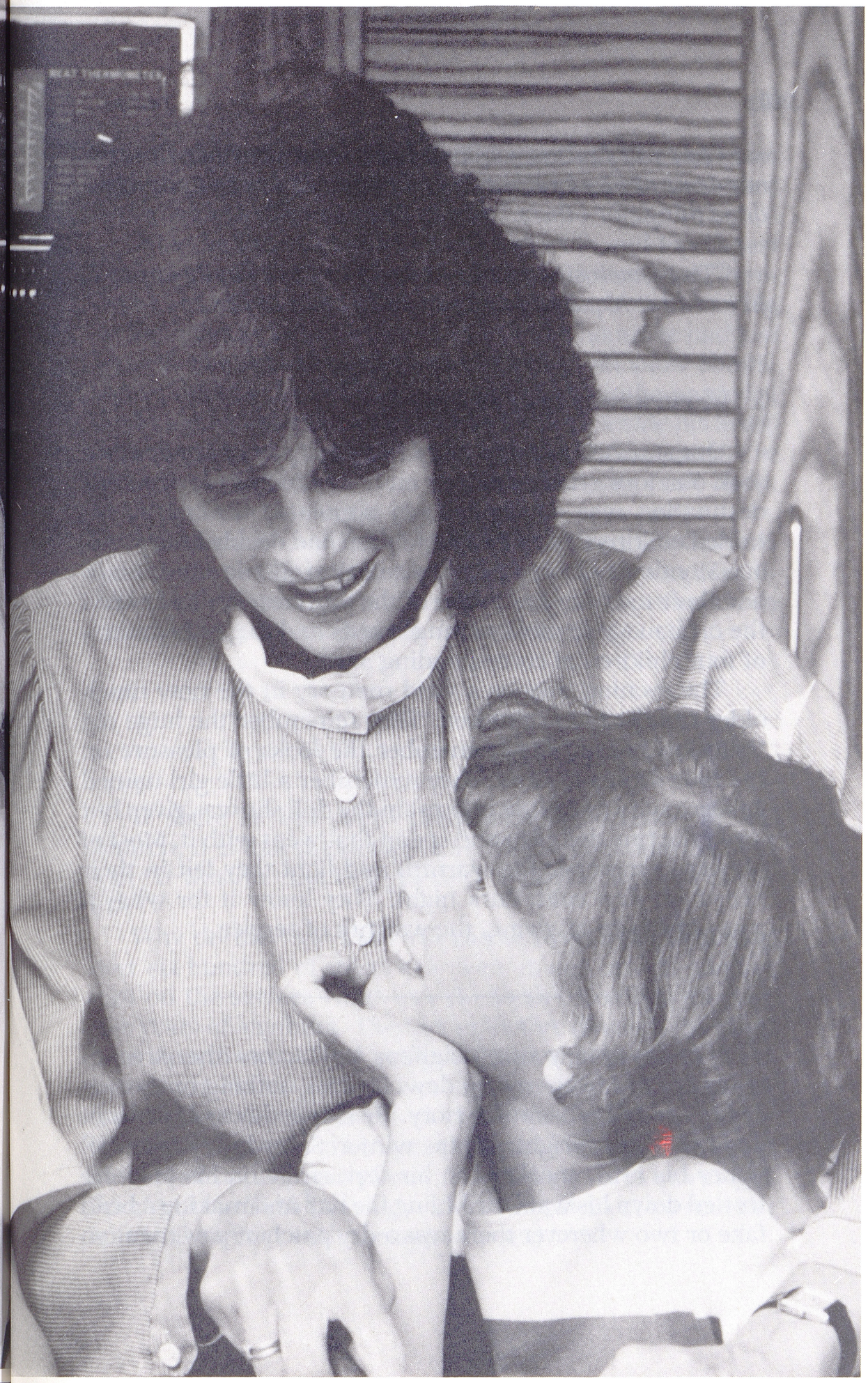
Francis Bacon perhaps said it best of all, "All our actions take their hue from the complexion of the heart, as landscapes their variety from light."

MONTH

11

Service

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ **Doing**
= Charity



"You will find as you look back upon your life, that the moments that stand out are the moments when you have done things for others." (Henry Drummond.)

"True generosity requires more of us than kindly impulse. Above all it requires imagination." (I. A. R. Wylie.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

One snowy December night in a poor part of London, we took our four small children on a mission of service. Our destination was an orphanage, populated mainly by retarded children. Each of our children had decided the previous Monday night in a family meeting to choose one of his or her "best toys" to give to one of the orphans. We had called the orphanage to make arrangements and to get the names of four children of corresponding ages.

The evening lives as a vivid memory in the now much older minds of our children. They remember the huge old Victorian house. They remember the looks of pleasure on the four orphans' faces. They remember a little girl named Rebecca who took little interest in the doll she was given but loved the tiny doll dish and spoon that went with it. Most of all they remember the warmth and light they felt in their hearts on that cold, dark night. They know it for what it was—the light of giving, the warmth of service.

I observed a young neighbor boy across the street. I watched him from my window, hearing nothing but seeing enough to tell a beautiful story. He skipped out of his front door into the bright, white winter Saturday, basketball under his arm, sneakers on his feet, smile on his face. He trotted down his walk, dribbling the ball and making a head fake or two wherever there was a dry patch of pavement on

the carefully shoveled cement. The boy had done the snow shoveling earlier that morning. I had noticed him as I went out to pick up the morning paper.

Now he turned onto the main sidewalk and loped past his neighbor's house. Then he paused, looked back, hesitated, started running again, stopped again. He was looking at the old lady who lived next door in the house he had just passed. She was struggling with a heavy old snow shovel. Again the boy started down the street. Again he paused. I could see his thoughts as clearly as if I were inside his head. "The guys are waiting for me. I'd miss part of the game. I've already shoveled snow this morning. But she can't do it. She's too frail. She might hurt herself."

He tossed the ball into a fluffy snowdrift and ran back to get his shovel. The look on his face was an interesting combination of exasperation at the situation and satisfaction in having decided something he knew was right.

If there is one truly predictable occurrence in the Church, it is that missionaries, in their return address, will say, "It was the best two years (or eighteen months) of my life."

Why do they say that? We can tell you from watching over six hundred of them who were in our care in London that on the surface what they do doesn't look like the best two years of anything. They get up before dawn in freezing, bare apartments. They study difficult matter intently for two hours before eating a meager breakfast. They spend most of the day knocking on doors that get slammed on them. They give up their greatest loves (from girlfriends to basketball to deep pan pizza). They follow rules more rigid than most prisons (staying within a small area, no movies, no social contact with the opposite sex).

Why are these the happiest years? Because it is a time of concentrated service, of doing all they can for their fellowman—and, in the process, forgetting themselves.

"I believe that the rendering of service is the common duty of mankind and that only in the purifying of sacrifice is the dross of selfishness consumed and the greatness of the human soul set free." (John D. Rockefeller, Jr.)

Teddy Roosevelt said, "In the battle of life, it is not the critic who counts. Not the man who points out where the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually *in* the arena, who does actually strive to *do* the deeds, whose place will never be among those cold and timid souls who never knew either victory or defeat!"

What really puts us in the arena? What really lets us undertake the risk of actively loving? The answer is service.

Those who serve are involved. They are no longer mere spectators of life. And they will never be among the "timid souls" who rarely lose and rarely win!

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Attitude.* Most service is an outgrowth of attitude. Let's explore some aspects of the kind of attitude that leads toward natural and heartfelt service.

1. *The honor of serving children.* I got up six times with our sick eighteen-month-old one night. Fortunately, I had been reflecting earlier that day on what an honor it is to serve children. They are, after all, our brothers and sisters. They are God's children, put in our stewardship so we can become more like God. No other privilege compares with serving children, and nothing teaches us more.

The presence of this attitude in my mind actually (though it's hard for me to believe even as I write) made it pleasant to be awakened six times in one night and to be given six chances to serve a tiny brother.

2. *Stewardship.* Perhaps nothing in the world is more conducive to service than a consistent awareness that we own nothing—that all belongs to God. With this in mind, we lose the tendency to protect *our* time and *our* things, and we lose the selfishness that prevents service.

3. *Wanting others' problems to become ours.* All parents have experienced the desire to take pain or sickness away from our children and take it upon ourselves instead. As we learn to love our fellowmen more, we can feel similar feelings for them, feelings that lead invariably to service.

B. *Work by "mental effort."* The most effective and useful types of service come in the form of response to need. When we think hard enough to clearly define a need, and then think again, hard enough to think of how we can really help fill that need—then we provide true service.

This approach can be particularly valuable with children. I remember one period when I felt some rather deep concern about problems that two of our children were having. One adolescent daughter, just starting a new school, felt that she had no close friends and was just too shy to go out and get some. And our preadolescent boy, totally secure socially and with his friends, was performing far below his potential academically at school.

Both problems seemed to drag on and on, and steadily worsened. I worried about them a fair amount but didn't know what to do, really, other than give a word of encouragement here and there.

One day it occurred to me that I had to analyze these problems to the same depth and with the degree or intensity of mental effort that I put into business and professional problem analysis at my office.

Hard thought led to specific ideas. As mentioned earlier in this book, we ended up throwing a surprise party for the daughter—a slumber party that tightened some relation-

ships and got her over the hump. As for the son, I first spoke at length to his teachers, then went to school with him so we could sit together with his teachers and talk. My son, learning earlier that day about the meeting, had prepared a list of the grades he wanted to aim for during the next term. He also wrote out what he thought he would have to do to get each desired grade. The teachers added a bit, right to his list, making it a complete summary of the requirements and grade division points. We designed a system of follow-up: teachers checking in school, parents checking in the home.

Both ideas helped considerably with these two children's respective problems. The point, though, more importantly, is that parents can best serve their children when they take the time to think first, to use mental effort to decide what the needs are and how to meet them.

C. *Keeping inventory.* As simple as it sounds, rendering small acts of service is often as much a product of habit as anything else. We do what we condition ourselves to do, and even though routine, mechanical, or unfeeling service is inferior to what is done with the heart, there is nonetheless much benefit in becoming consistent and regular in our efforts to serve.

Try this (during the month): In your day-planner, calendar book, or diary (or on your partnership planning forms if you have adopted the planning system from Month Seven) draw a small box on each day or date. Then, as you watch for and perform some small act of service each day, write what it was in the box for that day. A few words will do: "Helped Lillian unload groceries," "Took over car pool for Margaret so she could prepare for guests," "Stopped to help elderly man change tire."

You will never pass a day without chances to give some kind of service. The uncertainty is whether you will see those chances. The "fill-in-the-box" method increases awareness.

D. *Wise service.* We must all strive to give others, particularly our children, what they need rather than what they

want. Usually we can discern the difference between the two simply by asking ourselves objectively, by trying to project in our minds what the consequences will be.

All of the other skills, worked on in the other "months" of this book, essentially help us to observe and understand enough to serve needs rather than wants. Indeed, this is what separates true charity from mere nice gestures.

The question is not whether your nonmember car-pool friend wants the gospel, it's whether he needs it. It's not whether your neighbor wants to go to aerobics, it's whether it would help her to go. It's not whether your teenager wants his own car when he's sixteen, it's whether he needs much more responsibility and maturity first (he does!).

Big things like the examples above are pretty easy. But we need to work on the small, everyday ones—they are the toughest. And it is sometimes *our* wants that get in the way of others' needs. Are you buying the overpriced toy in the airport shop because your daughter needs it, will benefit by it, will be reassured of your love by receiving it—or is it because you want to ease the slight guilt you feel for not spending much time with her lately? What does she *need?*

Or what about something as routine as visiting teaching? The elderly lady just wants someone to talk to, so that's what you do once a month—you talk to her for a while, and listen, too. And she does need that. But what else does she need? Something she doesn't ask for and may not even consciously want? Does she need more fresh air? A way to get out of her home once in a while? Does she need any physical help? Any assistance with her own distant family? Does she need help with her journal? Does she need purposeful activity or projects to make her feel worthwhile? What does she *need?*

The point, once again, is that real service, real need-based service, takes thought, mental effort, even wisdom. We're only without these things when we don't want them badly enough to work for them.

E. *The power of prayer.* Perhaps the most pleasant and

easy-to-answer prayers that God receives are those from people who ask for opportunities to serve. Service to others is service to him and fulfills his purposes.

Essentially, when we ask for chances to serve, we ask if we can help him. And he always says yes.

Because it is always answered, prayer to serve should never be asked without thought and commitments. Once those are in place and the request made, look out! Opportunities to give service will start dropping like rain.

Prayer is not only the prelude to service; it is the heart of it. Often the best service we can render to another is to pray for him. "Third-party prayers," in which one person prays to God for someone else, are usually effective in direct proportion to how specific they are and how much faith is involved. Alma the Elder, as we know, prayed with such faith and sincere intent that God intervened to bring Alma the Younger into repentance.

Again, the observation, recognition, and understanding of needs is the key. When we have found a genuine need, we can try to serve directly, and when the need is beyond our power or wisdom, we can appeal to God through our faith and our specific prayers in behalf of the specific need we have recognized.

F. *Your own methods.* Before reading on into the ideas for children, take a moment and list any other ways you can think of to give yourself additional ideas and motivation to give service.

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III. Exercises to Teach Children

A. *Fast Sunday discussion and pretest* (to help children understand how the skills of the preceding ten months lead

up to service and to establish concentration on service as the goal for the month ahead). Build an opening discussion around the following points:

1. What are the skills we have worked on over the past ten months? How do they make us more capable of giving service?

2. Tell the "orphan story" and the "snow shovel" story from the opening of the chapter. Discuss them.

3. Why do returning missionaries say their missions were the best two years of their lives?

4. What does service do for the person giving the service?

Test

1. How many specific acts of service can you remember giving during the month just passed? How many of those were "planned" and how many were "spur of the moment"?

2. How many times did you give up something you wanted to do or had planned to do in order to help someone else?

3. How many people did you ask, "Do you need anything?" or, "Can I help you in any way?"

4. How many times did you ask Heavenly Father to give you opportunities to give service?

5. How does serving other people also serve God and Christ?

6. About how many specific times during the past month did you ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"

B. *Comprehension of service—the "hows" and the "whys"* (for building a "mind-set" for service within our children).

1. *Story.* Tell the following story in your own words: In a small town in Central Europe stands a statue of Christ that was reassembled and repainted after being seriously damaged in the Second World War. The statue was actually broken into pieces and, because of its value to the citizens of the town and its prominence in the center of their town square, the decision was made to attempt to restore it. Careful reassembly worked miracles, and soon the statue was again intact, except for the hands, which were blown into so many pieces that their restoration was impossible. The

townspeople thought of bringing in an artist to resculpt the hands, but realized that no matter how good a sculptor they found, it would never look "just right."

Then an older man of the village, a gentleman who had always taken special interest in the statue, proposed that they leave the statue as it was—without hands—and that a special sign be created for the base of the statue that would read, "On this earth, his only hands are yours."

Discuss the story with your children. See how much they can tell you about what it means. How is service to others service to Christ? How is service to others partial repayment for what Christ has given us (which is everything)? What kinds of things can we do for others as "Christ's hands"? What kinds of thoughts come to our minds when we ask, "What would Jesus do?"

2. *Books and stories that emphasize service* (including ancestor incidents). Any story or everyday illustration of service can become a vicarious experience for children in which they feel the joy and light that comes through serving. C. S. Lewis's seven-book series for children, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, helps children understand sacrifice and the principles of good vs. evil in a way we have never found elsewhere. Books like the "value tales" series or even the Uncle Wiggily stories lead to thoughts of turning the mind from self to others.

The best illustration of service (and the most pertinent and relevant to children) are stories of service their grandparents or ancestors (or even their parents) have rendered. These needn't deal with large or magnificent or publicly recognized service. In fact, incidents relating to everyday good deeds or thoughtful acts have the most direct influence on children. What incidents can you remember from your own experience and from stories you have heard of your family?

3. *Discussion.* Tell children the two following short stories and follow up with a discussion based on the questions that follow:

a. The Jones family located a needy family and decided to help them to have the kind of Christmas they could not af-

ford for themselves. They invited the family over for two family home evenings and got to know them. They took them all for pizza one night and got to know them better. Then they talked about the family and planned exactly what they could do for each child and for the parents to make it the best Christmas they had ever had.

b. Larry was walking home from school one day when he noticed an elderly man whose car had a flat tire. He helped the man get the jack working and put on the spare tire. Closer to home he passed a neighbor who was trying to hang her wash on a clothesline. The wind came up and scattered sheets and other articles across the lawn. Larry helped her gather it up and then stayed to help her hang it on the line.

Discuss the differences in the types of service involved in the two stories. One kind was planned and became better because the Jones family took the time to think carefully about needs. The second kind of service was spontaneous. Needs presented themselves to Larry and he responded to them.

Ask for some other examples of planned service. How do you find opportunities for planned service? What are the enjoyments of planned service? What are some other examples of spontaneous service? How do you find opportunities for it? What are the enjoyments of spontaneous service?

C. *Look for needs—do the deeds* (to help children see the connections between the listening and observation skills they have been learning and the actual rendering of service). Explain to children that whether service is planned or spontaneous, it has *observation* as a prerequisite. We cannot "do the deeds" until we "see the needs."

Look for opportunities (dinner time is usually best) to ask about what needs anyone in the family has observed and about what deeds were done or could have been done to assist those needs.

D. *Create an atmosphere of awareness and service* (to further encourage children to watch for chances to help).

1. *Family motto.* All parents, to some extent at least,

should have the goal of making their families institutions in the sense that the word implies permanence, dependability, and loyalty. One thing all institutions have is traditions, and we have discussed various traditions of service that families can have.

Other "trademarks" of a true institution are its codes of conduct, its slogans, and its mottoes. Think of a good two- or three-word motto for your family that implies service (for example, "help others" or "watch for needs" or "service to others").

Repeat the family motto often: Start any family meeting with it, put it on a plaque in the family room, make a needlepoint sampler of it—anything that increases the family's awareness of and commitment to giving service.

2. *Family flag.* If you want to go one step further in the institutionalizing process, create a family flag that you can display somewhere in the home and even put on a flagpole on special days. (See *Teaching Children Responsibility* for more detail on family flags.) One of the central things to sew on your flag is the service-oriented family motto.

E. *"Service training"* (to help children become proficient at thinking of the right kind of service to render in a particular situation).

1. *Expand the dinner time discussions.* In addition to asking, "What needs did anyone observe today?" ask, "What did you do about them?" Then ask, "What else could have been done?" or "What other approach could have been taken?" Help each other think about all the different possibilities for service presented by one particular situation. Children are very good at this kind of brainstorming if you praise every small idea or comment they have.

2. *Different kinds of service—starting with the smile.* Discuss how people often think of service as some big act or gift or sacrifice, when in fact an act of service can sometimes be something as small and easy and spontaneous as a smile.

Emily Dickinson wrote:

"They might not need me but they might,
I'll let my head be just in sight.

A smile as small as mine might be
Precisely their necessity."

3. *Game—"returning gifts."* Play a verbal game in which you present a situation and ask your children how they would respond: "You're given _____ by _____. What could you give in return?" The goal here is to help children realize how much they have been given and develop a thought pattern of wanting to return gifts to the sources. (Examples: You've been given time and attention and talent this year by a special piano teacher. You've been given freedom by this country of America. You've been given lots of encouragement by our home teacher. You've been given a healthy body and free agency by your Heavenly Father.) In each case ask, "What could you give in return?" This discussion works best in a group of two or more children where they can brainstorm or compete in thinking of the kinds of things they could give back (with thoughts that range in magnitude from a letter of appreciation to a piano teacher to living a good life to try to repay Heavenly Father).

F. *Service awards* (to recognize and praise children for giving service). The Sunday "awards" discussed in previous "months" are especially effective for this month. Have the "What Would Jesus Do" award go to the person who (as Jesus would have) noticed a need and did something about it.

G. *"The highest service"* (to help children realize that the most lasting and beneficial kind of service is the kind that helps other people to help themselves).

Read the following quotations together:

"The highest service we can perform for others is to help them help themselves." (Horace Mann.)

"To lift up a fallen man is good. To help him lift himself up is better." (Author unknown.)

Then make a list of "better" forms of service:

—Instead of giving a poor man a fish, teach him how to fish.

—Instead of giving people food and clothes, help them get a job.

—Instead of tying a child's shoe, teach him how to tie.

H. *Asking* (to help children realize that there is another way besides observing to discover needs).

We heard a fireside speech by a blind woman once, and one of the most interesting things she said was how rare it was (and how pleasant) for someone to simply ask what they could do for her. Much more often, she said, people tried to give her a kind of help that she didn't really need and that embarrassed her. They would help her find something that she took pride in being able to find herself, or take hold of her and help her do something that she had long since learned to do on her own. What she appreciated much more, she told us, was people who didn't assume they knew her needs, but asked.

There is a great principle here. No matter how good we get at noticing or observing the needs of others, we will never know the specifics of their needs as they do. When it is asked sincerely, the question "What can I do to help you?" is the most effective beginning that service can have!

We have some friends whose teenage boys have made a habit of calling on four or five widows in their neighborhood on a regular basis to ask what they can do for them. The widows know they are sincere and have come to appreciate their visits immensely. They mention the things they really need—perhaps an errand or help with something heavy. And the boys derive great satisfaction from helping.

Families can also do this kind of asking together. Set aside a Saturday morning. Put on your grubbies, go to the homes of some elderly neighbors, ask what would help them right then, and spend a few hours doing whatever they need done.

I. *Group service projects* (to give children the experience of working with a large group in performing major service). Ward Mutual groups and Scouting groups often get involved in service projects of various kinds, but it is those who plan the projects who get the greatest fulfillment.

Try organizing a group service project as a family. Find a

need that takes lots of manpower (such as cleaning up a property or painting a house) and let your children organize and plan it, ask other families to help, figure out when and how to do it, and so forth.

J. *Your own methods.* Sit down for a half hour and think about service. What ideas come to mind? How can you get your children involved in more opportunities for service? What things can you do together? How can you motivate and reward their efforts at serving? Write your ideas down.

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K. *Post-test.* Take the test from the beginning of this section again. Many of the questions that were hard to answer (or answered with a "zero") a month ago will be easy (and plentiful) as you retake the test.

Praise the children lavishly for their improvement and their new sense of awareness. Then talk about the family focal point.

IV. Family Focal Point

The free daddy date. All of the family focal points in this book are ideas designed to "carry on" the principles of the chapter long after the monthly focus has shifted to other chapters. Therefore, the focal points have to be things with a built-in motivation.

We have found that what we call the "free" daddy date or "free" mommy date works in precisely this kind of self-perpetuating way.

For us, "daddy dates" and "mommy dates" start when children are young and are times when one individual child

goes somewhere alone with mom or dad. Because our family is large, these one-on-one times are especially valued by our children. We try to have at least one daddy date or mommy date with each child each month. The children, of course, would like to have them more often than this.

And there is one way that they can. If they find a service opportunity, something they plan that they and one parent could do for someone, we have promised them that one of us will take them—alone—to go and perform that service. This is a "free" daddy or mommy date that they get in addition to their quota of one per month.

Don't assume that this is only an idea for young children. Teenagers crave time alone with parents, too (though they may not admit it).

The motivation of an opportunity to be alone with one parent adds to a child's interest in looking for and finding opportunities for service.

V. Summary

All of the previous "months" in this book were devoted to the development of skills and understanding that would lead to acts of service. This month, the objective is to focus on those acts themselves and to make them fun and rewarding enough that children want to continue to look for them and participate in them.

Take the time this month not only to think about and perform acts of service, but to reflect on service you have rendered, to recall how happy it made someone else, and to think back and remember how good it made you feel to do it.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember during this month is the principle discussed earlier, that "we love whom we serve." Do not make the mistake of thinking it works the other way. We do not necessarily love those who serve us. We need only to look around our society to dispel this notion. We see how many cynics, drop-outs, conceited

people, and spoiled children there are who take advantage of, criticize, and even despise the parents, teachers, and society that have served them.

But we do love those whom we serve. That is a law. And it follows, simply and correctly, that those who love most are those who serve most.

We began this book talking about love as the best motivator for service. We have now gone all the way around the circle and found that service is the best motivator for love.

Service is training in loving.

As we teach our children to serve, we are teaching them to love. In fact, more than that, as we teach them to serve they are participating in love, actually gaining love and absorbing it as they perform the service. And it is a love that frees them from the unhappy prison of self-centeredness.

MONTH

12

Anonymous Service

Understanding
Observing
Feeling
Communicating
+ **Doing**
= Charity

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." (Matthew 6:3.)

"Except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy father." (Ether 12:34.)

I. Illustrations and Stories

In the Book of Mormon definition, "charity is the pure love of Christ." (Moroni 7:47.) One way to interpret the word *pure* is as the purity of one's nature. Too often, acts of service are performed with the thought of recognition from others or of the appreciation and gratitude that will come from the receiver. At other times we serve to strengthen our own self-image as a kind or generous person. It is only when none of these self-focused motivators are present that our motives are pure. We remove them when we serve anonymously.

We've heard of a family that for years had a family tradition of helping a needy family at Christmas. Then one year they decided to do it anonymously. They discovered the needs of the family they located by nameless calls to neighbors. They prepared gifts and looked for the things the family wanted without telling anyone they were doing it. They labeled the presents "from your secret friend" or "from Santa." They made a visit late Christmas Eve and quietly arranged the wrapped gifts on the porch. Then they all got in the car, parked up the street in dark shadows, and the fastest boy pushed the doorbell several times and ran for cover. In silence, from the shadows, the whole family watched as the surprised and delighted poor family came to the door and discovered the Christmas they didn't think they would have.

The anonymous giving family would be very upset if we

or anyone else found out who they were. We don't know—we heard the story from the family who was helped.

The scriptures tell us that those who gain recognition or admiration for their acts of service already have their reward, whereas those who act anonymously will receive their reward in heaven. Even when someone gives service to others with motives that are pure and unselfish, he still, to some extent, eliminates part of his heavenly reward by receiving the reward of whatever plaudits he gets in recognition of his deed.

There is an inner feeling, a reward of the spirit, that swells secretly inside whenever we can do something for others that is not "connectable" to ourselves.

There are three levels of anonymous service. One keeps the deed secret from all people except the person for whom the deed is done. The second level keeps the deed secret from the person for whom it is done but not necessarily from others. On the third level, no one knows who did the deed except God and the doer himself.

Service on any of the three anonymous levels requires imagination, creativity, and sometimes even a little bent toward the intrigue of covert and clandestine activity!

Level one is illustrated by a man named Milt who knew of a friend's need for a second loan to get into the home that he and his family so badly needed. The bank's limits and loan criteria did not allow enough for the down payment. Milt arranged to loan the balance to his friend, on the strict

condition that no one else knew of the transaction, and on the secondary condition that the friend, someday when he was able, would help someone else on a similar anonymous basis.

Level two is illustrated by Billy Parker, age twelve, and his dad, who decided it was about time they did something really nice for the Folkers, the elderly couple who had been such good neighbors to them for so long. Mr. Folker still shoveled his walk every time it snowed (which was often in Montana where they lived). Billy and his brother Jimmy and their dad knew that the Folkers usually slept late and that Mr. Folker never did any shoveling until late morning. They decided to get up early every morning there was snow and get his walk and driveway done before he looked outside.

Another illustration is Becky. She noticed that the new girl in school was shy and had no friends. She approached a half-dozen of her own friends and told them that she was trying to make the new girl feel comfortable. She asked if they would help by doing the same. She told her friends to keep their discussion secret, not to mention to the new girl that they had talked—just to go a little more out of their way to be friendly and make her feel accepted.

Level three is illustrated by Jane Wolff. She was one of many who had tried to help Lilly Parker, a young divorcée with three little children who was trying to keep her family together with no more support than a part-time job and occasional unfulfilled promises by her husband to catch up on the alimony. Lilly had always refused help, saying she had too much pride and she would make it just fine on her own.

Jane decided to "go underground." On her own, and always anonymously, she found ways to get extra food and clothing delivered to Lilly. Always it was accompanied by some form of note that made it seem like something other than a handout. For example, one note said, "Thank you for your patronage over the years. This is a token of our appreciation." Once, when she knew some unexpected bills had come up, Jane sent a cashier's check with an anonymous

note that said, "You won't remember this but you once waited on me at Spencer's Cafe and took the time to talk with me for a minute. I was seriously depressed that day and your cheerfulness helped me more than you will ever know. Consider this check a tip with interest added on for four years."

Jane even managed to arrange for a better job to be offered to Lilly. She covered her tracks on everything she did.

Stories like this are rare. They are rare partly because they do not happen as often as they should. But they are also rare because, if they are truly anonymous on the third level, no one ever knows about them.

Another illustration of level three is provided by Sue, an adolescent girl who wanted to do something for a wonderful lady who had been her Sunday School teacher for two years. Sue thought about it for quite a while and decided, totally on her own, that what the sister would appreciate most would be a sincere, loving letter that could be interpreted as being from any member of the class. She wrote the letter carefully, even including an original poem of gratitude. She typed the letter on plain paper and was careful not to include any clues as to who might have written it. The letter thanked the teacher for changing her life and for giving her a foundation on which to make decisions for the rest of her life.

The story related here is pieced together from some small shreds of evidence and a certain amount of guesswork.

II. Approaches for Parents

A. *Think about it.* Opportunities for anonymous service rarely occur "off the cuff"—or, if they do occur, we seldom recognize them and grasp them unless we have been thinking about it. Start by coming up with someone who you know needs something. Then plan a way to deliver that need on one of the three levels of anonymity. During this "month," decide on one major act of service or on four

(weekly) smaller ones. Think them through, plan how and when you will do them and how you will be sure to stay anonymous. Then do them.

B. *Start a private "book of Anonymous Service."* Sometimes having a private diary of some sort (in which you record "for your eyes only" notes on things you have done or on plans you have for future service) can serve as a motivation and a catalyst to keep you aware and conscious of the goal to provide secret service. In such a book you can keep track of names and facts you learn about anyone needing any kind of help. If you open the book once a week or so, recording anything you have done or thought about and reviewing earlier facts and plans, the process can become a regular reminder as well as a source of joy and inner satisfaction that you share with no one but yourself and the Lord.

C. *"Partnership" service.* As important as it is to try to do some acts of service that are known only to yourself, it is also exciting and fulfilling to do some things as a couple, working and planning together to secretly meet a need of someone else.

The best (and most enjoyable and consistent) way to do this is to have, each fast Sunday, a short partnership planning meeting in which you review your family goals, schedule the commitments you have for the month, and talk about at least one act of anonymous service that you could perform during the month. You will find that talking about it, planning it together, is as much fun as doing it—and you will find that it draws you closer together in a rather unique way.

D. *Asking and fasting.* It is well to remember that, even with our efforts at watching and observing, we are never as aware of the needs of others as is God. A prayer in which we ask to be made aware of needs that we can meet is a truly remarkable type of prayer. We mentioned this method in Month Eleven; add to it this month the dimension of asking for opportunities for *anonymous* service.

As a parent, imagine the pleasure and joy you would take in one of your children asking which of your other children

he could help and just how he could help in a quiet, secret way.

Fast Sunday, particularly if you are involved in the kind of monthly planning mentioned in item C above, is an ideal time to ask for awareness and for opportunities for anonymous service.

Once you have asked, you must think and watch. Sometimes ideas will come to you immediately following or even during your prayer. Other times, you will notice an opportunity in the days that follow.

Answers to this type of prayer come in different ways and at different times, but they always come.

E. *Remember that it is often the small things that count.* We mentioned earlier the "small services" of a smile or a kind word of encouragement. At first glance it would not seem that these are examples of anonymous service, since they are performed in person. Thinking again, however, these are often the very most anonymous acts since they can be aimed at strangers—at people whom you have not seen before and are likely not to see again.

In some ways this is the ultimate in secret, non-self-serving deeds: to notice a lonely person, one who looks discouraged, someone who is withdrawn or shy—on a train, in a public place, while traveling, walking on a downtown street—and to catch his eye, to smile, to say hello, perhaps to ask a question, stay to talk for a minute, offer some cheer and some conversation.

F. *Your own methods.* List any other ideas that come to mind: ways of giving anonymous service, people needing help but too proud to ask, anonymous service you could provide as a couple or as a family.

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III. Exercises for Children

Fast Sunday discussion and pretest (to focus family attention on this month's goal of giving anonymous service). Remind the children that this is Month Twelve in your family's year-long effort to understand and exercise charity. Explain to them that charity reaches its most pure (and often most exciting) level when it leads us to do things secretly for other people.

Then engage the family in a discussion along the following lines:

1. Why is service more individually rewarding when we don't receive any outward reward (not even recognition or appreciation)?

2. Discuss the three levels of anonymous service as listed in the first part of this chapter. Give the five illustrations from there and see if the children can tell which level each story illustrates. Also tell the story of the family giving Christmas secretly to another family.

3. Try to come up with an idea for an anonymous act of service that your family can provide.

4. Draw family names from a hat to begin "secret buddies" (see item B, below).

Test (left-hand side of paper)

1. How many acts of anonymous service can you remember performing during the month just passed?

2. In sixty seconds, can you think of someone you could help and of a way of giving that help that would be completely anonymous?

3. What is God's promise to those who do good deeds so secretly that "their right hand doesn't know what their left hand is doing"?

4. Why does anonymous service do more good than the same deeds would do if they were not done in secret?

B. *"Secret buddies"* (to apply and practice simple acts of anonymous service within the family). Children of all ages enjoy the "secret buddies" game. On Sunday, put the names

of all family members (including parents) in a hat and let each person draw. If anyone gets his own name, he draws again.

The name that each person draws becomes his "secret buddy" for the week ahead. He tries to do as many things as possible for his buddy, guarding carefully to leave no clues to his identity. The secret services may range from making someone's bed or shining his shoes to finding and buying a tool someone has needed or leaving a note about the things a person is good at or about why that person is appreciated or loved by his secret buddy.

The next Sunday (after a week) have two brief, sequential discussions: the first about whose secret buddy did the most and the best things (without yet revealing who the buddies were), and the second to see who can guess who their secret buddies were. Then reveal the names.

C. *The "Secret Service" award* (to reward children for taking the initiative of thinking of and doing anonymous service and to make them increasingly aware of future opportunities). To the Sunday awards discussed in previous "months," add the "secret service" award. Ask, "Who is in the running?" and let children think back through the week past and recall any "level two" anonymous service (where the person receiving it did not know who gave it). Give the award to whomever can relate the best deed.

As with the other awards, make a simple logo of *S.S.* on a mounted piece of paper and let the child who wins it post it on his door for the month ahead.

With this award, you will have four that are given out in your brief awards ceremony at the Sunday dinner table. Each one reminds and motivates the children on one important aspect of charity.

To make the ceremony even more interesting, try the following twist, which combines the awards with the different pictures of Jesus that family members keep in their rooms (see Month One).

Bring the four awards and all of the framed pictures of

Jesus to the dinner table. Turn the back of the four awards toward the children so they can't tell which is which, and have a child "pick a card." The one chosen becomes the first award given that week, and the person who receives it gets his first choice of which picture of Jesus he wants that week for his room. As the other awards are given, let their recipients choose the pictures they want.

As a further variation, ask children who receive an award to try to choose a picture on which Jesus' expression seems to match the award (for example, "He looks in this picture like he might be giving a compliment to someone," or, "In this one he looks like he might be saying, 'Do not let your left hand know what your right hand doeth'").

D. *Sponsor a child in a Third World country* (to give children the chance to serve others who are both very different and very far away from themselves). Another way to make service essentially anonymous is to give it to people who are too far away or too far removed from you to "pay you back" in any way.

Various organizations offer opportunities, for a few dollars per month, to sponsor a child—paying for his support and often for his education.

You can, of course, make your support anonymous, receiving information only from the organization and not corresponding directly with the child. But there is often so much enjoyment and so much benefit in having your children correspond with the child that you may want to settle for "semianonymous" service in this case.

E. *"Right-attitude," tithing, fasting, and other Church offerings* (to help children understand all Church service and giving as forms of anonymous service, and to *enjoy* this form of sacrifice). Take the time to explain to children that tithing goes to assist the Church in providing for people's physical and spiritual needs, and that fast offerings go specifically for welfare and assistance to the needy. We do not know personally the people who receive the help, nor do they know us, but there can be great joy in imagining them and knowing we are helping, at least in a small way, to ease their burdens.

Also talk about Church callings, and about the fact that gifts of time and personal effort are often worth more than money. And when one magnifies a calling, giving it his best, no one can say how many may be helped, both directly and indirectly.

Tell the following story: A young missionary, laboring in Scotland in the 1800s, was so discouraged that he wanted to return home early. He had converted no one to the Church. He prayed privately in a cave, telling the Lord of his plans to give in. An answer came. The answer was that he could not measure whom he was helping, that much good would come of his work—that he should stay. He finished out his mission, finding little outward success, baptizing only one small, ragged Scottish boy. But he returned home at peace with himself, confident and ready to approach the rest of his life because he had given his time, tried to serve, even when the fruits of his labor were not obvious. He often wondered what those fruits might be.

Long thereafter, near the end of the missionary's life, a wonderful leader of men and follower of God was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. The man became a sterling example of manhood, of fatherhood, and of an abundant life for millions. As he aged and his flowing hair became snowy white, he became the prophet of God on earth—the President of the Church.

The man was President David O. McKay, and he was the son of the ragged little Scottish boy who was the humble missionary's only convert.

F. *The story of Butch O'Hare—two perspectives on anonymous service* (to help children see the connection between integrity, conscience, and anonymous service). In World War II, a young pilot named Butch O'Hare was trying to get back to his carrier after his fighter plane had been damaged. His squadron commander had sent him back, fearing that his bullet-riddled craft was of little further fighting use and that O'Hare should get it back to the carrier while it would still fly.

Reluctant to leave the mission, O'Hare nonetheless fol-

lowed orders and headed back toward the carrier. On the way, quite by chance, he intercepted a squadron of Japanese migs, flying from another angle toward the American fleet which, without its own planes, would have less defense against them. O'Hare, despite his crippled plane, engaged them in a dogfight and ended up shooting six of the migs out of the sky. By then he had run out of ammunition and was trying to fly into the other planes—to knock at least one more out even though it would cost his own life to do so. The Japanese flight leader, seeing that he was dealing with a "madman" who had no regard for his own life, decided to make a retreat and led his remaining planes off in the other direction. O'Hare had attacked them with the intent of sacrificing himself, in the hopes that he could bring down enough of them to save the thousands of men on his carrier.

As it turned out, O'Hare was miraculously able to nurse his battered aircraft back and land it safely on the carrier. He became one of the war's most decorated heroes, receiving the rewards and accolades and heroism that he had not sought. A few years later the airport in O'Hare's home town of Chicago was renamed O'Hare Field in his honor. It was to become the busiest airport in the world.

Now another story, also set in Chicago. Al Capone, the most infamous of the 1920s gangsters, was charged with crimes time after time by the law but never went to jail because of the skill and craftiness of his personal lawyer, a man called Easy Eddie.

But as time wore on, Eddie began to heed his conscience. He knew of Capone's evil and he knew the best service he could give his fellowmen was to turn Capone in. He eventually went to the FBI and said he had decided to turn state's evidence, to help put Capone into the jails he had kept him out of for so long. The government warned him of what he already knew better than they, namely that, though they would try to protect him, his life would be in grave danger.

He replied that he had a small son and had decided that what he wanted most to leave to that son was a good name.

That name, he decided, was more important than the wealth he would have to part with by turning on Capone.

Now Eddie wanted his service to be anonymous, desperately wanted it, but it could not be so. Capone was put in jail, but not long thereafter Eddie met with an "accident" and was killed.

His son, however, did grow up with a good name, and with his father's courage and desire to serve others. His son's name was Butch—Butch O'Hare.

G. *Letting others serve you* (to teach children that service is a two-way street, and that is is often just as important to let others serve you as it is to serve them). Ask your children what they think the phrase "we love whom we serve" means. They will likely give a pretty good answer. Then ask, "If we want others to love *us*, what must we do?" (Let them serve us.) Since others have a need to serve, sometimes the best way to serve them is to find a way whereby they can serve us. In a little different twist of the word, this is a form of anonymous service, since they do not realize we are serving them (our service is hidden, camouflaged, beneath the service we are inviting them to give us).

The way to do this is to ask. Ask for advice and for help in areas that those you are asking perceive themselves to be good at. Such a request is a flattering compliment to them and it draws them closer to you, makes them feel important, and gives them the blessing of service.

H. *Your own ideas.* As with each "month," it is likely that you can come up with your own methods that are even better suited for your own children. Take a few moments and think hard about opportunities for anonymous service. Think of ways your family could help others in secret. Be sure to write your ideas down.

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I. *Post-test* (to reinforce and review what has been learned, and to measure the month's progress).

Retake the test from the beginning of this section. Compare the results with those of a month ago. Praise the improvements. Discuss how your family can continue to enjoy the inner joys of anonymous service. Present the family focal point which follows as a way of doing so.

IV. Family Focal Point

One family "secret service" each month. Because children of all ages love being a part of surprises, it is not difficult to involve them in the process of designing some kind of secret good deed to do once a month.

When we first began doing this, the children responded almost *too* enthusiastically. Some of their ideas were so elaborately secretive that we decided they were either watching too much TV or reading too many mysteries.

One month they decided the family down the street really needed a particular book. They determined to bake a cake, with the book inside of it, and deliver it secretly to the family. They had a wonderful time doing it.

Another month they decided that since they had no living grandfathers, they wanted to find an old man whom they could help and get to know. Through the local Community Services Council we located an eighty-six-year-old man with no family and no one to watch out for him. We have since had many memorable moments of service, from helping him interpret a household bill to simply sitting and listening as he tells of his life. The children often notice something around his house or yard that needs improvement. They do this quietly and privately.

On months when we plan and carry out a family secret service, we inevitably have a great experience—one in which we learn more than we teach and gain more than we give.

V. Summary

If the entire process of this book is thought of as an equation, perhaps the product or the result is anonymous service. Children (or adults) can get to the point where they are able to think enough about others to look for and find private acts of service to perform for them. When they reach that point, we can be sure that they are worrying far less about the self-centered things that flood and short-circuit the minds of most adolescents and teenagers.

Take the opportunity when this twelfth month ends to have some kind of review with your children. Take any that are eight or older to a restaurant or some place that is special to your family and discuss the full year. See if they understand how the earlier chapters on seeing and listening tie into the feelings chapters. See if they can grasp how some of those skills help in their efforts to communicate better with others and to do more for them.

Discuss the "entry" and "exit" tests that they have taken at the starting and ending of each month and compliment them for their improvements. Remind them of the first three months spent on understanding charity as the pure love of Christ. Ask if they understand that definition any better after learning the skills of the last nine months.

Finally, discuss repeating each of the twelve "months" during the coming year. Ask which ones they look forward to most. Review the twelve family focal points and see which of them have taken root and become permanent parts of your family's life.

Thank them for being your children, for affording you the greatest of all opportunities for Christlike love: namely, the opportunity of being their parent.

Then go back and start on Month Twelve (which is actually Month One, repeated). You will find that your second year will be even more beneficial than the first, that your children will have an insight and an understanding this time through that will actually blend the various skills—and will form the true attitudes of charity.

EPILOGUE

Homebase: An International Parents Organization

After we read a book and find ourselves in agreement with its principles, what we often need is some form of follow-up, some program or assistance to help us implement the principles consistently in our lives and within our own families.

This book and the others in the series (*Teaching Children Joy* and *Teaching Children Responsibility*) have spawned parenting organizations that provide additional materials (teaching manuals, music tapes, children's storybooks, and a monthly newsletter) to assist parents in teaching joy, responsibility, and charity to their children.

If you would like more information about any of these organizations, please write or call:

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