



APOSTLES SPEAK TO US



THE KEY TO SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

"When I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with feelings of positive optimism. . . .

"The scriptures hold the keys to spiritual protection. They contain the doctrine and laws and ordinances

that will bring each child of God to a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer. . . .

"Make scripture reading a part of your regular routine, and the blessings will follow. There is in the scriptures a voice of warning, but there is also great nourishment.

"If the language of the scriptures at first seems strange to you, keep reading. Soon you will come to recognize the beauty and power found on those pages. . . .

"The gospel teaches us to be happy, to have faith rather than fear, to find hope and overcome despair, to leave darkness and turn toward the light of the everlasting gospel.

"Paul and others warned about the trials of our time and the days yet to come. But peace can be settled in the heart of each who turns to the scriptures and unlocks the promises of protection and redemption that are taught therein. We invite all to turn to the Savior Jesus Christ, to His teachings as found in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



THE DOCTRINES AND PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

"The scriptures guide us to a standard of truth by which we can judge the knowledge we are receiving, whether it be true or false. True doctrine comes

from God, the source and foundation of all truths. The teachings and concepts of true doctrine are found in the gospel of our Lord and Savior. False teachings come from Satan, the father of all lies. His desire is to pervert, change, and alter revealed truths. He wants to deceive us so some of us will lose our way along the journey back to our heavenly home.

"The scriptures teach us how to avoid false teachings. For example, [see] 2 Timothy 3:16–17. . . .

". . . Use your bright minds to study and learn the Articles of Faith and the doctrines they teach. They are among the most important and certainly the most concise statements of doctrine in the Church. If you will use them as a guide to direct your studies of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself prepared to declare your witness of the restored truth to the world. You will be able to declare in simple, straightforward, and profound ways the core beliefs you hold dear as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"I add my testimony to the truthfulness of the thirteen Articles of Faith."

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



"It was comforting to be reminded that no matter what, I can build my testimony and obey Christ. It doesn't matter what changes in life—Christ will not change and will not leave us. We just have to decide to follow Him. That is the one choice that will bring eternal happiness."

Jessica T., 18, California, USA



DECISIONS FOR ETERNITY

"We can change our behavior. Our very desires can change. How? There is only one way. True change—permanent change—can come only through the healing, cleansing, and enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He loves you—each of you! He allows you to access His power as you keep His commandments, eagerly, earnestly, and exactly. It is that simple and certain. The gospel of Jesus Christ *is* a gospel of change! . . .

"While we are to emulate our Savior's kindness and compassion, while we are to value the rights and feelings of all of God's children, we cannot change His doctrine. It is not ours to change. His doctrine is ours to study, understand, and uphold.

". . . His way includes chastity before marriage and total fidelity within marriage. The Lord's way is the only way for us to experience enduring happiness. His way brings sustained comfort to our souls and perennial peace to our homes. And best of all, His way leads us home to Him and our Heavenly Father, to eternal life and exaltation.

". . . Each day is a day of decision, and our decisions determine our destiny. One day each of us will stand before the Lord in judgment. We will each have a personal interview with Jesus Christ. We will account for decisions that we made about our bodies, our spiritual attributes, and how we honored God's pattern for marriage and family."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



NO OTHER GODS

"The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God's plan. Outside the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman, all uses of our procreative powers are to one degree or another sinful and contrary to God's plan for the exaltation of His children. . . .

"There are many political and social pressures for legal and policy changes to establish behaviors contrary to God's decrees about sexual morality and contrary to the eternal nature and purposes of marriage and childbearing. These pressures have already authorized same-gender marriages in various states and nations. Other pressures would confuse gender or homogenize those differences between men and women that are essential to accomplish God's great plan of happiness.

"Our understanding of God's plan and His doctrine gives us an eternal perspective that does not allow us to condone such behaviors or to find justification in the laws that permit them. And, unlike other organizations that can change their policies and even their doctrines, our policies are determined by the truths God has identified as unchangeable. . . .

"In this determination we may be misunderstood, and we may incur accusations of bigotry, suffer discrimination, or have to withstand invasions of our free exercise of religion. If so, I think we should remember our first priority—to serve God."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



PUT YOUR TRUST IN THE LORD

"Fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities. Then, we must

demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father's children, and surely those opportunities will come. These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. Just be positive, and those whom you speak with will feel your love. They will never forget that feeling, though the timing may not be right for them to embrace the gospel. . . .

". . . I pray that none of you would ever feel that reaching out in normal, pleasant ways to share the gospel would ever be a burden. Rather, it is a privilege! There is no greater joy in life than being anxiously engaged in the service of the Lord.

"The key is that you be inspired of God, that you ask Him for direction and then go and do as the Spirit prompts you. When members view the work of salvation as their responsibility alone, it can be intimidating. When they view it as an invitation to follow the Lord in bringing souls unto Him to be taught by the full-time elders and sisters, it is inspiring, invigorating, and uplifting."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



PERSONAL STRENGTH THROUGH THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

"Recently, . . . one virtuous young woman asked me what I feel is the most important thing they should be doing in their lives right now. I suggested they learn to recognize the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives. . . .

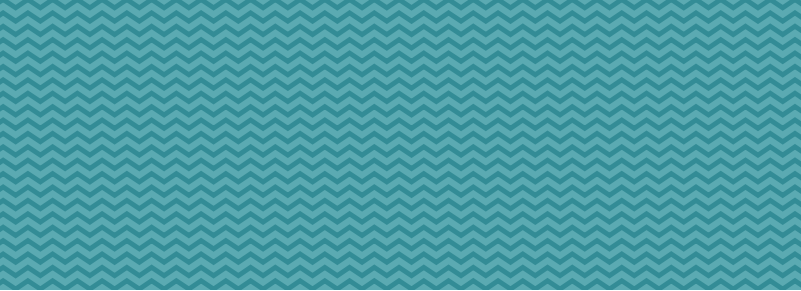
"It is a fundamental truth that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed. We can become virtuous and pure. However, sometimes our poor choices leave us with long-term consequences. One of the vital steps to complete repentance is to bear the short- and long-term consequences of our past sins. . . .

"Satan will try to use our memory of any previous guilt to lure us back into his influence. We must be ever vigilant to avoid his enticements. . . .

"The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of past poor choices is that the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy. . . .

". . . Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, each of us can become clean and the burden of our rebellion will be lifted. Remember, repentance is not punishment. It is the hope-filled path to a more glorious future."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



"The most important thing I learned is to never give up, because the Lord is on my side and will always help me."

Samuel J., 16, Upper Austria, Austria



GENERAL CONFERENCE: STRENGTHENING FAITH AND TESTIMONY

"When I take notes at conference, I do not always write down exactly what the speaker is saying; I note the personalized direction the Spirit is giving me.

"What is *said* is not as important as what we *hear* and what we *feel* . . .

" . . . The world is moving away from the Lord faster and farther than ever before. The adversary has been loosed upon the earth. We watch, hear, read, study, and share the words of prophets to be forewarned and protected. For example, 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World' was given long before we experienced the challenges now facing the family. 'The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles' was prepared in advance of when we will need it most. . . .

"The greatest blessings of general conference come to us after the conference is over. Remember the pattern recorded frequently in scripture: we gather to hear the words of the Lord, and we return to our homes to live them. . . .

"In addition to inviting us to hold personal and family scripture study, Heavenly Father wants us to regularly study and apply what we have learned in conference. I testify that those who put their trust in the Lord and heed this counsel in faith will gain great strength to bless themselves and their families for generations to come."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

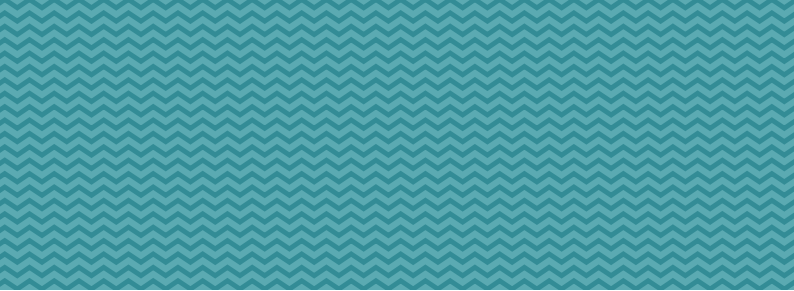


LIKE A BROKEN VESSEL

"How do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love? Above all, never lose faith in your Father in Heaven, who loves you more than you can comprehend. As President Monson said to the Relief Society sisters so movingly last Saturday evening: 'That love never changes. . . . It is there for you when you are sad or happy, discouraged or hopeful. God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve [it]. It is simply always there' ['We Never Walk Alone,' *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 123–24]. Never, ever doubt that, and never harden your heart. Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Believe in miracles. I have seen so many of them come when every other indication would say that hope was lost. Hope is *never* lost. If those miracles do not come soon or fully or seemingly at all, remember the Savior's own anguished example: if the bitter cup does not pass, drink it and be strong, trusting in happier days ahead. . . .

"Also let us remember that through any illness or difficult challenge, there is still much in life to be hopeful about and grateful for. We are infinitely more than our limitations or our afflictions!"

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



"My testimony of the need to live ALL of the standards of the Church, especially those very basic habits of prayer, scripture study, and paying tithing, has been greatly strengthened. I know where I want to be in the eternities, and I am willing to do what it takes to get there."

Taylor A., 13, Utah, USA



THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

"As we live the law of tithing, we often receive significant but subtle blessings that are not always what we expect and easily can be overlooked. . . .

"Often as we teach and testify about the law of tithing, we emphasize the immediate, dramatic, and readily recognizable temporal blessings that we receive. And surely such blessings do occur. Yet some of the diverse blessings we obtain as we are obedient to this commandment are significant but subtle. Such blessings can be discerned only if we are both spiritually attentive and observant (see 1 Corinthians 2:14). . . .

"For example, a subtle but significant blessing we receive is the spiritual gift of gratitude that enables our appreciation for what we have to constrain desires for what we want. A grateful person is rich in contentment. An ungrateful person suffers in the poverty of endless discontentment (see Luke 12:15). . . .

"Sometimes we may ask God for success, and He gives us physical and mental stamina. We might plead for prosperity, and we receive enlarged perspective and increased patience, or we petition for growth and are blessed with the gift of grace. He may bestow upon us conviction and confidence as we strive to achieve worthy goals. And when we plead for relief from physical, mental, and spiritual difficulties, He may increase our resolve and resilience."

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



LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH: BEWARE OF BONDAGE

"God intended that men and women would be free to make choices between good and evil. . . .

". . . We should do everything within our power to avoid the sin and rebellion that lead to bondage. . . .

". . . Moral agency can be abused in many ways. I will mention four that are particularly pernicious in today's culture.

"First, addictions that impair agency, contradict moral beliefs, and destroy good health cause bondage. . . .

"Second, some addictions or predilections, while not inherently evil, can use up our precious allotment of time which could otherwise be used to accomplish virtuous objectives. These can include excessive use of social media, video and digital games, sports, recreation, and many others. . . .

"Third, the most universal subjugation in our day . . . is ideology or political beliefs that are inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Substituting the philosophies of men for gospel truth can lead us away from the simplicity of the Savior's message. . . .

". . . Gospel truths are often rejected or distorted to make them intellectually more appealing or more compatible with current cultural trends and intellectual philosophies. . . .

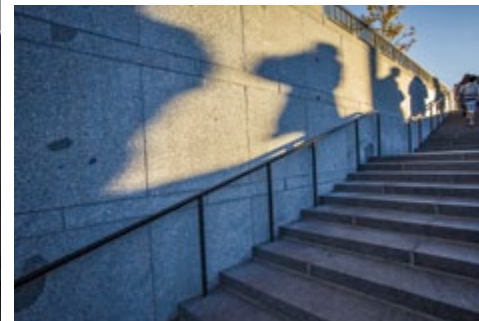
"Fourth, forces that violate sincerely held religious principles can result in bondage. . . . For example, health providers forced to choose between assisting with abortions against their consciences or losing their jobs."

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



"I felt reassurance and encouragement to keep working toward my goal of having an eternal family and staying home to teach and care for my future family."

Victoria G., 16, California, USA



THE MORAL FORCE OF WOMEN

"Certainly there are trends and forces at work that would weaken and even eliminate [a woman's] influence . . . Let me mention three as a caution and a warning.

"A pernicious philosophy that undermines women's moral influence is the devaluation of marriage and of motherhood and homemaking as a career. . . There is not a higher good than motherhood and fatherhood in marriage. There is no superior career, and no amount of money, authority, or public acclaim can exceed the ultimate rewards of family. . .

"Attitudes toward human sexuality threaten the moral authority of women on several fronts. Abortion for personal or social convenience strikes at the heart of a woman's most sacred powers and destroys her moral authority. The same is true of sexual immorality and of revealing dress that not only debases women but reinforces the lie that a woman's sexuality is what defines her worth. . .

"A third area of concern comes from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine. Often this takes the form of pushing women to adopt more masculine traits. . .

". . . In blurring feminine and masculine differences, we lose the distinct, complementary gifts of men and women. . .

"My plea to women and girls today is to protect and cultivate the moral force that is within you."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



POWER IN THE PRIESTHOOD

"We sometimes overly associate the power of the priesthood with men in the Church. The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women, and children.

"A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings. The blessings of the priesthood are infinitely greater than the one who is asked to administer the gift.

"To receive the blessings, power, and promises of the priesthood in this life and the next is one of the great opportunities and responsibilities of mortality. As we are worthy, the ordinances of the priesthood enrich our lives on earth and prepare us for the magnificent promises of the world ahead. The Lord said, 'In the ordinances . . . the power of godliness is manifest' [D&C 84:20].

"There are special blessings from God for every worthy person who is baptized, receives the Holy Ghost, and regularly partakes of the sacrament. The temple brings added light and strength, along with the promise of eternal life.

"All of the ordinances invite us to increase our faith in Jesus Christ and to make and keep covenants with God. As we keep these sacred covenants, we receive priesthood power and blessings.

"Do we not feel this power of the priesthood in our own lives and see it among the covenant-keeping members of the Church?"

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles