

# IN THE LORD'S HANDS



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*We all have the potential to become beautiful works of art in the Lord's hands.*

I am certain you have heard of Michelangelo, the Italian sculptor. Besides being a sculptor, he was a painter, a poet, and an architect, and he is considered one of the foremost artists of Western civilization.

One of his most famous sculptures is called the *Pietà*. This statue portrays Mary, the mother of Jesus, seated with Jesus Christ lying in her arms after He was crucified. It depicts Mary's profound sadness and the physical and emotional suffering Jesus accumulated after taking upon Him the sins of the world and being nailed to the cross.

I had the privilege of viewing this sculpture during a visit to Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. I was impressed to learn that Michelangelo used basically two main tools to accomplish his works of art: a hammer and a chisel. It is truly incredible

that he could create such an enormous and beautiful work of art from a piece of raw marble using these two tools.

When I think about the works he produced and the results he achieved, I think about the wonderful plan of love our Heavenly Father developed in consideration for each of us and for what He hoped we might become when He sent us here to earth.

Figuratively, we all have the potential to become beautiful works of art in the Lord's hands. In this sense, He is the sculptor and He is able to mold us through our experiences day by day. If we allow the Lord to shape us, we can turn our lives in the direction of God and become like Him, and the result will be wonderful.





## Hold to the Iron Rod

Without question, this world offers many distractions that can pull our focus away from the primary reason we are living here on this earth. These distractions can turn into detours in our lives that prevent us from being transformed into works of art.

In Lehi's vision about the tree of life, Lehi saw a tree "whose fruit was desirable

to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10). He also saw a straight and narrow path alongside an iron rod that led to the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:19–20). A dense mist of darkness covered the path leading to the tree of life. Because of this mist, several people who had started along the path to the tree of life wandered away from it and became lost (see 1 Nephi 8:22–23).

Nephi explained that "the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Nephi 12:17). Here we find the primary weapon the enemy uses to distract us: temptation.

Nephi explained to his brothers that the only weapon we have to avoid this distraction is to hold onto the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 15:24–25).

"And I said unto them that it [the iron rod] was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:24).

## The Light of Christ

There is a simple formula that President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) often quoted that can help us avoid the



MINERVA TEICHERT (1888–1976), *THE HOUSE OF THE WORLD*, 1949–1951, OIL ON MASONITE, 36 X 48 INCHES, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART, 1969.

# ALLOW THE LORD TO MOLD AND TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE INTO YOUR POTENTIAL.

distraction of temptation and keep us moving in the right direction. He said, “You can’t be right by doing wrong, and you can’t be wrong by doing right.”<sup>1</sup>

President Monson’s formula is simple and direct. If we exercise faith and are diligent in obeying the commandments of the Lord, we will easily find the right way to go when we face daily small choices.

We are able to find the right way because our Heavenly Father has given us the Light of Christ. The Light of Christ is the divine energy, power, or influence that proceeds from God through Christ and gives life and light to all things. It helps a person choose between right and wrong. This wonderful gift helps us identify what is right, and the Holy Ghost testifies of the truth and helps guide our decisions on which path to follow. These two gifts are available to help to guide our lives in the Lord’s direction.

## The Blessing of Repentance

Let us imagine that for some reason we have been deceived or confused by temptation and we end up sinning. What should we do? If we fall into temptation and sin, we have to reconcile ourselves with God. In the language of the scriptures, this means we must repent.

I like very much what Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about repentance:

“When we sin, we turn away from God. When we repent, we turn back toward God.

“The invitation to repent is rarely a voice of chastisement but rather a loving appeal to turn around and to ‘re-turn’ toward God [see Helaman 7:17]. It is the beckoning of a loving Father and His Only Begotten Son to be more than we are, to reach up to a higher way of life, to change, and to feel the happiness of keeping the commandments. Being disciples of Christ, we rejoice in the blessing of repenting and the joy of being forgiven. They become part of us, shaping the way we think and feel.”<sup>2</sup>

My dear young people, repentance is a wonderful gift that is available to all who desire to return to God. It is available to those who have the desire to hold onto the iron rod and allow the Lord to shape their lives into wonderful works of art.

## Shaping Our Souls Each Day

We were born with the seed of divinity in our spirits because we are God’s children. This seed needs to grow. It develops as we use our agency in righteousness, as

we make correct decisions, and as we use the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost to guide us in the decisions we make during the course of our lives. In this way we shape our spirits so that they become admirable works of art.

Our choices shape our souls. Recognizing our dedication and perseverance, the Lord will give us what we are unable to obtain by ourselves. He will shape us because He sees our efforts to overcome our imperfections and human weaknesses.

My invitation is for all of us to allow the Lord to mold and transform our lives into our potential—into that which our Heavenly Father has planned for us.

Let us understand our eternal perspective and turn our lives into beautiful works of art that were planned by a loving Heavenly Father who developed a plan of redemption so that we could return to His presence. **NE**

*From a Brigham Young University devotional address given on November 5, 2013.*

## NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “In Harm’s Way,” Apr. 1998 general conference.
2. Neil L. Andersen, Oct. 2009 general conference.