It’s remarkable how much we can learn about life by studying nature. For example, scientists can look at the rings of trees and make educated guesses about climate and growing conditions hundreds and even thousands of years ago. One of the things we learn from studying the growth of trees is that during seasons when conditions are ideal, trees grow at a normal rate. However, during seasons when growing conditions are not ideal, trees slow down their growth and devote their energy to the basic elements necessary for survival.

At this point some of you may be thinking, “That’s all very fine and good, but what does it have to do with flying an airplane?” Well, let me tell you.

Have you ever been in an airplane and experienced turbulence? The most common cause of turbulence is a sudden change in air movement causing the aircraft to pitch, yaw, and roll. While planes are built to withstand far greater turbulence than anything you would encounter on a regular flight, it still may be disconcerting to passengers.

What do you suppose pilots do when they encounter turbulence? A student pilot may think that increasing speed is a good strategy because it will get them through the turbulence faster. But that may be the wrong thing to do. Professional pilots understand that there is an optimum turbulence penetration speed that will minimize the negative effects of turbulence. And most of the time that would mean to reduce your speed. The same principle applies also to speed bumps on a road.

Therefore, it is good advice to slow down a little, steady the course, and focus on the essentials when experiencing adverse conditions.

The Pace of Modern Life

This is a simple but critical lesson to learn. It may seem logical when put in terms of trees or turbulence, but it’s surprising how easy it is to ignore this lesson when it comes to applying these principles in our own daily lives. When stress levels rise, when distress appears, when tragedy strikes, too often we attempt to keep up the same frantic

Notes

1. Man’s Search for Happiness (pamphlet, 1960), 4–5.
3. Thomas Carlyle, Past and Present (1843), 251.
The Power of Basics

The story is told that the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi had a ritual he performed on the first day of training. He would hold up a football, show it to the athletes who had been playing the sport for many years, and say, “Gentlemen, . . . this is a football!” He talked about its size and shape, how it can be kicked, carried, or passed. He took the team out onto the empty field and said, “This is a football field.” He walked them around, describing the dimensions, the shape, the rules, and how the game is played.

This coach knew that even these experienced players, and indeed the team, could become great only by mastering the fundamentals. They could spend their time practicing intricate trick plays, but until they mastered the fundamentals of the game, they would never become a championship team.

I think most of us intuitively understand how important the fundamentals are. It is just that we sometimes get distracted by so many things that seem more enticing.

Printed material, wide-ranging media sources, electronic tools and gadgets—all helpful if used properly—can become hurtful diversions or heartless chambers of isolation. Yet amidst the multitude of voices and choices, the humble Man of Galilee stands with hands outstretched, waiting. His is a simple message: “Come, follow me.”

And He does not speak with a powerful megaphone but with a still, small voice.

It is so easy for the basic gospel message to get lost amidst the deluge of information that hits us from all sides. The holy scriptures and the spoken word of the living prophets give emphasis to the foundational principles and doctrines of the gospel. These core doctrines and principles, though simple enough for a child to understand, provide the answers to the most complex questions of life.

There is a beauty and clarity that comes from simplicity that we sometimes do not appreciate in our thirst for intricate solutions.

For example, it wasn’t long after astronauts and cosmonauts orbited the earth that they realized ballpoint pens would not work in space. And so some very smart people went to work solving the problem. It took thousands of hours and millions of dollars, but in the end, they developed a pen that could write anywhere, in any temperature, and on nearly any surface. But how did the astronauts and cosmonauts get along until the problem was solved? They simply used a pencil.

Leonardo da Vinci is quoted as saying that “simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” When we look at the foundational principles of the plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, we can recognize and appreciate in its plainness and simplicity the elegance and beauty of our Heavenly Father’s wisdom. Then, turning our ways to His ways is the beginning of our wisdom.
repenting of our sins, and by actively following Jesus Christ, for “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Christ].”

To strengthen our relationship with God, we need some meaningful time alone with Him. Quietly focusing on daily personal prayer and scripture study, always aiming to be worthy of a current temple recommend—these will be some wise investments of our time and efforts to draw closer to our Heavenly Father. Let us heed the invitation in Psalms: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Our second key relationship is with our families. Since “no other success can compensate for failure” here, we must place high priority on our families. We build deep and loving family relationships by doing simple things together, like family dinner and family home evening and by just having fun fellowman, and with ourselves. As we evaluate our own lives with a willing mind, we will see where we have drifted from the more excellent way. The eyes of our understanding will be opened, and we will recognize what needs to be done to purify our heart and refocus our life.

First, our relationship with God is most sacred and vital. We are His spirit children. He is our Father. He desires our happiness. As we seek Him, as we learn of His Son, Jesus Christ, as we open our hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit, our lives become more stable and secure. We experience greater peace, joy, and fulfillment as we give our best to live according to God’s eternal plan and keep His commandments.

We improve our relationship with our Heavenly Father by learning of Him, by communing with Him, by principles, to the pure doctrines, is because they are the gateway to truths of profound meaning. They are the door to experiences of sublime importance that would otherwise be beyond our capacity to comprehend. These simple, basic principles are the key to living in harmony with God and man. They are the keys to opening the windows of heaven. They lead us to the peace, joy, and understanding that Heavenly Father has promised to His children who hear and obey Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, we would do well to slow down a little, proceed at the optimum speed for our circumstances, focus on the significant, lift up our eyes, and truly see the things that matter most. Let us be mindful of the foundational precepts our Heavenly Father has given to His children that will establish the basis of a rich and fruitful mortal life with promises of eternal happiness. They will teach us to do “all these things . . . in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that [we] should run faster than [we have] strength. [But] it is expedient that [we] should be diligent, [and] thereby . . . win the prize.”

Brothers and sisters, diligently doing the things that matter most will lead us to the Savior of the world. That is why “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that [we] may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins.” In the complexity, confusion, and rush of modern living, this is the “more excellent way.”

So What Are the Basics?

As we turn to our Heavenly Father and seek His wisdom regarding the things that matter most, we learn over and over again the importance of four key relationships: with our God, with our families, with our
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Christian discipleship—the path that leads always toward a life of meaning, gladness, and peace. For this I pray, as I leave you my blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes
6. See 1 Kings 19:12.
9. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.

The heavens are open again. The gospel of Jesus Christ is on earth once more, and its simple truths are a plentiful source of joy!

Rejoice in the Pure Gospel

Brothers and sisters, let us be wise. Let us turn to the pure doctrinal waters of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us joyfully partake of them in their simplicity and plainness. The

Dublin, Ireland