



By Elder
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Of the Seventy

MAINTAINING AN Eternal Perspective

In the late 1980s a man I will call Mr. Brown came to a hospital in Salt Lake City with severe heart disease. Despite the most advanced medications available, his heart could not adequately support his circulation. His medical providers determined that he would soon die without a heart transplant. While he waited for a suitable donor heart, his condition worsened and surgeons had to implant mechanical pumps.

At that time mechanical pumps were useful for only a short time. After a few days other organ systems would begin to fail. All involved in Mr. Brown's care knew that if a donor heart did not become available soon, he would certainly die.

A suitable donor heart became available, and Mr. Brown received a new heart. Unfortunately, the heart did not work. Now his situation became dire. But just as his doctors were about to give up, another donor heart became available. This donor heart was marginal at best and could not be used for any other recipient. The doctors involved in Mr. Brown's care decided that this marginal heart was his last hope and that they should attempt to use it.

Mr. Brown soon underwent another operation, and within hours he began to recover. The mechanical

pumps were removed, and over the course of 10 days he was ready to be discharged from the hospital.


The day before his discharge, I walked into Mr. Brown's hospital room and noticed that something was not right. He looked angry. He sat on his bed, gripping the hospital tray with his breakfast on it.

"Mr. Brown, what is wrong?" I asked.

Through clenched teeth, he replied, "The oatmeal isn't hot, and the milk isn't cold!"

Think of it! Ten days before, Mr. Brown was near death. Now he was complaining about the hospital food. For that moment he had lost sight of the bigger picture—of where he had been and of the future he now had. He would go on to live 18 years with an excellent quality of life and die of something unrelated to his heart.

It is easy to fall into the same trap that Mr. Brown found himself in that morning in the hospital, having lost sight of the long-term perspective. When our day-to-day challenges loom before us, it is natural to focus on the here and now. But when we do, we may make poor choices, become depressed, or experience hopelessness. Because of this human tendency, prophets have admonished us to remember the eternal perspective. Only then can we successfully navigate mortality.



*Remember
that life is
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“Beware Lest Thou Forget”

Surprisingly, losing the eternal perspective is a risk whether we face trials or prosperity. In the Old Testament, Moses warned the Israelites that once they found themselves blessed beyond measure in the promised land, they must “beware lest thou forget the Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:12).

In the Book of Mormon, Mormon stated the problem when he wrote, “Yea, and we may see at the very time

when [God] doth prosper his people, . . . then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity” (Helaman 12:2).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) issued a similar warning. He said: “The worst fear that I have about [members of this Church] is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and his people, wax fat, and kick

themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth.”¹

Anciently, prophets used tangible objects to serve as reminders of God’s goodness to help the people maintain a long-term perspective. Moses admonished, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deuteronomy 11:18).

To be obedient to this direction, the children of Israel wrote Moses’s prophetic words on strips of parchment, enclosed them in tiny boxes, and bound the boxes on their arms and foreheads. These frontlets, or phylacteries, were worn during prayer to help the people remember God and His goodness to them.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

How can I better remember God’s goodness to me?

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught:

“There is a simple cure for the terrible malady of forgetting God, His blessings, and His messages to us. Jesus Christ promised it to His disciples when He was about to be crucified, resurrected, and then taken away from them to ascend in glory to His Father. . . .

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you’ [John 14:26].

“The key to . . . remembering . . . is receiving the Holy Ghost as a companion. It is the Holy Ghost who helps us see what God has done for us. It is the Holy Ghost who can help those we serve to see what God has done for them” (“O Remember, Remember,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 68).

At the Lord’s direction, Joshua, who succeeded Moses, gathered 12 stones to commemorate the miracle that allowed Israel to pass through the river Jordan without getting wet. Regarding the 12 stones, Joshua told the people:

“When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?

“Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

“For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over . . . :

“That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty” (Joshua 4:21–24).

Remembering God’s Goodness

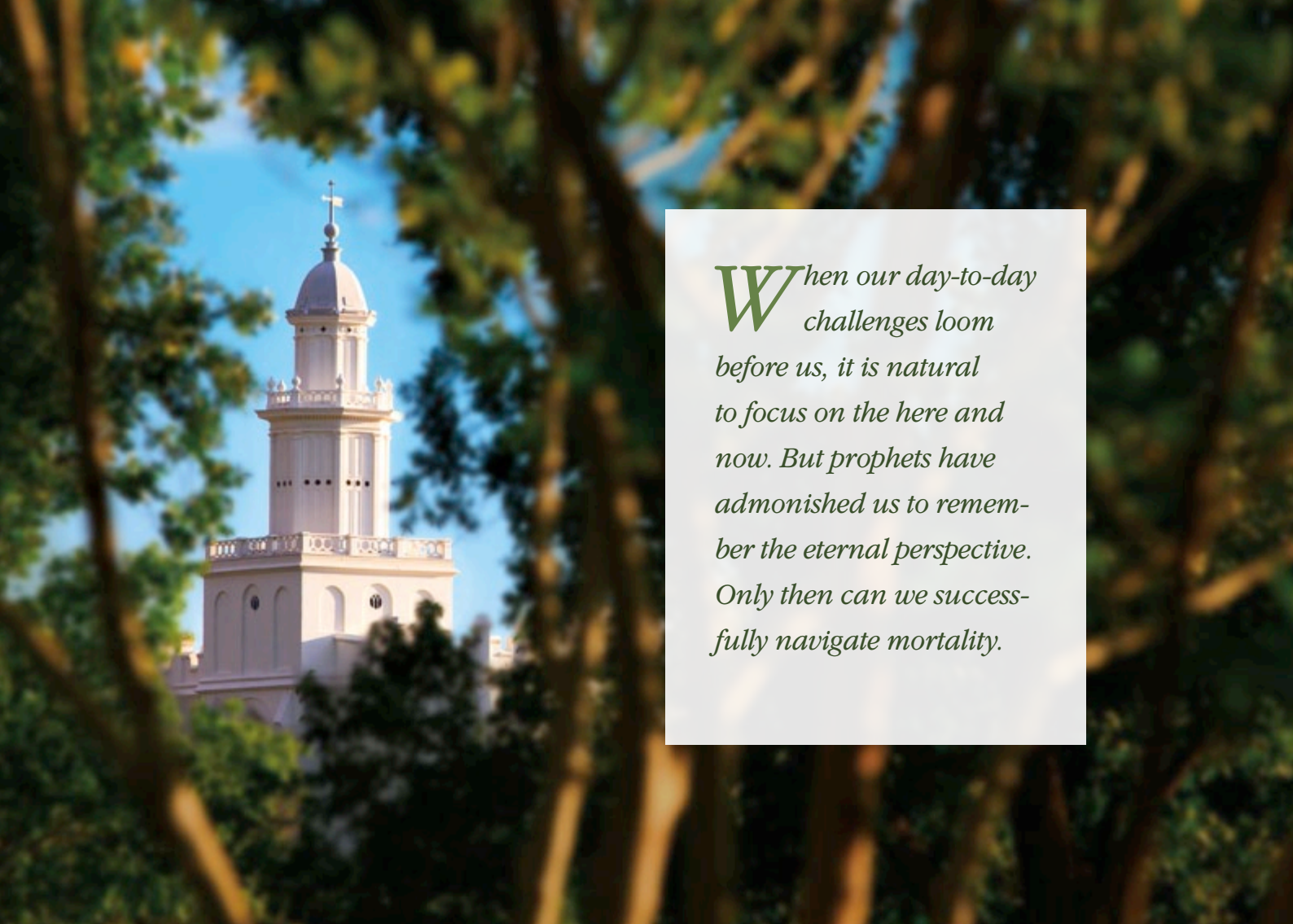
Another noteworthy example occurred after the Lord had miraculously blessed the Israelites in defeating the Philistines. After the victory, Samuel took a stone and placed it at the scene of two previous defeats. He named the stone Ebenezer (meaning “the stone of help”), saying, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12 and footnote *b*). This stone was another physical reminder of God’s goodness.

Robert Robinson, in his famous hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,”² referenced this bit of Israelite history when he penned:

*Here I’ll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I’m come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.*

Ebenezer, the stone of help, the outward symbol of God’s goodness, helped Israel remember the greatness of God. The hymn suggests that each of us do the same—raise an Ebenezer to remind us of God’s goodness and engender our constant gratitude.

While we may not use frontlets or stones, each of us needs to actively maintain an eternal perspective. Maintaining an eternal perspective means we remember that life is more than the here and now, that life continues after death, and that our choices have eternal consequences.



When our day-to-day challenges loom before us, it is natural to focus on the here and now. But prophets have admonished us to remember the eternal perspective. Only then can we successfully navigate mortality.

Whether we are served cold oatmeal or riches in abundance, we are all “prone to wander, . . . prone to leave the God [we] love.” The remedy for wandering away from God is also suggested in the hymn: “Let Thy goodness, as a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee.”

By remembering and keeping in mind what great things God has done for us, including the gift of His Son, we can “safely . . . arrive at home.”³

The Sacrament

What is our Ebenezer? What tangible objects help us maintain an eternal perspective? For Latter-day Saints, one of those objects is the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

Each Sunday the sacrament helps us remember God’s goodness and marvelous promises. By partaking of simple, tangible objects—a piece of bread and a sip of water—we promise to always remember the Savior and His great atoning sacrifice. Through the sacrament, we

renew our covenants and express our willingness to keep His commandments.

The Lord told the Nephites:

“And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

“. . . And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock” (3 Nephi 18:11–12).

With the help of the sacrament, we can always remember Him and maintain an eternal perspective. ■

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (1936), 128.
2. Robert Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount,” in *Gospel Tent Songs* (1905), no. 104; two verses of this hymn appeared in *Hymns: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1948), no. 70.
3. Robinson, “Come, Thou Fount,” no. 104.