



The Immortality of the Soul

Our life is eternal, and this knowledge helps us make correct choices and comforts us in times of mourning.

From the Life of George Albert Smith

George Albert Smith was blessed with a firm understanding of the purpose of life, and this enabled him to encourage others as they faced adversity. He frequently reminded the Saints that “we are living eternal lives”—that eternity doesn’t begin after this life but that mortality is a crucial part of eternity. “I sometimes have said to my friends when they seemed to be at the crossroads, uncertain as to which way they wanted to go, “Today is the beginning of eternal happiness or eternal disappointment for you.”¹

President Smith testified of these truths at the funeral services of Hyrum G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, who had passed away at a relatively young age, leaving behind his wife and eight children:

“I have felt, since I was asked to speak at this funeral, that perhaps I would not be able to do so. My emotions have been stirred, and I have found myself incapable of controlling them, but since I came into this building a beautiful, sweet influence of peace has come into my soul. . . .

“Instead of mourning I feel to thank our Father in heaven for the Gospel of His Beloved Son that has been revealed anew in our day. . . . To know that life is eternal is a wonderful blessing,—to know that throughout eternity the blessings that this good man has lived for will be his. His mortal life has been terminated but this is only part of eternal life. He has laid the foundation deep and secure upon which he has built and will continue to build throughout eternity. The joy that he has experienced here upon earth will be added upon. . . .



“I am thankful that there has been revealed to us and made plain in this latter-day that this life is not the end, that this is but a part of eternity.”

“As I think of the experiences of people in the world, on occasions of this kind, I marvel how we have been blessed. I have no more doubt about eternal life and the immortality of the soul than I have that the sun shines at midday. . . . It is a sad thing to part with our dear ones, even temporarily. We send them upon missions, or they go to other parts of the world to live and we miss them. When an occasion like this occurs it seems that they are more distant, but as a matter of fact they are not, if we but understood. . . . Instead of extending the condolence that sometimes might go to those who are bereaved, I feel more like rejoicing this day that I know that this is not the end. . . .

“. . . So today, as I stand in your presence, when perhaps tears should be flowing, my soul is filled with comfort and satisfaction. I pray that that comfort may be in the lives of each of those who are bereaved.”² [See suggestion 1 on page 77.]

Teachings of George Albert Smith

We lived as spirits before we came to earth, and our spirits will continue living after we die.

Our comprehension of this life is that it is eternal life—that we are living in eternity today as much as we ever will live in eternity. Our belief is that we lived before we came here; that which is intelligence, that which is spirit, did not have its beginning in this life. We believe that we received a spiritual tabernacle before we came into this world. That spiritual body was sent to this world, and here it received a physical tabernacle, the body which we see. The physical portion that we see is of earth, earthy [see 1 Corinthians 15:47], but that portion which leaves the body when our lives go out is that which is spiritual, and it never dies. The physical tabernacle lies in the tomb—it is a portion of the earth and goes back to mother earth—but the intelligence that God has placed within it, that which has power to reason and to think, that which has power to sing and to speak, knows no death; it simply passes from this sphere of eternal life, and awaits there the purification of the physical tabernacle, until the time it will be reunited with this tabernacle, which will

be glorified, even as the body of our risen Lord was glorified, if we have lived to be worthy of it.³

In the language of the poet, “Life is real, Life is earnest,” and “the grave is not its goal.” [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “A Psalm of Life.”] The spirit that inhabits the tabernacle is immortal. It lives beyond the grave. The body decays and returns to earth but the spirit lives on.⁴

I am thankful that there has been revealed to us and made plain in this latter-day that this life is not the end, that this is but a part of eternity, and that if we take advantage of our privileges here, that this is but the stepping stone to greater and more desirable conditions.⁵ [See suggestion 2 on page 78.]

**Our purpose here on earth is to prepare ourselves
to live with our Heavenly Father.**

Some believe that when we pass from this sphere of existence, that is the end. It seems incredible to me, when we look into the works of nature, when we investigate the organism of man, the perfection of his body, the pulsation of his heart, the building and strengthening from childhood to manhood, then the gradual decline until this life is ended—that it is possible any of our Father’s children can believe that human beings have been born into the world only to live to manhood and womanhood, pass to old age, and die, without some purpose in their having lived here.⁶

This life is not given to us as a pastime. There was a solemn purpose in our creation, in the life that God has given to us. Let us study what that purpose is, that we may progress and obtain eternal life.⁷

There is no doubt in the mind of a Latter-day Saint as to the purpose of our earth life. We are here to prepare ourselves and develop ourselves and qualify ourselves to be worthy to dwell in the presence of our Heavenly Father.⁸

We believe that we are here because we kept our first estate and earned the privilege of coming to this earth. We believe that our very existence is a reward for our faithfulness before we came

here, and that we are enjoying on earth the fruits of our efforts in the spirit world. We also believe that we are sowing the seed today of a harvest that we will reap when we go from here. Eternal life is to us the sum of pre-existence, present existence, and the continuation of life in immortality, holding out to us the power of endless progression and increase. With that feeling and that assurance, we believe that “As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become.” [See Lorenzo Snow, “The Grand Destiny of Man,” *Deseret Evening News*, July 20, 1901, 22.] Being created in the image of God, we believe that it is not improper, that it is not unrighteous, for us to hope that we may be permitted to partake of the attributes of deity and, if we are faithful, to become like unto God; for as we receive of and obey the natural laws of our Father that govern this life, we become more like Him; and as we take advantage of the opportunities placed within our reach, we prepare to receive greater opportunities in this life and in the life that is to come. . . .

What a happy people we should be with the knowledge we have that this probation is not to prepare us to die, but to live; that the Father’s desire for us is that we may avoid every error and receive every truth, and by applying truth in our lives become more like Him, and become worthy to dwell with Him.⁹

Brethren and sisters, this is a serious matter. We should think of it seriously. We should look into our own lives and discover if we are prepared for that great future life, if we were called hence tomorrow whether we would be prepared to give an account for our earthly deeds; whether we can feel that we would receive from our Heavenly Father the welcome plaudit of “Well done, good and faithful servant.”¹⁰ [See suggestion 3 on page 78.]

During this life we should seek after those things that are of eternal worth.

We may have given to us, in this life, a few things that will give us satisfaction, temporally; but the things that are eternal, the things that are “worth while,” are those eternal things that we reach out for, and prepare ourselves to receive, and lay hold of by the effort that we individually make.¹¹

Isn't it a singular thing that what the world has struggled for from the beginning, wealth, power, all those things that make men comfortable, are to be had in abundance today—better and more clothing than ever before, more food than can be consumed, more wealth of all kinds than the world has ever had before. Our homes are more comfortable. The conveniences of life have been multiplied marvelously since the Gospel came upon the earth, and today everything that we have struggled for we have. Education has arrived at its highest point. More knowledge of the things of this earth is possessed by men than ever before. Everything mankind has struggled for from the beginning of time that is considered most desirable is upon the earth today; and notwithstanding that, there is doubt and dread of what the future has in store.

What is our trouble? It is that we have sought the creature comforts, we have sought the honors of men, we have sought those things that selfishness puts into our souls. We have sought to set ourselves up and have preferred ourselves to our Father's other children.¹²

Let us not be lulled to sleep, let us not be deceived by the abundance of good things of this world; for what doth it profit a man though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? [See Mark 8:36.] Let not the object of our creation be overlooked; but let us labor for the salvation of our souls.¹³

One of the sorrowful things in life is to see a man or a woman laid away in Mother earth with a realization of the fact that they have refused the greater blessings that our Father offered to them, and have continued grasping at the bubble that has itself disappeared. When I think of the millions of God's children in the world, and realize how little they are striving for the things that are really worth while, I feel sad.¹⁴

Remember that it is the intelligence that you acquire that is eternal, the truth which you learn here and apply in your lives, the knowledge and experience you gain and profit by—these you will take with you when you go home.¹⁵



“The thing . . . that is worth more than all the rest is the opportunity to obtain eternal life [with your] sons and daughters, husbands and wives.”

The treasures that we will find when we go to the other side will be those that we have laid up there by ministering to our Father’s other sons and daughters with whom we have associated here. He has made this possible for all of us, and during our stay here we will be happier serving our fellows than we could possibly be in any other way.¹⁶

It is not so important how many valuables you may have, how much property you may possess, and how many of the honors of men you may acquire, and all those things that are so desirable in the world. The thing that God has given to you that is worth more than all the rest is the opportunity to obtain eternal life in the celestial kingdom and have as your companions, throughout the ages of eternity, sons and daughters, husbands and wives with whom you have associated here on earth.¹⁷ [See suggestion 4 on page 78.]

Because of Jesus Christ, we will be resurrected.

The Saviour's righteous life is a perfect example to all, and His resurrection was the first assurance to humanity that we, too, shall come forth from the tomb.¹⁸

When Jesus was raised from the dead He became the first fruits of the resurrection. The spirit begotten of the Father (the intelligent part of His soul) reinhabited His earthly tabernacle which had been purified, and He became a glorified celestial being, and took His place, on the right hand of the Father, as one of the Godhead. He had power to overcome death because He had complied with all the laws of His Father governing it; and having subdued death he turned the key whereby all mankind may be resurrected, and all may be glorified also by obeying His teachings, which are so simple that all may comply if they will.¹⁹

Jesus Christ was a man without sin. By reason of His purity, His uprightness and His virtue, He was able to unlock the doors of the prison, to overcome death and the grave, and pioneer the way . . . unto that heaven where we expect to go.²⁰

We may turn to section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants and see what the Lord has said about our resurrection, not only the resurrection of the Savior, but he tells us what may happen to us. . . . We are informed in this section that our bodies are to be raised from the tomb, not some other bodies, and that the spirits that possess these tabernacles now will inhabit the same tabernacles after they have been cleansed and purified and immortalized. [See D&C 88:14–17, 28–33.]²¹

Now a good many people in the world do not know what the resurrection is. Do you teach your children and your associates what it means? . . . [The Savior's] resurrection is plain to the Latter-day Saints who understand the gospel, but there are so many who do not understand what it means. . . . The purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to prepare every man, woman and child for the time when all those who have died will be brought forth from their graves, and when our Heavenly Father will establish his kingdom upon this earth and the righteous will dwell there and Jesus Christ will be our King and our Law-giver.²² [See suggestion 5 on page 78.]



“The Saviour’s . . . resurrection was the first assurance to humanity that we, too, shall come forth from the tomb.”

Our knowledge of the immortality of the soul inspires, encourages, and comforts us.

We read in Job, “But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” [Job 32:8.] Those who have not received that inspiration will not comprehend the meaning of the resurrection from the dead, and without that understanding it seems to me there would be little happiness for those who are living in mature years, waiting for the time when the spirit leaves the body to go they know not where.²³

Oh, how sad we would be if we thought that death terminated our career. If, when our life’s labor on earth was finished, we had no opportunity to go on developing, there would be little to inspire us to live as we should here. The knowledge that all the good we accomplish here, and all the development we make, will enhance our happiness eternally, encourages us to do our best.²⁴

We are all of us passing rapidly to that time when we will be called hence. If we did not understand that there is a future life, if we did not realize that there is something more than the influence that we have received thus far, if there was not anything but the vanity and vexation of life for us to live for, there are many, it seems to me, who would grow weary in the struggle that is to be made for existence here. But in the mercy of our Heavenly Father he has bestowed upon us the most wonderful gifts that come to human kind.²⁵

The Lord has blessed us with a knowledge that he lives, and has a body, and that we are created in his image. We do not believe that he is some kind of essence or that he is incomprehensible. If you have received the witness that has come to me and know as I know that our Heavenly Father has revealed himself to the children of men, that he is a personal God, that we are created in his image, that our spirits were begotten by him, that he has given us an opportunity to dwell upon the earth to receive a physical tabernacle, in order that we may be prepared to return into his presence and live eternally with him, I say, if you have received that assurance, then you have a foundation upon which you may build your faith. Take that from you, the knowledge that God really lives, the assurance that Jesus Christ was the manifestation of God in the flesh, take from you the assurance that there will be a literal resurrection from the dead, and you will find yourselves in the condition that our Father's children are in throughout the world, and I ask you, what comfort remains to you then? These are the truths that are fundamental.²⁶

More of my dear ones are on the other side than are here, and it will not be long in the natural course of events before I, too, will receive my summons to pass on. I am not looking forward to that time with anxiety and distress, but with hope and with the assurance that the change, when it occurs, will be for increasing happiness and advantages that we cannot know in mortality.²⁷

When we realize that death is only one of the steps that the children of God shall take throughout eternity, and that it is according to his plan, it robs death of its sting and brings us face to face with

the reality of eternal life. Many families have been called upon to say good-bye temporarily to those they love. When such passings occur, they disturb us, if we will let them, and thus bring great sorrow into our lives. But if our spiritual eyes could be opened and we could see, we would be comforted, I am sure, with what our vision would behold. The Lord has not left us without hope. On the contrary he has given us every assurance of eternal happiness, if we will accept his advice and counsel while here in mortality.

This is not an idle dream. These are facts. To you who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ, this story is a simple one, but it is true. There are sacred volumes of scripture that our Heavenly Father has placed within our reach, teaching us that we live eternally. . . . The Lord has given us this information in great plainness, and from the depths of my heart I thank him for the knowledge that he has given us, that those who mourn may be comforted and that we ourselves may understand our purpose in being here. If those who have passed on could speak to us, they would say, “Press on, press on, for the goal that will bring us eternal happiness together.” Do the things the Lord would have you do, and you will not miss anything that is worth while; but on the contrary you will be continually laying up treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot corrupt or thieves break through and steal. [See Matthew 6:19–20.]

I leave my testimony with you that I know that we are living eternal life, and that the temporary separation of death . . . is but one of the steps along the pathway of eternal progress and will result eventually in happiness if we are faithful.²⁸ [See suggestion 6 on page 78.]

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. As you read “From the Life of George Albert Smith” (pages 67–69), think about a time when you have tried to comfort someone after the death of a loved one. What was it that brought President Smith comfort?

2. President Smith taught that “this [life] is but a part of eternity” (page 70). What does this mean to you? How does our understanding of this principle influence the choices we make?
3. Study the section that begins on page 70. How do the teachings in this section differ from what the world teaches about the purpose of life? What experiences do we have during mortality that can help us “partake of the attributes of deity”?
4. Review the section that begins on page 71, especially the last four paragraphs of the section. Why is striving for worldly things like “grasping at [a] bubble that has itself disappeared”?
5. On page 74, President Smith refers to information about the resurrection in Doctrine and Covenants 88. What do verses 14–17 and 28–33 of this section teach you about the resurrection? What are some effective ways to teach children about the resurrection?
6. Read the section that begins on page 75. What are some of the trials of life that are made more bearable because you have a testimony of the principles taught in this section?

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:12–26, 35–42, 53–58; 2 Nephi 9:6–13; Alma 12:24; 28:12; Doctrine and Covenants 93:19–20, 29–34; 130:18–19; Abraham 3:24–26

Teaching help: “Ask participants to choose a section they are interested in and read it silently. Invite them to gather in groups of two or three people who chose the same section and discuss what they learned” (from page vii of this book).

Notes

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| 1. In Conference Report, Oct. 1944, 94. | 7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1906, 48. |
| 2. In <i>Deseret News</i> , Feb. 13, 1932, Church section, 5, 7. | 8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1926, 102. |
| 3. “Mormon View of Life’s Mission,” <i>Deseret Evening News</i> , June 27, 1908, Church section, 2. | 9. “Mormon View of Life’s Mission,” 2. |
| 4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 62. | 10. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 63. |
| 5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1923, 70–71. | 11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1909, 78. |
| 6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 59. | 12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1932, 44. |
| | 13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1906, 50. |
| | 14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1923, 70. |

15. "Mormon View of Life's Mission," 2.
16. In *Deseret News*, May 26, 1945, Church section, 6.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1948, 163.
18. "President Smith Sends Greetings," *Deseret News*, Dec. 27, 1950, Church section, 3.
19. "Mormon View of Life's Mission," 2.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 60.
21. In Conference Report, Apr. 1939, 122–23.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 187–88.
23. In Conference Report, Apr. 1939, 121.
24. In Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 41.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 1923, 71.
26. In Conference Report, Oct. 1921, 39.
27. In *Deseret News*, May 26, 1945, Church section, 4.
28. "Some Thoughts on War, and Sorrow, and Peace," *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1945, 501.



Interior of the Kirtland Temple, where the ancient prophet Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and conferred on him the sealing power and the keys of the work for the dead.