



Worship through REVERENCE

BY ELDER ROBERT C. OAKS

Served as a Member of the Seventy
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The counsel of President David O. McKay (1873–1970) puts the topic of reverence in clear perspective: “Reverence is profound respect mingled with love.”¹ This perspective is further enriched by the words of a song from the *Children’s Songbook*:

*Rev’rence is more than just quietly sitting:
It’s thinking of Father above,
A feeling I get when I think of his blessings.
I’m rev’rent, for rev’rence is love.*²

The core words most often found in scriptures associated with reverence are *respect*, *love*, and *honor*. Using these standards, we can see that reverence reflects activity of the heart, not just inactivity of the mouth.

Reverence is an integral part of worship. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has instructed:

“Worship often includes actions, but true worship always involves a particular attitude of mind.

“The attitude of worship evokes the deepest feelings of allegiance, adoration, and awe. Worship combines love and reverence in a state of devotion that draws our spirits closer to God.”³

Certainly the prime purpose for entering a place of worship is to be drawn closer to God.

As we study the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and gain an appreciation of the remarkable impact—both mortal and eternal—of His Atonement on our lives, we naturally experience the emotional responses of respect, love, and honor. Gospel obedience and Christian service then flow as appropriate expressions of these emotions. But without reverence, the expressions of respect, love, and honor are incomplete.

As we develop reverence for Jesus Christ, we are better able to pattern our lives after His perfect example. There are many facets to such reverence: faith that He lives, trust in His promised blessings, and obedience to gospel standards. But one of the most important facets is the feeling of our heart—the



Reverence includes much more than the absence of noise. Heartfelt reverence includes listening, thinking on the things of God, and feeling respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity. We who respect, love, and honor the Lord will never take His name in vain and will be uncomfortable with demeaning or trivializing jokes about Him. Rather, we praise and revere



(see verses 14, 15, 21, 22, 34). Truly, the wages of reverence are great!

Much of what we say in the Church about reverence usually focuses on being quiet in places of worship, with special emphasis on children being quiet. Certainly, quiet is a key part of reverence, but the full, rich meaning of the concept of reverence includes much more than the absence of noise and commotion. Quiet does not necessarily equal reverence.

A *n important facet of reverence is the feeling of our heart—the respect, love, and honor we feel toward Deity.*

our Heavenly Father and Him whom we worship as our Lord and our Savior.

The Lord gives clear direction regarding His expectation for reverence in Leviticus 19:30, where He states, “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” The respect we show for His temples and chapels is a reflection of the reverence for Him we feel in our hearts. Our degree of respect, love, and honor for the Lord is directly reflected in our reverence, as shown by our attitudes as well as by our decorum.

Blessings of Reverence

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided an interesting insight into reverence in his prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836. Joseph prayed that the repentant might return and “be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in thy house” (D&C 109:21). The Prophet’s prayer highlights what these blessings of reverence might be: words of wisdom, a fulness of the Holy Ghost, favor in the sight of the Lord, the power of God, and forgiveness

Our chapels are first and foremost houses of worship where we should be able to sit quietly during prelude music and meditate on the beauty of the restored gospel, prepare our hearts and minds for the sacrament, and ponder the majesty of our Heavenly Father and the splendor of the Savior’s Atonement. Where better to consider such sacred and weighty matters? These manifestations of our worship will naturally be accompanied by an attitude of reverence.

Such worship opportunities are fundamental to the strengthening of our faith and can provide a conduit whereby the spirit of testimony and revelation can flow into our souls. This reality was dramatically demonstrated to me one Sabbath day as I sat during the prelude music for sacrament meeting. My wife and I had been seeking spiritual instruction on a particular question in our lives. Thankfully, the answer came through the particular prelude hymn selected. In response to the sweet melody, the Spirit clearly indicated the appropriate course for us. Unfortunately, before the hymn had ended, someone sitting near me leaned over and started talking to me, and

the Spirit immediately left. A treasure of sweet revelation was cut short by a lack of reverence.

From this experience I gained a special appreciation for the sanctity of a quiet prelude moment. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, highlighted this truth when he stated, “Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit.”⁴

Measures of Reverence

The measures of reverence are not complicated. Rather than letting our minds wander to the mundane things of the world, we should school our thoughts in places and times of reverence to think on the things of God: the majesty of the Atonement, eternal families, the Restoration of the gospel in its fulness. These measures of reverence would include schooling our behavior to reflect the attitudes of respect, love, and honor. They would include dressing modestly in our nicest clothes, avoiding the ultra-casual fashions of the day, and avoiding loud talking and disruptive behavior in the Church building. And when in the chapel, we should seek to take “quiet” down another level, especially during the administration of the sacrament.

A desire for reverent behavior would prompt us to plan ahead if we anticipate the need to leave the meeting for any reason and to sit in the rear near an exit so we can leave quietly. Leaving in the middle of a service, especially during a talk or other presentation, is distracting to the speaker and to those sitting near you. Out of respect



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for others as well as for the Lord, we should avoid such untimely movements.

Often we equate the reverence of a congregation with the behavior of the children present. True, young children can provide a special challenge to reverence. But the

first rule with respect to children is to bring them! They can be taught, they can be taken out, and they can be brought back into the meeting. And in the teaching it is better to minimize the number of training tools that are brought to church, such as toys and food. Latter-day Saint congregations are generally blessed with large numbers of children and youth, and we should be thankful for this. They are the future of the Church.

Heartfelt reverence is an important part of our worship of our Heavenly Father and of the Lord. In all of the activities and thoughts of our lives each day, may we avoid that which reflects a lack of reverence toward Them. In all of our worship activities, may we seek to expand and enrich our feelings of respect, love, and honor toward our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. These feelings are tokens of a true Christian character. ■

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 86.
2. “Reverence Is Love,” *Children’s Songbook*, 31.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (1988), 125.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Reverence Invites Revelation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.