



By Elder Don R. Clarke
Of the Seventy

Blessings of the Sacrament

We will be blessed as we feel gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, renew our baptismal covenants, feel forgiveness, and receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

I grew up in Rexburg, Idaho, where I was influenced and taught by a wonderful family, friends, teachers, and leaders. There are special experiences in the lives of all of us that touch our souls and make things different forever. One such experience happened in my youth. This experience transformed my life.

I was always active in the Church and progressed through the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was a teenager, Brother Jacob, my teacher, asked that I write down on a card what I had thought about during the sacrament. I took my card and began to write. First on the list was a basketball game we had won the night before. And then came a date after the game, and so went the list. Far removed and certainly not in bold letters was the name of Jesus Christ.

Each Sunday the card was filled out. For a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, the sacrament and sacrament meeting took on a new, expanded, and spiritual meaning. I anxiously looked forward to Sundays and to the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as understanding the Savior's

Atonement was changing me. Every Sunday to this day, as I partake of the sacrament, I can see my card and review my list. Always on my list now, first of all, is the Savior of mankind.

In the New Testament we read of the time that the Savior and His Apostles met in an upper room for the Feast of the Passover.

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me.*”

“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, *which is shed for you.*”¹

Jesus also instituted the ordinance of the sacrament during His visit to the Nephites.² I have come to know the importance of these two events.

President David O. McKay said, “I feel impressed to emphasize what the Lord has designated as the most important meeting in the Church, and that is the sacrament meeting.”³ If we properly prepare for the sacrament, we can transform our lives. I would like to suggest five principles that can bless our lives as we partake of the sacrament worthily.

I. Have a Feeling of Gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ

The first principle is to have a feeling of gratitude to Heavenly Father during the sacrament for the Atonement of His Son. The following story is told about passing the sacrament:

“The sacrament never really meant much to me until the Sunday I was ordained a deacon. That afternoon I passed the sacrament for the first time. Prior to the meeting, one of the deacons warned me, ‘Look out for Brother Schmidt. You may have to wake him up!’ Finally the time came for me to participate in the passing of the sacrament. I handled the first six rows quite well. Children and adults partook of the bread with no noticeable thought or problem. Then I got to row seven, the row where Brother Schmidt always sat. But I was surprised. Instead of being asleep he was wide awake. Unlike many of the others I had served, he took the bread with what seemed to be great thought and reverence.

“A few minutes later I found myself again approaching row seven with the water. This time my friend was right. Brother Schmidt sat with his head bowed and his big German eyes shut. He was evidently sound asleep. What could I do or say? I looked for a moment at his brow, wrinkled and worn from years of toil and hardship. He had joined the Church as a teenager and had experienced much persecution in his small German town. I had heard the story many times in testimony meeting. I decided finally to gently nudge his shoulder in hopes of waking him. As I reached to do so, his head slowly lifted. There were tears streaming down his cheeks and as I looked into his eyes I saw love and joy. He quietly reached up and took the water. Even though I was only twelve then, I can still remember vividly the



feeling I had as I watched this rugged old man partake of the sacrament. I knew without a doubt that he was feeling something about the sacrament that I had never felt. I determined then that I wanted to feel those same feelings.”⁴

Brother Schmidt had communicated with heaven, and heaven had communicated with him.

II. Remember That We Are Renewing Baptismal Covenants

The second principle is to remember that we are renewing our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament. Some of the promises that we make, as recorded in the scriptures, include:

“Come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . to bear one another’s burdens, . . . to mourn with those that mourn . . . , and to stand as witnesses of God.”⁵

“Come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, . . . willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end,”⁶ and to keep His commandments and always remember Him.⁷

The sacramental prayers are a reminder of these covenants. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew our commitment to live up to these

covenants. I believe it would be appropriate to memorize the sacramental prayers in our minds and in our hearts. This will help us focus on renewing our baptismal covenants. Whether we were 8 or 80 years old when we were baptized, I hope we will never forget that day and the covenants we made.

III. During the Sacrament We Can Feel Forgiveness of Our Sins

Thirdly, during the sacrament we can feel forgiveness of our sins. If we have spent time before sacrament meeting repenting of our sins, we can leave sacrament meeting feeling clean and pure. President Boyd K. Packer said: “The sacrament renews the process of forgiveness. Every Sunday when the sacrament is served, that is a ceremony to renew the process of forgiveness. . . . Every Sunday you cleanse yourself so that, in due time, when you die your spirit will be clean.”⁸ Partaking of the sacrament worthily can help us feel like the people of King Benjamin, who “were *filled with joy*, having received a *remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience*.”⁹

IV. We Can Receive Inspiration for Solutions to Our Problems

The fourth principle is that we can receive inspiration for solutions

to our problems during sacrament meeting. When I was a mission president in Bolivia, my wife, Mary Anne, and I had the blessing of attending a mission presidents’ seminar with President Henry B. Eyring. In that meeting he taught that there are three important ways to prepare to benefit from a meeting. We should come with our problems, humble as children ready to learn, and with the desire to help God’s children.

As we humbly come to sacrament meeting, we can be blessed to feel impressions for solutions to our daily problems. We must come prepared, be willing to listen, and not be distracted. In the scriptures we read, “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must *study it out* in your mind; then you must *ask me if it be right*, and if it is right I will cause that your *bosom shall burn* within you; therefore, *you shall feel that it is right*.”¹⁰ We can know what we should do to solve our problems.

V. Partaking of the Sacrament Worthily Will Help Us Be Filled with the Holy Ghost

The fifth principle, partaking of the sacrament worthily, will help us be filled with the Holy Ghost. Upon instituting the sacrament during His visit to the Nephites, Jesus stated, “He that

eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.”¹¹ They had been promised that if they hungered and thirsted after righteousness, they would be filled with the Holy Ghost. The sacramental prayer also promises that if we live up to our covenants, we will always have His Spirit to be with us.¹²

Elder Melvin J. Ballard said: “I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food.”¹³

We will be blessed as we feel gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, renew our baptismal covenants, feel forgiveness, and receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost as we partake of the sacrament each week. It will always be a great sacrament meeting if the sacrament is the center of our worship. I express my gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I know He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 22:19–20; emphasis added.
2. See 3 Nephi 18.
3. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 11.
4. *Book of Mormon Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 1979), 417.
5. Mosiah 18:8–9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
8. Boyd K. Packer, *Mine Errand from the Lord* (2008), 196.
9. Mosiah 4:3; emphasis added.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8; emphasis added.
11. 3 Nephi 20:8.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
13. Melvin J. Ballard, in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (1949), 149.



By Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Converted unto the Lord

*Knowing that the gospel is true is the essence of a testimony.
Consistently being true to the gospel is the essence of conversion.*

My message focuses upon the relationship between receiving a testimony that Jesus is the Christ and becoming converted to Him and His gospel. Typically, we treat the topics of testimony and conversion separately and independently. However, we gain precious perspective and greater spiritual conviction as we consider these two important subjects together.

I pray the Holy Ghost will instruct and edify each of us.

Whom Say Ye That I Am?

We can learn much about testimony and conversion from the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

As Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He posed this penetrating question to His disciples: “Whom say ye that I am?”

Peter responded forthrightly:

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:15–17).

As is evidenced in Peter’s reply and the Savior’s instruction, a testimony is personal knowledge of spiritual truth obtained by revelation. A testimony is a gift from God and is available to all

of His children. Any honest seeker of truth can obtain a testimony by exercising the necessary “particle of faith” in Jesus Christ to “experiment upon” (Alma 32:27) and “try the virtue of the word” (Alma 31:5), to yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19), and to awaken unto God (see Alma 5:7). Testimony brings increased personal accountability and is a source of purpose, assurance, and joy.

Seeking for and obtaining a testimony of spiritual truth requires asking, seeking, and knocking (see Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7) with a sincere heart, real intent, and faith in the Savior (see Moroni 10:4). Fundamental components of a testimony are knowing that Heavenly Father lives and loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that the fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth in these latter days.

When Thou Art Converted

As the Savior taught His disciples at the Last Supper, He said to Peter:

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to . . . sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31–32).

Interestingly, this mighty Apostle had talked and walked with the