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# Become What God Wants You to Be

**D**uring my first semester at college 40 years ago, I decided to read the Book of Mormon cover to cover. Somehow, I had never done that before.

At that time, I could tell you why we have the Book of Mormon and why it's important, and I could bear testimony that it is the word of God. But a full-time mission was approaching, and I sensed that my conviction of the Book of Mormon was more in my head than in my heart. I knew that as a missionary, I would need more than just a working knowledge of the Book of Mormon—I wanted to teach from the heart!

So I set a goal to finish the Book of Mormon before the Thanksgiving break. I read every day. This was a life-changing experience. For the first time, the stories I had heard in pieces started flowing together. I could almost see Nephi, Alma, and Captain

Moroni. Visions of their experiences formed in my mind, and I can still see those images to this day. It was my first real experience “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20), and it was “delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

The day before Thanksgiving, I was reading in the book of Ether, so I stayed up all night and accomplished my goal. When I had finished, I prayed, as Moroni suggests, to “ask God . . . if these things are not true” (Moroni 10:4).

Did I receive a dramatic revelation? No. But I did receive a feeling of peace, consistent with the feelings I had while reading the book. I now had the ingredient that was missing, not just in my mission preparation but also in my conversion to the Savior.

**I encourage you to accept the Lord's plan for you, even if it differs from your plan for yourself.**



## Examine Your Heart

Ask yourself: “Where am I spiritually? Where do I want to be? Am I making any progress in that direction?” Or, to use Alma’s words, “Have ye experienced [a] mighty change in your hearts?” And “if ye *have* experienced a change of heart, . . . can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:14, 26; emphasis added).

It was this type of self-examination that inspired me to read the Book of Mormon as a freshman. It could also inspire you to take the next step in your spiritual progress.

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called this process doing a spiritual “biopsy” on our hearts. To illustrate, he shared an example from his life as a busy young physician. He often had to work on Sundays, and one Sunday it looked like he would finish in time to make it to church. On the other hand, if he stayed a little longer, his family would leave without him, and then he could go home and take a much-needed nap. Ultimately, that’s what he decided to do.

But he couldn't sleep. He was troubled by his decision. He used to love going to church. What had happened? In humility he examined his life and realized that his busy schedule had made him casual about prayer and scripture study.

Elder Renlund recalled: "I got off the couch, got on my knees, and pleaded with God for forgiveness. . . . The next day I brought a Book of Mormon to the hospital. On my to-do list that day, and every day since, were two items: praying at least morning and evening and reading in the scriptures. Sometimes midnight would come, and I would have to quickly find a private place to pray. Some days my scripture study was brief. I also promised Heavenly Father that I would always try to get to church, even if I missed part of the meeting. Over the course of a few weeks, the zeal returned and the fire of testimony burned fiercely again. I promised to never again . . . [become] casual about these seemingly small actions."<sup>1</sup>

Can you imagine what would have happened had Elder Renlund decided that because of his busy schedule, he was excused from praying and reading the scriptures *every* day? What if he had reasoned that he was just fine spiritually—after all, he wasn't committing any grievous sins; he was just taking a nap! Fortunately, he was humble enough to notice that he was

drifting and to correct his course. And now this deeply spiritual man is blessing the Church and the world as an Apostle of the Lord.

I urge you to spend some time in quiet conversation with Heavenly Father. Ask Him, "What lack I yet?" (Matthew 19:20).

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The answers may surprise you. The path of conversion—the road between who we are and who Heavenly Father wants us to be—is a long one. Don't let that discourage you. Learn from your experience; let it humble you. Submit to some tutoring from the Lord.

Remember that the Savior loves you. He has promised, "Be of good cheer, for I will lead you along" (D&C 78:18).

## Let the Lord Guide You

Often, letting the Lord guide you will mean altering the plans you have made for your life in favor of His plans. I encourage you to accept His plan for you, even if it differs from your plan for yourself.

Consider this example from the life of Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

When he was a young man, he looked forward to serving a full-time mission. But one week after he graduated from high school, war broke out in Korea, and young Dallin was sent into military duty.

Years later, when Elder Oaks was 48 years old, he was appointed to the Utah Supreme Court. At that time, he and his wife, June, made a plan for the rest of their lives. They determined that he would serve for 20 years on the court and then retire at age 68. Then they would submit their mission papers and serve, as a couple, the full-time mission neither of them got to serve in their youth.

Well, it didn't quite work out that way. Just four years later, Elder Oaks was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—not exactly the kind of thing you plan for. He would still be serving the Lord, just not in the capacity he had anticipated. Then, when he was 66, his wife died of cancer. Two years later he married his current wife, Kristen.

Elder Oaks has observed: “How fundamentally different my life is than I had sought to plan! My professional life has changed. My personal life has changed. But the commitment I made to the Lord—to put Him first in my life and to be ready for whatever He would have me do—has carried me through these changes of eternal importance.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Understand the Plan**

Submitting our lives to God is not easy. But we can make it easier for ourselves.

When Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they received a commandment that at first they did not understand: Take the firstborn of your flocks and sacrifice it to the Lord. They trusted the Lord enough to

obey, but when an angel asked Adam why he was making sacrifices, Adam said, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.” (See Moses 5:5–6.)

Then the angel taught Adam and Eve about the spiritual significance of sacrifice. It wasn't about giving up one of their animals. It was about redemption. It was about “the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7). It meant that although they had fallen, they could be redeemed. The Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they saw the plan with new eyes (see Moses 5:10–11).

Do you see parallels between experiences in your life and the experiences of Adam and Eve? Do you sometimes receive counsel from the Lord that you do not understand? Sometimes we have to say, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me,” obeying out of a sense of duty. This is admirable because such faithful obedience can lead you, as it did Adam and Eve, to greater light, understanding, and blessings. Remember that Adam and Eve found joy and the strength to persevere *after* “God . . . made known unto them the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:30).

This is why we obey the commandments. This is why we raise families. This is why we make sacrifices joyfully—because we know the plan. Seek to understand the doctrine, for as President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), former President of



the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, often reminded us, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.”<sup>3</sup>

It is not enough just to know with our minds; we must *understand* in our hearts. Doctrine can’t just influence our thoughts; we have to let it change our very nature.

### Look to Jesus Christ

None of us knows what tomorrow will bring. But we do know one thing: We can put unreserved faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. No matter what happens, eternal life is available because of Jesus Christ. Death, pain, and sorrow will eventually become only memories because of Him. Every inequality, every injustice, every iniquity can be made right because of Him.

This is why Helaman pleaded with his sons to build their foundation “upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God”—because no other foundation can withstand the devil’s “mighty winds . . . [and] all his hail and his mighty storm” (Helaman 5:12).

We live in an era of secularism, when people are increasingly putting their trust in worldly philosophies, institutions, and wealth. But all of these will fall, and if we anchor ourselves to them, we will fall also.

Christ is the only “sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12). Faith and righteousness will prevail. Faith in Jesus Christ gives us strength to accept the unknown. It will carry us through

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anything the future may hold. So “look unto [Him] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36). Seek to become “a greater follower of righteousness” (Abraham 1:2). And “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men” (2 Nephi 31:20).

I have always loved these words from the epistle to the Hebrews: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”

(Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1 [in Hebrews 11:1, footnote *b*]). I am a witness of things not seen. I have the assurance that the Lord has guided my path. I could not always see where that path would lead, but the evidence of God’s hand in my life has been revealed in many ways. Most often, they were subtle and gentle manifestations—opportunities and feelings. Isaiah described such guidance this way: “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

I don’t know how the hand of the Lord will manifest itself in your life, but I invite you to look for it. Then, someday 40 years from now, I hope you will also see profound changes in yourself and be filled with gratitude that during this pivotal time in your life, you allowed the Lord to help you become what He wants you to become. ■

*From a devotional address, “I’ll Be What You Want Me to Be,” given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 8, 2016. For the full text, go to [web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches).*

### NOTES

1. See Dale G. Renlund, “Preserving the Heart’s Mighty Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 98–99.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Timing,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 16–17.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “Little Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17; see also “Do Not Fear,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 79.