



By Elder Craig A. Cardon  
Of the Seventy

# BECOMING MEN & WOMEN OF GOD

*May each of you remember who you really are, what God expects of you, and that He has a mission for you.*

Several years ago, prior to my calling as a General Authority, Sister Cardon and I attended a dinner for members of the Dean's Alumni Leadership Council at the Harvard Kennedy School.

After the dinner the president of the council invited the council members and their companions to stand and introduce themselves. He suggested that each person share educational and professional background information, along with what each considered to be his or her most significant accomplishment. Because of the way the room was organized, our table would be the last to participate.

Sister Cardon later explained to me that as she saw all in attendance standing and listing their many academic degrees and professional accomplishments, she thought, "What can I possibly say to these people who have been ambassadors, high government officials, educators, professionals, and leaders of gigantic enterprises? I don't even have my bachelor's degree yet" (though she subsequently received it in 2008).

Sister Cardon's mind continued racing: "I've got to think of something to say. No, I've got to find an excuse to leave." Then, in an instant, she thought, "I'm going to pray."

She said a silent, earnest prayer, pleading with the Lord for His help



and direction. In that moment, a voice came into her mind with perfect clarity. It said, “Debbie, who in this room has achieved more important things in this life or has had more amazing experiences than you? You are a mother in Zion. You have brought eight children into this world. Those who are of age are happily married and are having children of their own. What is more important than that? Debbie, get up and tell these people with power what you have done.”

At that moment, the microphone was passed to our table. I had seen Sister Cardon shifting in her chair and looking a bit uneasy, so I extended my hand to take the microphone, thinking to give her additional time to prepare herself. Imagine my surprise when her hand stretched out in front of mine and literally grabbed the microphone.

She confidently stood, and with an elegance difficult to describe, she said, “A few years ago I accompanied my husband here to the Harvard Kennedy School. And my most important achievement is that I am the mother of 8 children and the grandmother of 18 grandchildren” (the number of grandchildren at the time).

With that statement, spontaneous applause erupted in the room. It was the only applause of the entire evening. Sister Cardon shared a few



**FAITH: THE BROTHER OF JARED**



**KNOWLEDGE: ABRAHAM**



**PATIENCE: JOSEPH SMITH**



**BROTHERLY KINDNESS: NEPHI**

***Thinking about an individual who managed to develop a divine attribute in his or her life provides a powerful example that may assist us in our efforts to do the same. Consider, for example, the attributes associated with the prophets above.***

additional thoughts relating to the central, societal role of the family and the happiness found therein. Then she handed me the microphone and sat down. I stood and added simply, “I’m her husband.”

The significance of what the Lord did through Sister Cardon was evidenced by the fact that for the remainder of the evening we were inundated with questions about families, children, and marital harmony—subjects eminently more important than anything else that had been addressed. Because Sister Cardon had earnestly sought direction from the Spirit and had exercised the faith and courage to respond to what she was told, the Lord had magnified her in a powerful way in furthering His purposes.

I desire to share some thoughts about such experiences, with a prayer that you will come to understand more fully what it means to be a man or a woman of God, and to invite you to become a man or a woman of God.

### **Examples from the Prophets**

The appellation “man of God” is used in scripture to describe Moses (see Deuteronomy 33:1; Joshua 14:6), Samuel (see 1 Samuel 9:6–10), Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:24), Elisha (see 2 Kings 4:7; 5:8), Abinadi (see Mosiah 7:26), Alma and his sons (see Alma 2:30; 48:18), Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah (see Alma 48:18), Captain Moroni (see Alma 48:18), and Nephi the son of Helaman (see Helaman 11:8,

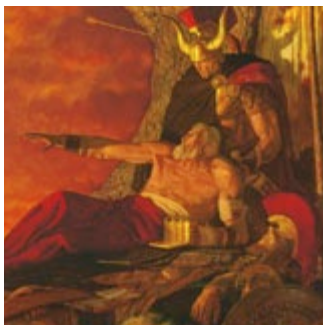
18). Although not found in the scriptures, the companion appellation “woman of God” would accurately describe women such as Sarah, Ruth, Deborah, Sariah, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene.

If we desire to become men and women of God, we might ask, “What are the attributes of a man or a woman of God?” Certainly, such attributes mirror the attributes of Deity. A listing of some of these attributes appears in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence” (D&C 4:6).

To give these attributes greater contextual meaning, have you ever attempted to associate an individual with each attribute? Thinking about an individual who struggled with the vicissitudes of life but managed to develop a divine attribute in his or her life provides a powerful example that may assist us in our efforts to do the same. Consider the following examples.

For the attribute of *faith*, consider the brother of Jared. Notwithstanding he was “chastened . . . because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord,” yet he “repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord” (Ether 2:14–15).

As he prayed regularly, the brother of Jared was directed in his work. When a matter arose in which he needed further direction, the Lord invited him to find a



CHARITY: MORMON



DILIGENCE: PRESIDENT  
THOMAS S. MONSON

solution. This he did, taking 16 small molten stones to the Lord to ask for something that only the Lord could do. In deep humility, he asked the Lord to “touch [the] stones” (Ether 3:4). The brother of Jared then saw the premortal Savior “because of [his] faith.” The Lord told him, “Never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast” (Ether 3:9).

When I think of *knowledge*, I think of Abraham, who “sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same; having been [himself] a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, . . . and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, [he] became a rightful heir” (Abraham 1:2).

Many prophets have endured difficult things that have imbued them with *patience*. I think of Joseph Smith and his words from Liberty Jail, which are perhaps most emblematic: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”

The Lord responded:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes” (D&C 121:1, 7–8).

For *brotherly kindness*, there could be no greater example than Nephi, whose older brothers bound him “with cords, for they sought to take away [his] life.” Through his exercise of faith, the cords were loosed from his hands and feet. His brothers eventually became “sorrowful, because of their wickedness.” Evidencing great brotherly kindness, Nephi simply records, “I did frankly forgive them” (see 1 Nephi 7:16–21).

For *charity*, consider Mormon. From the heart of this faithful prophet and valiant military leader who prepared the sacred book of scripture that bears his name comes this counterintuitive yet remarkably inspired counsel to his people, who were then immersed in despair and destruction:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (Moroni 7:46–47).

For all who know President Thomas S. Monson, his life is synonymous with duty and *diligence*. His very being defines diligence. He said:

“I love and cherish the noble word *duty* and all that it implies.

“. . . Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you, to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere: ‘Wherefore, now let every man learn his *duty*, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.’ [D&C 107:99; emphasis added.]”<sup>1</sup>

Like these men of God, we can develop divine attributes in our own lives.

### Doing the Will of the Father

Having considered the attributes of Deity, we are led to the essential, central question: what is the defining characteristic of men and women of God? Consider the following:

- Men and women of God understand the plan of the Father.

- They understand the will of the Father in accomplishing His plan.
- They do the will of the Father.

This defining characteristic—doing the will of the Father—may be developed, refined, and strengthened in our lives, but it takes effort. As you consider your own circumstances, the following statements may provide a helpful guide to making this characteristic a part of you, even defining who you are:

- An understanding of the Father’s plan comes from studying and pondering the word of God, from prayer, and from life’s experiences.
- An understanding of the will of the Father in accomplishing His plan comes from recognizing the “[Lord’s] voice, even the voice of [His] Spirit” (D&C 97:1).
- A conviction to do the will of the Father comes from exercising faith to follow the direction given by the Spirit.

As in all righteous endeavors, the Savior is our great Exemplar. Consider His thought-provoking question and loving invitation to his disciples in the land of Bountiful: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). Now consider the following examples from the many found in the Savior’s life and teachings.

Understanding the Father’s plan, the Savior took the initiative at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, knowing full well the consequences that would follow. Knowing the will of the Father in accomplishing that plan, the Savior saw a man who had been an invalid for 38 years and asked him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6).



As the man explained his futile attempts at receiving a blessing in the pool, “Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5:8). When the Jews learned that Jesus had performed the miracle, they “sought to slay him” (John 5:16). In this setting, Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). That pattern is characteristic of a man or woman of God.

***Learning and following the Father’s will, as the Savior exemplified during His earthly ministry, is characteristic of a man or woman of God.***

Later in His ministry, at the synagogue in Capernaum, the Savior gave what is perhaps the most succinct expression of this divine characteristic as He taught the people and the Jewish leaders, saying, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38).

In terms of our own personal conversion, it is worth considering carefully the significance of the similar words the Savior used to define His gospel to his disciples in the land of Bountiful: “Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me” (3 Nephi 27:13).

### Remembering Who You Are

Jesus also exemplifies a final element I would like to address in becoming men and women of God. Jesus knew who He was and that His Father had given Him a mission to accomplish. He knew that His Father had sent Him. Similarly, a man or a woman of God knows and remembers who he or she is and that God has a work for him or her to do.

Note, however, that men and women of God must first become sons and daughters of Christ, being born of Him. King Benjamin said, “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

The Lord wants you to know that you are children of the covenant. You are part of a

grand design, which is our Heavenly Father’s plan. And He wants you to remember that as you live faithfully, you are the means whereby the families of the earth are blessed and the Lord’s purposes are realized (see 3 Nephi 20:25).

I invite you to be men and women of God. You do this by continuing along the path on which you have set your feet. As Nephi said, “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

In your efforts, you may look to the prophets for guidance, and you will find in Christ the perfect example.

May each of you develop the attributes of Deity in your personal life.

May each of you do the will of the Father, making this the defining characteristic of your life. You will be able to do so as you study and pray, experience life, come to recognize the voice of the Spirit, and exercise your faith in following that voice, just as Sister Cardon did.

And may each of you remember who you really are, what God expects of you, and that He has a mission for you to accomplish. I hope you all become men and women of God, that He may eventually say of you, as He said of Joseph Smith, “I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work” (2 Nephi 3:8). ■

*Excerpted from a devotional address given at Brigham Young University—Idaho on June 19, 2012. For the full address, visit [web.byui.edu/devotionalsand speeches](http://web.byui.edu/devotionalsand speeches).*

#### NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Willing and Worthy to Serve,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 66.

## ANSWERING QUESTIONS

### What does it mean for us to be sons and daughters of God?

“Seen in its true light, the doctrine of the Father and the Son is the doctrine of the eternal family. Every human being has existed previously as a spirit child with heavenly parents, with Christ being the Firstborn of the Father in this heavenly family.

“So it is with all of us. We are the children of our Heavenly Father. . . .

“. . . I bear my solemn witness and testimony of the reality, nearness, and goodness of our Eternal Father and His holy Son, Jesus Christ.”

Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. of the Seventy, “The Father and the Son,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 101.