

## The Word of Wisdom: A Blessing of

# STRENGTH



**From an interview  
with Elder Darwin B.  
Christenson of the  
Seventy, currently  
serving in the  
Brazil South Area  
Presidency; by  
Jan Pinborough**

*And all . . . who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health . . . ; And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge (D&C 89:18–19).*

**W**hen I was a little boy, I lived on a ranch in Firth, Idaho. I had fun doing all the things a little boy could do on a ranch—feeding the chickens and petting the sheep, ducks, rabbits, and pigs.

My parents had often warned my older brother and me to never play with the farm machinery. But one day we started playing near the combine, which is a big machine that cuts grain. My brother discovered the crank that made the blades move to cut the grain. While he turned

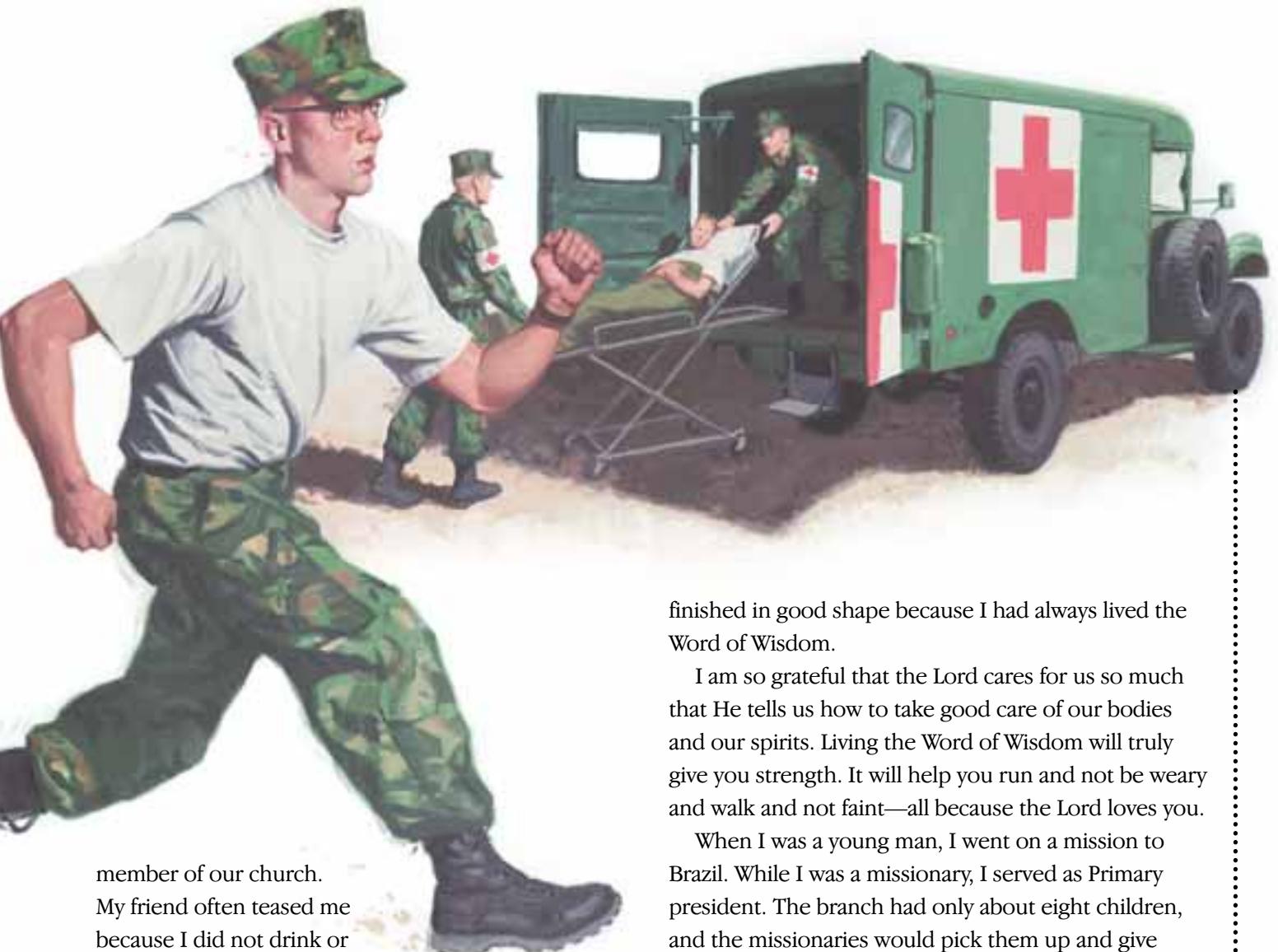
the crank, I started putting grass and leaves in the machine and watching the blades cut them.

Then I saw something shocking. Lying among the grass and leaves was my own finger! The very sharp blades of the machine had cut my finger off. My finger hurt a lot, and so did my conscience. I knew that I had lost my finger because I had disobeyed my mother and father.

Just as our parents give us guidance to keep us safe, so does Heavenly Father. As a young man, I was in the National Guard. I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to learn all about tanks and helicopters so that I could be an officer in an armored cavalry unit. While I was there, I made friends with a soldier who was not a



**Left, at age 5, holding his sister Janice, with his brother A. J. standing behind him.  
Middle, his missionary photo. Right, Elder Christenson's wedding day.**



member of our church. My friend often teased me because I did not drink or smoke, as he did. I told him about the Word of Wisdom and about other Church teachings.

One day our troop had to run a special kind of race. Every so often along the ten-mile course, we had to stop and pass a test. For example, we might have to figure out why a tank wasn't running, adjust a machine gun, or do something else we had been learning in our training. My friend and I agreed that this race would be a good test of whose lifestyle was healthier—his or mine.

The men started the race one at a time in alphabetical order, with about a minute between each man. My friend's last name started with A and mine with C, so he started the race a few minutes before I did. About a third of the way through the course, I saw a truck with a red cross on its side. Inside the ambulance was my friend. Because he did not take good care of his body, he was not physically fit and could not finish the race. I

finished in good shape because I had always lived the Word of Wisdom.

I am so grateful that the Lord cares for us so much that He tells us how to take good care of our bodies and our spirits. Living the Word of Wisdom will truly give you strength. It will help you run and not be weary and walk and not faint—all because the Lord loves you.

When I was a young man, I went on a mission to Brazil. While I was a missionary, I served as Primary president. The branch had only about eight children, and the missionaries would pick them up and give them a ride to Primary on their bicycles. We would have a lesson, and we sang without accompaniment because we didn't have a piano. The children were beautiful with their big dark eyes and beautiful skin, and they were so lovable and willing to learn the gospel.

Heavenly Father wants all His children to return to Him. And He has placed temples on earth to help us prepare to return to Him. What wonderful experiences we have in the new Brazil Recife Temple. That temple is beautiful, with lots of marble and Brazilian mahogany wood trim. Through President Hinckley, the Lord is providing temples throughout the world. It is especially wonderful to see children dressed in white who come to be sealed to their parents or do baptisms for the dead. You will want to be ready to go to the temple in the future.

Children, you are beautiful and precious to the Lord. He wants you to live a full life, serve others, and return to Him. ●