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# THE Heart AND A WILLING Mind

In 1951 Masako Kato met the missionaries in her hometown of Yokohama, Japan. When the missionaries began to speak of spiritual things, she felt something and allowed them to teach her about the restored gospel. During this time both Masako's older sister and mother died. She was emotionally devastated but still attended the Church's little branch—even on the Sunday after her mother passed away. During the opening hymn, the power of the Spirit brought her to tears, and she gained a witness of the eternal nature of life.

Masako wanted to be baptized, but her father would not give his permission. She was of legal age, but out of respect for her father, she honored his wishes. However, she continued to attend Church meetings and participate in Church activities.

The missionaries suggested that it might be good for her to share the gospel message she had come to know. Seemingly unafraid, she invited co-workers to attend church with her. A few came to some social activities, but one, Shozo Suzuki, also came to Sunday meetings. He had a good feeling about what he heard, and he consented to receive the missionary discussions. After several months Shozo accepted the challenge to be baptized. Masako decided it was time to again seek her father's permission to be baptized, which he gave. On August 4, 1952, Masako and Shozo were baptized.

A few months later a young missionary approached them and suggested they think about marriage—to each other. This surprised them, especially Shozo. However, it prompted him to think about Masako in a different way than he had before. Not long afterward, on April 29, 1953, they were married.

Brother and Sister Suzuki were blessed with nine children. Seven of their children served full-time missions. Eight married, all in the temple. Brother Suzuki has served as a branch president, district president, mission president, president of the Japan Missionary Training



Masako and Shozo Suzuki. Shozo served as mission president in the Sapporo Japan Mission, 1976–79.

Center, regional representative, and patriarch. From Masako's determined desire to join the Church have come 54 righteous members of the Suzuki family. Indeed, "out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

These same blessings can be found everywhere the Church is established. They can even happen in your own family.

## The Heart and a Willing Mind

How do such blessings come? That question is answered in scripture: "Behold, the Lord requireth



*When we live by covenant rather than by convenience, we direct our lives toward our heavenly home.*

the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days” (D&C 64:34).

This doctrine is affirmed in the experience of Jesus with the Pharisaic lawyer who asked him:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:36–38).

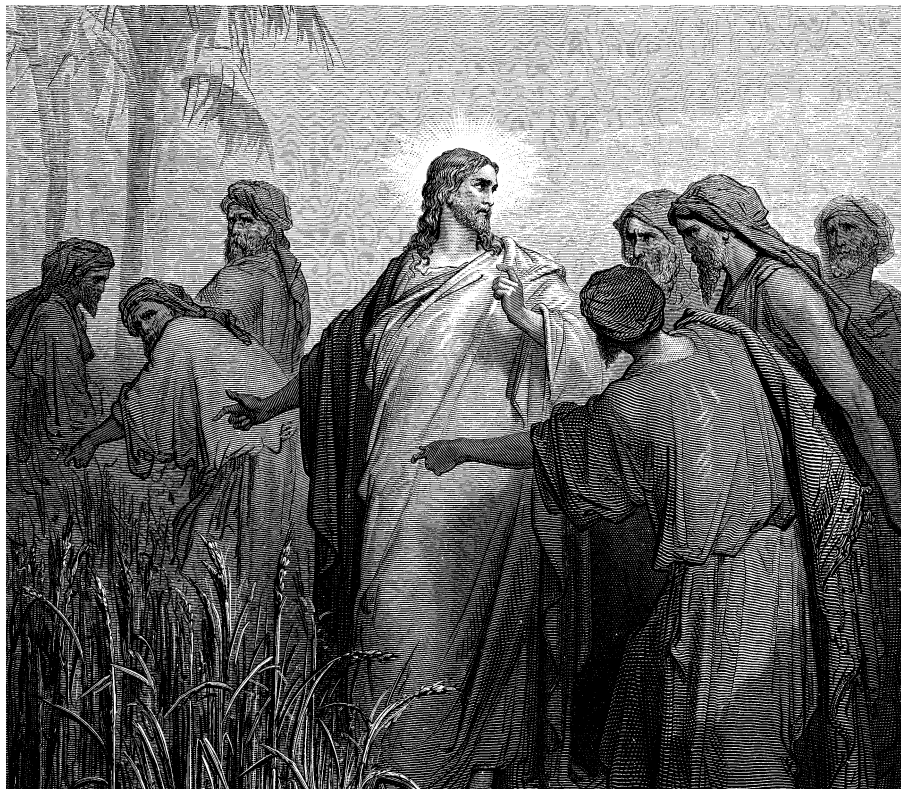
From these words we understand that both the *heart* and the *mind* must be fully engaged in this holy process.

The heart is symbolic of love and commitment. We make sacrifices and bear burdens for those we love that we would not endure for any other reason. If love does not exist, our commitment wanes.

If we love the Lord with all our heart, we are willing to give Him everything we possess. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) said: “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar.

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circumstances.

I wish to suggest five ways we can genuinely seek to give our heart and mind to the Lord:

*1. Gain and constantly nurture your own testimony.* Our testimonies should include knowledge of, and love for, God the Father, Jesus

. . . The many other things we give to God . . . are actually things He has already given us, and He has loaned them to us. But when we begin to submit ourselves by letting our wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him. . . . There is a part of us that is ultimately sovereign, the mind and heart. . . . And when we submit to His will, then we’ve really given Him the one thing He asks of us.”<sup>1</sup>

Having “a willing mind” connotes giving our best effort and finest thinking and seeking God’s wisdom. It suggests that our most devoted lifetime study should be of things that are eternal in nature. It means that there must be an inextricable relationship between hearing the word of God and obeying it.

The Apostle James said, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

Some of us “hear” selectively and “do” when it is convenient. But for those who give their heart and mind to the Lord, whether the burden is light or heavy makes no difference. We demonstrate a consecrated heart and mind by consistently following God’s commandments no matter how difficult the

Christ, and the Holy Ghost. We should also testify of the glorious gospel plan, the centrality of the Savior and His Atonement, the Restoration of the Lord’s Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the role of apostles and prophets.

If you do not feel the power and security that this knowledge brings, I ask you to study the exhortation found in Moroni 10:3–5.

*2. Honor priesthood ordinances and covenants.* Ordinances are sacred ceremonies in which we enter into solemn covenants with the Lord. As covenant children, we have been promised all that is required for eternal success if we are true to our promises. Prepare for the ordinances yet to be performed in your life, and be guided in your decisions by the covenants you have made. When you are evaluating alternatives, ask yourself, “Is this choice consistent with my covenants?”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “The importance of having a sense of the sacred is simply this—if one does not appreciate holy things, he will lose them. Absent a feeling of reverence, he will grow increasingly casual in attitude and lax in conduct.

He will drift from the moorings that his covenants with God could provide. His feeling of accountability to God will diminish and then be forgotten. Thereafter, he will care only about his own comfort and satisfying his uncontrolled appetites. Finally, he will come to despise sacred things, even God, and then he will despise himself.”<sup>2</sup>

When we live by covenant rather than by convenience, we direct our lives toward our heavenly home.

**3. Root out duplicity.** A duplicitous person is double-minded in thought, speech, or action with the intent to deceive. Such a person often acts one way in public and another way in private. Often the purpose of our deception is to hide our sins, but as Jonah learned when he fled to Joppa, you cannot hide from God (see Jonah 1). Our deceit will be found out eventually, and the damage caused may be irreversible.

One way to test whether we have “an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5) or a secondary eye to the evil of the world is to evaluate how we act when we are alone. What sites do we visit on the Internet? What television programs or videos do we watch? What kinds of books and magazines do we read? Would we be comfortable doing the same activities if others were watching?

**4. Continually study the doctrine.** When we know the commandments of God and “liken all scriptures unto us” (1 Nephi 19:23), we will change the way we think and act.

Studying and following the counsel of living prophets is vital. Having prophets of God on earth has become so commonplace for us as members of the Church that we may underappreciate their profound importance and role.

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has stated: “Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. . . .

“Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept

or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous.”<sup>3</sup>

**5. Establish a life of service.** When I was still in my 20s, I was called to be the bishop of an 850-member ward. Two weeks before, a partner and I had founded a company and hired several new employees. At the time, my wife and I had three energetic children ages one to seven. The daunting responsibilities to properly care for my young family, to assist the Saints entrusted to my stewardship, and to create a viable business seemed impossible.

As I now reflect on the events of the ensuing years, I am convinced that service to others (most important, service to my family) has been one of the great blessings of my life. Without the continual humility and life perspective that service engenders, the allure of the world could easily have entrapped me.

By serving others, we emulate the ultimate act of service offered to each of us by the Redeemer of the world. Service is a way for us to show gratitude for the blessing of salvation, which comes only through Jesus Christ.

## No Other Way

Submitting our will—completely giving our heart and mind to God—is not easy. But I am comfortable with, and comforted by, the “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). There is no other way. I would not want another way. I testify of Him whose plan it is, God the Eternal Father, and of Him who is central to the plan, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I bear witness of apostles and prophets, whose counsel I gladly follow. With all my heart and mind I testify of these truths. ■

*From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University—Idaho on May 17, 2005.*

## NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “Sharing Insights from My Life,” in *Brigham Young University 1998–99 Speeches* (1999), 4.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “A Sense of the Sacred” (Church Educational System Fireside for young adults, Nov. 7, 2004), [www.ldscs.org](http://www.ldscs.org).
3. Henry B. Eyring, “Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25.