

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven.



The Apostle Paul boldly declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). This same boldness is declared by our full-time missionaries as they serve in many parts of the world.

Essentially, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a five-ingredient recipe for eternal life. First, let us consider what can become of us if we follow this recipe, and then we can consider each of the ingredients.

What do we know about eternal life? We learn from Moses 1:39 that the Lord’s work and glory is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal

life. This teaches us that immortality and eternal life are separate and distinct. The gift of eternal life, which is promised only when certain conditions are met, is so much greater than the gift of immortality.

According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Eternal life is not a name that has reference only to the unending duration of a future life; immortality is to live forever in the resurrected state, and by the grace of God all men will gain this unending continuance of life. But only those who obey the fulness of the gospel law will inherit eternal life. . . . It is ‘the greatest of all the gifts of God’ . . . , for it is the kind, status, type, and quality of life that God himself enjoys. Thus those who gain eternal life receive exaltation; they are sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ, members of the Church of the Firstborn; they overcome all things, have all power, and receive the fulness of the Father” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 237).

The duty of our missionaries, as stated on page 1 of *Preach My Gospel*, is to “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the . . . Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end” (2004).

In many cookbooks there are

pictures of the perfect dishes that recipes make—the fulness of the joy of cooking. These pictures are important because they help us envision the outcome if we strictly follow the directions as given in the recipe. It is important to begin with the end in mind, but the end represented by pictures in cookbooks is an end that is only possible if everything is done right. If directions are not followed or an ingredient is left out or miscalculated, the desired taste and appearance are seldom attained. The picture of a perfect dish, however, can serve as motivation to try again to create something that is both delicious and beautiful.

When we think of eternal life, what is the picture that comes to mind? I believe that if we could create in our minds a clear and true picture of eternal life, we would start behaving differently. We would not need to be prodded to do the many things involved with enduring to the end, like doing our home teaching or visiting teaching, attending our meetings, going to the temple, living moral lives, saying our prayers, or reading the scriptures. We would want to do all these things and more because we realize they will prepare us to go somewhere we yearn to go.

Why does a missionary’s purpose need to begin with helping others receive faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement? In order to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, people must first embrace Him whose gospel it is. They must trust the Savior and what He has taught us. They must believe that He has the power to keep His promises to us by virtue of the Atonement. When people have faith in Jesus Christ, they accept and apply His Atonement and His teachings.

The Savior taught His disciples, as recorded in the 27th chapter of 3 Nephi, the interdependence of His gospel and His earthly ministry and Atonement when He said:



Members and missionaries in the Antsirabe Branch, Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, gather prior to conference.

“Behold, I [give] unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. . . .

“And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (vv. 13, 16).

Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement turns us to Him. The world teaches that seeing is believing, but our faith in our Lord leads us to believe so we can see Him and the Father’s plan for us.

Our faith also leads to action—it leads to the commitments and changes associated with true repentance. As Amulek taught in the 34th chapter of Alma:

“Therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

“Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

“Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save” (vv. 16–18).

Why must individuals repent before they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost? The voice of Christ proclaimed to the Nephites an end to the law of sacrifice, and then He said: “And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

This same requirement is discussed in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants in a verse we often use to describe the requirements for baptism. Verse 37 states, “All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite

spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins . . . shall be received by baptism into his church.”

These verses of scripture teach essential lessons about the nature of repentance as preparation for baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost. First, repentance involves an attitude of humility. In order to prepare to be baptized and take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we must humble ourselves before Him—offer our sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and accept His will. Second, we learn that persons must witness before the Church, or a representative of the Church, that they have repented of their sins. Finally, we recognize that repentance, which is a cleansing process, precedes baptism, which is a cleansing ordinance, in order to prepare someone to receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. The gift of the Holy Ghost is available only to those who are cleansed



Children from the Bell Ville Argentina District show one of their favorite pictures.

by repentance of the sins of the world.

Why do we need baptism to receive the Holy Ghost? Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: “Baptism is twofold, and has a double mission to perform. It not only cleanses—it [illuminates] the soul, making manifest the things of God, past, present, future, and imparting a sure testimony of the Truth. The soul, cleansed of sin, is in a condition to enjoy the abiding influence of the Holy Ghost, which ‘dwelleth not in unclean tabernacles.’ Water baptism begins the work of purification and enlightenment. Spirit baptism completes it” (*Baptism—The Birth of Water and of Spirit* [n.d.], 10).

The ordinance of baptism by water and fire is described as a gate by Nephi (see 2 Nephi 31:17). Why is baptism a gate? Because it is an ordinance denoting entry into a sacred and binding covenant between God and man. Men promise to forsake the world, love and serve their fellowmen, visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, proclaim peace, preach the gospel, serve the Lord, and keep His commandments. The Lord promises to “pour out his

Spirit more abundantly upon [us]” (Mosiah 18:10), redeem His Saints both temporally and spiritually, number them with those of the First Resurrection, and offer life eternal. Baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost are the prescribed ways to enter the strait and narrow path to eternal life.

According to the Apostle Paul, baptism also denotes our descent into a watery grave from which we are raised with “newness of life” (Romans 6:4) in Christ. The ordinance of baptism symbolizes Christ’s death and Resurrection—we die with Him so we can live with Him. In this sense baptism is the first saving ordinance, and receiving the Holy Ghost helps each of us press forward and endure to the end.

How do we endure to the end?

Enduring to the end requires faithfulness to the end, as in the case of Paul, who told Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Obviously, this is not an easy task. It is intended to be difficult, challenging, and, ultimately, refining as we prepare to return to live with our Father in Heaven and receive eternal blessings.

Enduring to the end is definitely not a do-it-yourself project. First, it requires the Savior’s redemptive power. We cannot return to our Heavenly Father’s presence unless we are clean, and so we must continue to repent. Ideally, we repent moment by moment, but we also attend sacrament meeting each week to partake of the sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants. Second, enduring to the end requires the Holy Ghost, who will both guide and sanctify us. Third, we must be an integral part of a community of Saints, serving and receiving service from our brothers and sisters in the gospel. With baptism we become part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:11–13); each of us has a role to play, each of us is important, but in order to succeed we must be unified in our Savior. Fourth, we must share the gospel with others. The promises of bringing even one soul unto the Lord are profound and eternal (see D&C 18:15). Moreover, the gospel takes deeper root in those who share it frequently. Finally, we must always maintain faith and hope in Christ to endure to the end, and among the many ways we do this are praying, fasting, and reading the scriptures. These practices will fortify us against the subtle schemes and fiery darts of the adversary.

I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it defines the way we can partake of the fruits of the gospel, experience the “exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12) that only it can bring, and endure to the end through all of the challenges of mortal life. The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven as resurrected and glorified beings. May all of us maintain in our minds the vision of eternal life. May we be diligent in following the recipe for eternal life that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we endure to the end. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■