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Lest Thou Forget

I encourage you to recall, especially in times of crisis, when you felt the Spirit and your testimony was strong; remember the spiritual foundations you have built.

Good afternoon, dear brothers and sisters. How blessed we have been during this conference. My first year as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been most humbling. It has been a year of stretching, growth, and earnest, ever-present petitions to my Father in Heaven. I have felt the sustaining prayers of family, friends, and Church members all around the globe. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.

I have also had the privilege of meeting with cherished friends, some from years past and many I have met recently. It was after a meeting with a dear friend that I have known and loved for many years that I felt impressed to prepare my remarks today.

When we met, my friend confided that he had been struggling. He felt he was experiencing, to use his words, a “crisis of faith” and sought my counsel. I felt grateful that he would share his feelings and concerns with me.

He expressed a great longing for what he had once felt spiritually and what he now thought he was losing. As he spoke, I listened carefully and prayed earnestly to know what the Lord would have me say.

My friend, like perhaps some of you, asked the question so poignantly phrased in the Primary song: “Heavenly Father, are you really there?”¹ For those of you who may be asking this same question, I would like to share with you the counsel I would offer to my friend and hope that each of you may find your faith strengthened and your resolve renewed to be a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

I begin by reminding you that you are a son or daughter of a loving Father

in Heaven and that His love remains constant. I know that such reassuring feelings of love are difficult to recall when you are in the midst of personal struggles or trials, disappointments, or broken dreams.

Jesus Christ knows about fierce struggles and trials. He gave His life for us. His final hours were brutal, beyond anything we can even comprehend, but His sacrifice for each one of us was the ultimate expression of His pure love.

No mistake, sin, or choice will change God’s love for us. That does not mean sinful conduct is condoned, nor does it remove our obligation to repent when sins are committed. But *do not forget*, Heavenly Father knows and loves each of you, and He is always ready to help.

As I pondered my friend’s situation, my mind reflected on the great wisdom found in the Book of Mormon: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall





send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”²

I testify that “the gulf of misery and endless wo” is a place no one wants to be. And my friend was feeling that he was on the edge.

When I have counseled individuals such as my friend, I have explored their decisions made over the years which led them to forget sacred experiences, to weaken, and to doubt. I encouraged them, as I encourage you now, to recall, especially in times of crisis, when you felt the Spirit and your testimony was strong; remember the spiritual foundations you have built. I promise that if you will do this, avoiding things that do not build and strengthen your testimony or that mock your beliefs, those precious times when your testimony prospered will return again to your memory through humble prayer and fasting. I assure you that you will once again feel the safety and warmth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each of us must first strengthen ourselves spiritually and then strengthen

those around us. Ponder the scriptures regularly, and remember the thoughts and feelings you experience as you read them. Seek other sources of truth as well, but heed this caution from the scriptures: “But to be learned is good *if* they hearken unto the counsels of God.”³ Attend Church meetings, especially sacrament meeting, and partake of the sacrament and renew covenants, including the promise to always remember the Savior, that His Spirit may ever be with you.

No matter what mistakes we have made or how imperfect we feel we are, we can always bless and lift others. Reaching out to them in Christlike service can help us feel the love of God deep within our hearts.

It is important to remember the powerful counsel found in Deuteronomy: “Keep thy soul diligently, *lest thou forget* the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.”⁴

Generations are affected by the choices we make. Share your testimony with your family; encourage them to remember how they felt when they recognized the Spirit in their lives and to record those feelings in journals and personal histories so that their own words may, when needed, bring to their remembrance how good the Lord has been to them.

You will recall that Nephi and his brothers returned to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates that contained the recorded history of their people, in part so that they would not forget their past.

Also, in the Book of Mormon, Helaman named his sons after their “first fathers” so they would not forget the goodness of the Lord:

“Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God. . . . Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.

“Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them.”⁵

Many today have the same tradition of naming their children after scriptural heroes or faithful ancestors as a way of encouraging them not to forget their heritage.

When I was born, I was given the name of Ronald A. Rasband. My last name honors my father’s ancestral line. The middle initial *A* was given to me to remind me to honor my mother’s Danish Anderson ancestry.

My great-great-grandfather Jens Anderson was from Denmark. And in 1861 the Lord led two Mormon missionaries to the Jens and Ane Cathrine Anderson home, where the missionaries introduced them and their 16-year-old son, Andrew, to the restored gospel. Thus began a legacy of faith of which my family and I are the beneficiaries. The Andersons read the

Book of Mormon and were baptized a short time later. The following year, the Anderson family heeded the call of a prophet to cross the Atlantic to join the Saints in North America.

Sadly, Jens died on the ocean voyage, but his wife and son continued to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving on September 3, 1862. Despite their hardships and their heartaches, their faith never wavered, and neither has the faith of many of their descendants.

In my office hangs a painting⁶ that captures so beautifully a symbolic reminder of that first meeting between my ancestors and those dedicated early missionaries. I am determined not to forget my heritage, and because of my name I will forever remember their legacy of faithfulness and sacrifice.

Never forget, question, or ignore personal, sacred spiritual experiences. The adversary's design is to distract us from spiritual witnesses, while the Lord's desire is to enlighten and engage us in His work.

Let me share a personal example of this truth. I distinctly recall a time when I received a prompting in answer to mighty prayer. The answer was clear and powerful. However, I failed to act immediately on the prompting, and after a period of time I began to



Elder Rasband calls this painting “a symbolic reminder” of the first meeting between his ancestors and early Mormon missionaries.

wonder if what I had felt had been real. Some of you may have fallen for that deception of the adversary as well.

Several days later, I awoke with these powerful verses of scripture in my mind:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart. . . .

“Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?”⁷

It was as if the Lord was saying, “Now, Ronald, I already told you what you needed to do. Now do it!” How grateful I was for that loving correction and direction! I was immediately comforted by the prompting and was able to move forward, knowing in my heart that my prayer had been answered.

I share this experience, dear brothers and sisters, to demonstrate how quickly our minds can forget and how spiritual experiences guide us. I have learned to cherish such moments “lest I forget.”

To my friend, and to all who wish to bolster their faith, I give you this promise: as you faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ and abide by its teachings, your testimony will be protected and it will grow. Keep the covenants you have made, regardless of the actions of those around you. Be diligent parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who strengthen loved ones with personal testimony and who share spiritual experiences. Remain faithful and steadfast, even if storms of doubt invade your lives through the actions of others. Seek that which will edify and fortify you spiritually. Avoid counterfeit offerings of so-called “truths” which are so pervasive, and remember to record your feelings of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”⁸

In the midst of life's greatest storms, *do not forget* your divine heritage as a son or daughter of God or your eternal destiny to one day return to live with Him, which will surpass anything the world has to offer. Remember the tender and sweet words of Alma: “Behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”⁹

To all who feel the need to have their faith fortified, I plead with you, *do not forget!* Please do not forget.

I bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know he saw and talked with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, just as he recorded in his own words. How grateful I am that he *did not forget* to write of that experience, that we may all know of his testimony.

I bear my solemn witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives; I know He lives and stands at the head of this Church. These things I know for myself, independent of any other voice or witness, and I pray that you and I will *never forget* sacred eternal truths—first and foremost that we are sons and daughters of living and loving Heavenly Parents, who desire only our eternal happiness. Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12.
2. Helaman 5:12.
3. 2 Nephi 9:29; emphasis added.
4. Deuteronomy 4:9; emphasis added.
5. Helaman 5:6–7.
6. The original painting was created by Christen Dalsgaard in 1856. The painting in my office is a copy created by Arnold Friberg in 1964.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–23.
8. Galatians 5:22–23.
9. Alma 5:26.