ant as having been placed on them by someone else, and not as a symptom of their own hardness against the truth. Whether the sin be "great," such as murder, adultery, or embezzlement, or "small," as in pride, harshness, or jealousy, its effects are manifest in predictable patterns of behavior. These patterns commonly include being burdened by, blind to, or excusing oneself from, what one knows to be true.

 Barely do the scriptures give a detailed catalog of sins. Usually they give illustrative examples (cf. Alma 1:32; 16:18; Hel. 4:12). President Ezra Taft Benson described the attitudes associated with the universal sin of pride: "Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers" (Benson, p. 4). King Benjamin noted, "I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not . . . continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not" (Mosiah 4:29–30).

 To be spiritually born of God is to be awakened, to be released from the burdens of sin (see FORGIVENESS; NATURAL MAN; REPENTANCE). The Book of Mormon records the history of a people who, for a time, overcame the bondage of sin. Of them it says, "And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Ne. 1:15–16).

 To overcome sin and be forgiven are to forsake ungodliness, to acknowledge dependence on God, and to seek to do his will. God's help is indispensable to abandoning sin: "He changed their hearts; . . . he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God" (Alma 5:6). Those who abandon sin have "received his image in [their] countenances" and exercise faith in the redemption of Christ (cf. Alma 5:14–19); they are full of love (Mosiah 3:19; John 13:35; 15:10).

 From an eternal perspective, there is no tragedy except in sin. Mortals are not on earth to prove themselves to one another but to God. This earth life is a probationary time, a test to see whether mankind will "do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25; cf. Alma 34:34). Those whose "hearts are set . . . upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men," or who cover their sins, gratify their pride, nurture vain ambition, or seek to control and dominate others "in any degree of unrighteousness" grievce the Spirit of the Lord (D&C 121:35, 37).

 Escaping sin is a simple but not an easy matter. Repentance requires deep suffering, the uttermost farthing, all that one is capable of doing: "none but the truly penitent are saved" (Alma 42:24; cf. D&C 19). "We are saved [by grace] after all we can do" (2 Ne. 25:23). Those who abandon sin are characterized by going "forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Ne. 31:20).

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**SINGLE ADULTS**

The Church is generally perceived to be a family church; but for various reasons many Church members become or remain single adults. Thirty percent of North American Latter-day Saint adults are currently widowed, divorced, separated, or have never married (1981 Church Membership Survey). Because of concern for their welfare, the Church has focused attention on the needs of single members and has organized activities and programs targeted to meet these needs.

Results of a demographic study indicated that among LDS single adults, 23 percent were divorced or separated, 13 percent were widowed, and 63 percent had never married. Children were present in 16 percent of single-adult households.
Estimates of marital experiences indicate that only 3 percent of LDS men and women between eighteen and thirty in 1981 would never marry by age sixty. Thus while most Latter-day Saints eventually marry, singleness is a relatively common experience for LDS adults. Only 51 percent of women and 64 percent of men between eighteen and thirty in 1981 are expected to be in an intact first marriage by age sixty. The others will have experienced some period of singleness due to having been divorced, widowed, or never married. If these trends continue, one-third of adult Church members will divorce at some time before age sixty (Goodman and Heaton, pp. 92–93, 96).

Poverty is a real threat to LDS single women, especially when children are present. When LDS households have equal numbers of members, those headed by females are 2.5–5.5 times as likely to be living below the poverty level as those headed by a married couple (Goodman and Heaton, p. 101). Church WELFARE SERVICES and the RELIEF SOCIETY seek to address both the immediate needs and the long-term problems of these women and families.

The ratio of single LDS men to single LDS women indicates a high number of women. In 1981, “for every 100 LDS women in the prime marriage ages (20–29 years) there are 89 LDS men” (Goodman and Heaton, p. 90). The ratio of weekly church attenders is even more out of balance: “For all singles over 30 there are 19 active men [who attend church weekly] for every 100 active women” (Goodman and Heaton, p. 91).

Furthermore, single LDS men and women are “mismatched on salient demographic characteristics. Single women over 30 have higher levels of education, occupation, and Church activity than single men. For example, never-married women over 30 are more likely to have four years of college (42 percent compared to 18 percent for never-married men) and professional occupations (70 percent compared to 38 percent)” (Goodman and Heaton, pp. 90–91). Goodman and Heaton conclude that “marriage to an active male is demographically impossible for many active single females over 30. And even when there are available males, they may possess other characteristics that rule them out as potential mates. Obviously, mar-
riage is not a universal solution to singleness if the only acceptable marital option is marriage to an active LDS partner" (p. 91).

For instructional and activity programs, single adults in the Church are divided into two groups: young single adults, aged eighteen through thirty; and single adults, aged thirty-one and above. Wards, stakes, and regions of the Church sponsor a broad range of activities aimed at meeting the needs of these groups. Activities include young single adult Sunday School classes, FAMILY EVENING groups, service projects, socials, recreational events, and conferences.

For five years (1972–1977), in response to the increasing number of single adults and a concomitant concern with addressing their needs, the Melchizedek Priesthood Mutual Improvement Association developed a uniform organizational program throughout the Church. Its purposes were to identify the needs of singles, to increase awareness of their contribution to the Church, to provide programs and activity suggestions, and eventually to incorporate responsibility for the singles into the PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS and RELIEF SOCIETY, which is the situation at present. Each ward now has a committee for single adults that includes one member from the bishopric, the Relief Society presidency, and the elders quorum presidency; a mature married couple to serve as advisers to young single adults; and elders quorum and Relief Society representatives from both the young single adult and single adult groups. Each stake has a similarly composed committee with responsibility for responding to the needs of singles at the stake level. Regional and sometimes multiregional committees are formed on an ad hoc basis to meet the needs of singles by bringing together greater numbers for various social and spiritual activities.

Some stakes have established wards or branches for single adults in areas where there is a high concentration of single members. Single wards have been organized to provide more leadership opportunities for singles and increased social experiences within the Church setting. In general, ward members must reside within the geographic stake boundaries and be a young single adult (ages eighteen to thirty). In areas with significant college student populations, membership may be limited to students. With the exception of the bishop, who is married, positions in the ward are normally staffed by the single adult members.

Church curricula and publications have also addressed the issue of singleness. Numerous articles dealing with challenges encountered by single adults and the place of single adults in the Church have appeared in the official Church magazine, the ENSIGN. In recent years, priesthood and Relief Society lesson manuals have also responded to singles' concerns and have suggested that teachers relate instructional material to single adults in the class.

Latter-day Saints have always placed a high value on marriage and family life. Consequently, the increasing number of single adult members presents a special challenge on how best to blend these single members into the Church community. A 1981 Church Membership Survey provides evidence suggesting that married members of the Church currently have greater opportunities for institutional involvement. Specifically, the survey notes that "singles score higher on the forms of religious involvement that are private, such as prayer and tithing, than on public involvement such as having a calling" (Van Leer). In other words, when leaders consider two equally devout individuals for a Church calling where one is single and one is married, they are more likely to extend the calling to the married individual. In particular, single men traditionally have been excluded from main leadership positions within the wards and stakes of a predominantly married population. Clearly, all of these matters are issues that require special Church attention for the future.

Emphasis on temple marriage and family has grown over time within the Church (Shepherd and Shepherd, p. 76). President Ezra Taft Benson reaffirmed the emphasis placed on marriage in his counsel to LDS single adults (Benson, May and Nov. 1988), reiterating the Church's position concerning temple marriage: To "obtain a fullness of glory and exaltation in the celestial kingdom, one must enter into this holiest of ordinances" (Benson, May 1988). Stressing the importance of marriage, he encouraged singles not to lose sight of the sacred goal of marriage and not to postpone or forego marriage for education and career. He also presented differing models of the responsibility single adults have toward temple marriage, with men having an active responsibility and women placed in a more passive role. In an article addressed to single Latter-day Saint men, President Benson warned single men that they were in danger of losing eternal blessings by failing to marry
(Benson, May 1988). On the other hand, he recognized that some women may not have the opportunity for temple marriage in this life. In a later article addressed to single Latter-day Saint women, he noted the Lord’s promise that if their lives are “worthy and [they] endure faithfully. . . [they] will be assured of all blessings” (Benson, Nov. 1988, p. 97), if not in this life, then in the eternities.

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SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood, like brotherhood, is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ that views God as the actual father of the immortal and eternal spirits of earthly women and men. President Barbara B. Smith of the RELIEF SOCIETY, said in 1976, “We look upon ourselves as being part of the family of the Lord, and so our sisterhood is one that has a deep understanding of this relationship” (Smith, pp. 7–8). Sisterhood in this broad sense includes all women in the world.

The title “Sister” also has a more special meaning in reference to the women of the Church. Every Latter-day Saint woman is appropriately called “sister.” The term does not relate to a woman’s profession or ecclesiastical calling, as it does in some religious and professional groups. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints often refer to women members collectively as “the sisterhood of the Church,” “sisters in the gospel,” or simply as “the sisters.”

“The sisterhood of the Church” may refer specifically to members of the Relief Society, organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1842, which includes all adult women of the Church—over two million in 1990. Lucy Mack SMITH, the Prophet’s mother, expressed the sisterly quality of the society in a classic statement: “This institution is a good one,” she told the women assembled in their second meeting. “We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another, and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together” (Relief Society Minutes of Nauvoo, Mar. 24, 1842, LDS Church Archives). A later prophet would speak of “a society of sisters,” and refer to “the loving fellowship” of the Relief Society VISITING TEACHING program, which from the beginning has been a channel for sisterly concern (Kimball, p. 2).

The organizational network of the Church promotes sisterhood by providing women opportunities to work and study together, to share religious conviciptions, and to serve others in charitable ways. Like Doroas in the early Christian church (Acts 9:36), LDS sisters have traditionally sewn clothing for the needy. In the late nineteenth century they worked together in producing silk, saving grain, and managing retail stores. Later sister held nurse training classes and sponsored maternal and child health clinics. They have also extended their service through cooperation with the Red Cross and other community agencies. The nature of the tasks has changed with time, but the sisterhood itself continues.

Several publications have helped to expand this network of concern. The sisters published Woman’s Exponent from 1872 to 1914, RELIEF SOCIETY BULLETIN in 1914, and Relief Society Magazine from 1915 to 1970. Currently, the Ensign, the Church’s monthly magazine for adults, carries articles by and about women, messages from women leaders, and reports of women’s conferences. The international magazines carry much of the same material in translation, keeping the sisters of the Church in touch worldwide.

Contributions from sisters in many nations financed two major projects in the 1950s and 1970s: the Relief Society headquarters building in Salt Lake City and the Monument to Women stationary gardens in Nauvoo, Illinois. At the dedication of the latter in 1973, some twenty thousand women celebrated their sisterhood at the place where their society had begun. In 1984, the Relief Society Building also became the headquarters of the PRIMARY (for children) and of the YOUNG WOMEN (girls twelve to eighteen), enabling the general women leaders of the Church to work