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Of the Seventy

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Shunning

A Key to Receiving Revelation

In this world of increasing turmoil, keeping ourselves worthy of receiving revelation is of utmost importance.

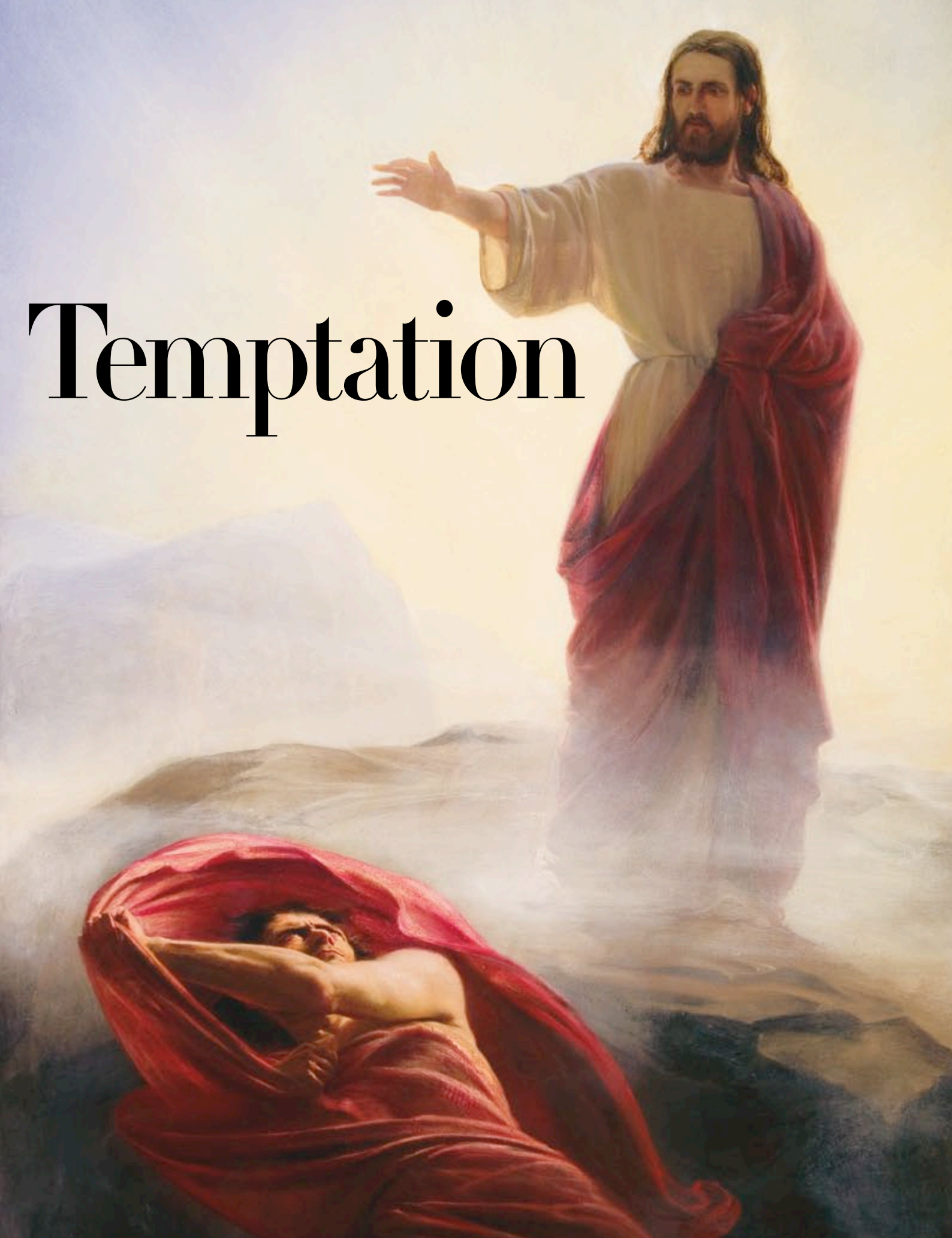
For many of us, a barrier to revelation is being unwilling to truly repent of “small things” the Spirit cannot tolerate. The so-called “small things” include watching inappropriate movies, being immodest in dress and action, harboring unworthy thoughts, disregarding the teachings of the prophets, and doing what the Spirit warns us to avoid.

An increase in worthiness and spirituality brings an increase in revelation. Nephi understood this and used the counsel of the Lord to remind his two wayward brothers about the process of revelation: “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Nephi 15:11).

This verse gives us a four-part formula for receiving revelation: softening our hearts, asking with faith in Christ, believing that we will receive, and keeping the commandments. Not all revelation comes immediately or as clearly as we may want, but it does come. The receipt of revelation depends on our faithfulness, but the clarity of revelation depends on our listening skills. Learn to listen for it, learn to feel it, learn to recognize how it comes to you, act upon it, and be grateful for it.

We must decide deep down inside that we want to be better and then act upon that desire so the waters of revelation can run freely. Even with the best desires, we are tempted to stray from the path of righteousness—that is part of mortality, for we are here to be tested and “tried in all things” (D&C 136:31; see also 2 Nephi 2:11).

Temptation



The Savior Himself faced temptation in the wilderness as He prepared for His mission (see Matthew 4:1–11). In His response to that temptation, He taught seven valuable lessons we can apply in our own lives that will enable us to remain worthy of divine communication.

Seven Lessons from the Savior

1. Recognize that Satan is the source of temptation. All that is good comes of God, and we should give thanks for it (see Moroni 7:12; D&C 46:32). All that is wicked comes from Satan, and we should recognize it and shun it.

In many sports there is a shroud of secrecy over the tactics of opposing teams, especially just before a game. In the final practice, cameras are banned, reporters are locked out, and gates are closed in an attempt to keep the team's plans from the opposition.

To know the plans of our opponent is to have an advantage. We have that advantage because we know that Satan's plan is "that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). We can, with the Savior, rebuff the devil and dismiss him with the command, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:10).

2. The Savior immediately dismissed temptation. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: "Our accountability begins with how we handle the evil thought immediately after it is presented. Like Jesus, we should positively and promptly terminate the temptation."¹ Modern scripture reinforces the truth that Christ "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22).

Some of us do exactly opposite of what the Savior did. We entertain the temptation momentarily for just a glimpse or taste or puff or kiss that is allowed to linger longer than it should, and then the temptation gets stronger and our ability to withstand it gets weaker. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us!"²

Remember that Satan's cunning plan is designed to lead us carefully down to hell (see 2 Nephi 9:28; 28:21). We must not fall into the trap of thinking we can sin just a little and it will not matter, for "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the



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least degree of allowance" (D&C 1:31; Alma 45:16).

3. Jesus took strength from the scriptures as a means of shunning temptation. Clearly the Savior was well versed in the scriptures, which allowed Him to use them to counter Satan's temptations (see Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change."³

Nephi taught that "whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them" (1 Nephi 15:24).

4. From the Joseph Smith Translation, we know that Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, as portrayed in the King James Version, for the righteous seek no temptation. Rather, "Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, *to be with God*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1; emphasis added).

The lesson is simple: when we are trying to lose weight, we stay away from the bakery. We should never put ourselves at risk by courting temptation. The road to temptation is clearly signposted, and we ignore the signs at our peril.

5. Satan tempts us at our weakest point. After the Savior had fasted 40 days and 40 nights and "was afterward an hungred," Satan, seizing the moment, said, "Command that these stones be made bread" (Matthew 4:2–3).

Satan seeks to tempt us when we are feeling weak and at what he perceives to be our weakest points. He will pick away at them in the hope that we will succumb.

We all have weak points, and mortality is our opportunity to make weak things strong. President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) declared: “The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. If it’s one of dishonesty, if it’s one of unchastity, . . . today is the day for you to work on that until you’ve been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that’s most difficult for you to keep.”⁴

To make a Book of Mormon analogy, Captain Moroni fortified the Nephite lands at their weakest points (see Alma 48:8–9; 49:13–15). We must do likewise in our lives against the temptations of Satan. Nobody knows our weak points better than the person looking back at us in the mirror.

6. The sixth lesson we learn is that of obedience. Jesus was tempted, but he instantly relied on His earlier decision to obey all the commandments of God and could not be persuaded to drift from that decision. The Savior focused on doing the will of the Father, and so must we.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, “When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block.”⁵

Before temptation comes, decide to always obey the commandments and the teachings of the prophets, and you will find you have an increase of power to withstand temptation.

7. The final insight comes from the observation that Christ was tempted three times in quick succession. The lesson is that Satan will not give up taunting and tempting us; therefore, we must forever be on our guard “against all the fiery darts of the adversary” (D&C 3:8).

Power in the Atonement of Jesus Christ

On those occasions that you think the temptations are too great, remember that Paul taught, “[God] will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Take added strength from knowing that the enabling

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Why is learning to receive revelation important?

“Each of us must stay in condition to respond to inspiration and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The Lord has a way of pouring pure intelligence into our minds to prompt us, to guide us, to teach us, and to warn us. Each son or daughter of God can know the things they need to know instantly. Learn to receive and act on inspiration and revelation.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “These Things I Know,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 8.

power of the Atonement, which comes through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a divine means to help us resist temptation. We can take comfort from Paul’s letter to the Hebrews: “For in that [Jesus] himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

Regretfully, we sometimes succumb to temptation, but be reassured that there is a way back. The journey is not easy, but it is worth the effort, for the Lord promises, “He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

After the Savior had shunned temptation, “angels came and ministered unto him” (Matthew 4:11). I testify that as we shun temptation and choose the better way, we will feel the loving arm of the Lord bearing us up, and His Spirit will fill our hearts with peace and joy. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on September 25, 2012. For the full address, visit devotional.byuh.edu/archive.

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “Think on Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1984, 11.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, “Overcome . . . Even as I Also Overcame,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 71.
3. Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6.
4. Harold B. Lee, in Ken Clements, “Californians Hear Pres. Lee,” *Church News*, May 5, 1973, 3.
5. James E. Faust, “Obedience: The Path to Freedom,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 47.