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Deep in Our Heart

The Lord is trying to help us—all of us—get His gospel deeper in our hearts.

Sisters and brothers, what a wonderful time we live in. As we celebrate the beginning of the Restoration, it is also appropriate to celebrate the ongoing Restoration that we are witnessing. I rejoice with you to live in this day.¹ The Lord continues to put in place, through His prophets, all that is needed to help us prepare to receive Him.²

One of those needed things is the new Children and Youth initiative. Many of you are familiar with this program’s emphasis on setting goals, new emblems of belonging, and For the Strength of Youth conferences. But we must not let those cloud our view of the principles the program is built on and their purpose: to help get the gospel of Jesus Christ deep in the hearts of our children and youth.³

I believe as we come to see these principles more clearly, we will recognize this as more than a program for members ages 8 to 18. We will see how the Lord is trying to help us—all of us—get His gospel deeper in our hearts. I pray the Holy Ghost will help us learn together.

Relationships—“Be with Them”⁴

The first principle is relationships. Because they are such a natural part of the Church of Jesus Christ, we sometimes forget the importance of relationships in our ongoing journey to Christ.

We are not expected to find or walk the covenant path alone. We need love and support from parents, other family members, friends, and leaders who are also walking the path.

These kinds of relationships take time. Time to be together. Time to laugh, play, learn, and serve together. Time to appreciate each other’s interests and challenges. Time to be open and honest with each other as we strive to be better together. These relationships are one of the primary purposes of gathering as families, quorums, classes, and congregations.

They are the foundation for effective ministering.⁵

Elder Dale G. Renlund gave us a key to developing these relationships when he said: “To effectively serve others we must see them . . . through Heavenly Father’s eyes. Only then can we begin to comprehend the true worth of a soul. Only then can we sense the love that Heavenly Father has for all His children.”⁶

Seeing others as God does is a gift. I invite all of us to seek for this gift. As our eyes are opened to see,⁷ we will also be able to help others see themselves as God does.⁸ President Henry B. Eyring emphasized the power of this when he said: “What will matter most is what [others] learn from [you] about who they really are and what they can really become. My guess is that they won’t learn it so much from lectures. They will get it from *feelings* of who you are, who you think they are, and what you think they might become.”⁹ Helping others understand their true identity





and purpose is one of the greatest gifts we can give.¹⁰ Seeing others and ourselves as God does knits our hearts “together in unity and in love.”¹¹

With ever-increasing secular forces pulling at us, we need the strength that comes from loving relationships. So as we plan activities, meetings, and other gatherings, let us remember an overarching purpose of these gatherings is to build loving relationships that unite us and help get the gospel of Jesus Christ deeper in our hearts.¹²

Revelation, Agency, and Repentance—“Connect Them with Heaven”¹³

Of course, it’s not enough just to be bound together. There are many groups and organizations that achieve unity around a variety of causes. But the unity we seek is to be one in Christ, to connect ourselves with Him.¹⁴ To connect our hearts with heaven, we need individual spiritual experiences, as Elder Andersen just eloquently spoke to us about.¹⁵ Those experiences come as the Holy Ghost carries the word and love of God to our mind and heart.¹⁶

This revelation comes through the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon; through inspired words of living prophets and other faithful disciples; and through the still, small voice.¹⁷ These words are more than ink on a page, sound waves in our ears, thoughts in our minds, or

feelings in our hearts. The word of God is spiritual power.¹⁸ It is truth and light.¹⁹ It is how we hear Him! The word initiates and increases our faith in Christ and fuels within us a desire to become more like the Savior—that is, to repent and walk the covenant path.²⁰

Last April, President Russell M. Nelson helped us understand the central role of repentance in this revelatory journey.²¹ He said: “When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. . . . We choose to become more like Jesus Christ!”²² This process of change, fueled by the word of God, is how we connect with heaven.

Underlying President Nelson’s invitation to repent is the principle of agency. We must *choose* repentance for ourselves. The gospel can’t be forced into our hearts. As Elder Renlund said, “Our Heavenly Father’s goal in parenting is not to have His children *do* what is right; it is to have His children *choose* to do what is right.”²³

In the programs replaced by Children and Youth, there were over 500 different requirements to complete in order to receive various recognitions.²⁴ Today, there is essentially one. It is an invitation to *choose* to become more like the Savior. We do this by receiving the word of God through the Holy Ghost and allowing

Christ to change us into the best version of ourselves.

This is far more than an exercise in goal setting or self-improvement. Goals are simply a tool that helps us connect with heaven through revelation, agency, and repentance—to come unto Christ and receive His gospel deeper in our hearts.

Engagement and Sacrifice—“Let Them Lead”²⁵

Finally, to get the gospel of Jesus Christ deep in our hearts, we need to engage in it—to give our time and talents to it, to sacrifice for it.²⁶ We all want to live a life of meaning, and this is especially true of the rising generation. They desire a cause.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest cause in the world. President Ezra Taft Benson said: “We are commanded by God to take this gospel to all the world. That is the cause that must unite us today. Only the gospel will save the world from the calamity of its own self-destruction. Only the gospel will unite men [and women] of all races and nationalities in peace. Only the gospel will bring joy, happiness, and salvation to the human family.”²⁷

Elder David A. Bednar promised, “As we empower the youth by inviting and allowing them to act, the Church will move forward in miraculous ways.”²⁸ Too often we have not invited and allowed the youth to sacrifice for this great cause of Christ. Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed, “If [our] youth are too underwhelmed [by God’s work], they are more likely to be overwhelmed by the world.”²⁹

The Children and Youth program focuses on empowering the youth. They choose their own goals. Quorum and class presidencies are

placed in their proper role. The ward youth council, just like the ward council, focuses on the work of salvation and exaltation.³⁰ And quorums and classes begin their meetings by counseling about how to do the work God has given them.³¹

President Nelson said to the youth of the Church: “If you choose to, if you want to, . . . you can be a big part of something big, something grand, something majestic! . . . You are among the best the Lord has *ever* sent to this world. You have the capacity to be smarter and wiser and have more impact on the world than any previous generation!”³² On another occasion, President Nelson told the youth: “I have complete confidence in you. I love you, and so does the Lord. We’re His people, engaged together in His holy work.”³³ Young people, can you feel the trust President Nelson has in you and how important you are to this work?

Parents and adult leaders, I invite you to see the youth as President Nelson does. As the youth feel your love and trust, as you encourage and teach them how to lead—and then get out of their way—they will amaze you with their insights, abilities, and commitment to the gospel.³⁴ They will

feel the joy of choosing to engage in and sacrifice for the cause of Christ. His gospel will get deeper into their hearts, and the work will move forward in miraculous ways.

Promise and Testimony

I promise, as we focus on these principles—relationships, revelation, agency, repentance, and sacrifice—the gospel of Jesus Christ will sink deeper in all our hearts. We will see the Restoration move forward to its ultimate purpose, the redemption of Israel and the establishment of Zion,³⁵ where Christ will reign as King of kings.

I testify that God continues to do all things necessary to prepare His people for that day. May we see His hand in this glorious work as we all strive to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”³⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:12.

President Nelson said: “Just think of the excitement and urgency of it all: every prophet commencing with Adam has seen our day. And every prophet has talked about *our* day, when Israel would be gathered and the world would be prepared for the Second Coming of the Savior. Think of it! Of all the people who have ever lived on planet earth, *we* are the ones who get to participate in this final, great gathering event. How exciting is that!” (“Hope of Israel” [worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018], HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

Elder Jeffrey R.

Holland taught:

“What a terrific time to be alive!

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is the most certain, the most secure, the most reliable, and the most rewarding truth on earth and in heaven,

in time and in eternity. Nothing—not anything, not anyone, not any influence—will keep this Church from fulfilling its mission and realizing its destiny declared from before the foundation of the world. . . . There is no need to be afraid or tentative about the future.

“Unlike every other era before us, this dispensation will not experience an institutional apostasy; it will not see a loss of priesthood keys; it will not suffer a cessation of revelation from the voice of Almighty God. . . . What a day in which to live!

“. . . If you haven’t noticed, I am bullish about the latter days. . . . Believe. Rise up. Be faithful. And make the most of the remarkable day in which we live!” (Facebook post, May 27, 2015; see also “Be Not Afraid, Only Believe” [address to Church Educational System religious educators, Feb. 6, 2015], broadcasts. ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

2. See John 1:12.

3. Shortly after we were called as the Young Men General Presidency, President Henry B. Eyring discussed with us the unique challenges and opportunities the youth of the Church face today. He counseled us to focus on those things that would help get the gospel of Jesus Christ down deep in their hearts. That counsel has been a beacon for us as the Young Men Presidency.

4. See “Be with Them,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood-quorums/my-calling/leader-instruction/be-with-them.

5. See Mosiah 18:25; Moroni 6:5.

6. Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 94; see also Moses 1:4–6.

President Thomas S. Monson taught: “We have the responsibility to see individuals not as they are but rather as they can become. I would plead with you to think of them in this way” (“See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 70).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught:

“Too often, a young person’s outward *non-compliance* with Church standards, or his seemingly confrontive questions, or his expressed doubts get him quickly labeled. The results can be distance and, sometimes, disaffiliation. True love does not like labels!” (“Unto the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1985, 9).

7. See 2 Kings 6:17.

8. Stephen L. Richards, as a member of the First Presidency, said, “The highest type of discernment is that which perceives in others and uncovers for them their better



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- natures, the good inherent within them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 162; in David A. Bednar, “Quick to Observe,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2006, 35; *Liahona*, Dec. 2006, 19). See also 2 Kings 6:17.
9. Henry B. Eyring, “Teaching Is a Moral Act” (address at Brigham Young University, Aug. 27, 1991), 3, speeches.byu.edu; emphasis added; see also Henry B. Eyring, “Help Them Aim High,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 60–67.
 10. See Moses 1:3–6.
 11. Mosiah 18:21; see also Moses 7:18.
 12. “Young men who have strong, positive relationships with an active [Latter-day Saint] family, peers, and leaders, which help them develop a relationship with their Heavenly Father, are most likely to stay active. Specific program elements—such as the Sunday curriculum, [Young Men] activity program, personal achievement expectations . . . may have little effect independent of those relationships. . . . The important question is not how completely specific program elements are implemented but how they contribute to positive relationships that strengthen the religious identity of [Latter-day Saint] young men” (“Be with Them,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood-quorums/my-calling/leader-instruction/be-with-them).
 13. See “Connect Them with Heaven,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood-quorums/my-calling/leader-instruction/connect-them-with-heaven.
 14. See John 15:1–5; 17:11; Philippians 4:13; 1 John 2:6; Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:32.
 15. The scriptures are full of examples of this; here are just two: 1 Nephi 2:16; Enos 1:1–4.
 16. See Luke 24:32; 2 Nephi 33:1–2; Jacob 3:2; Moroni 8:26; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
 17. See 2 Timothy 3:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 68:3–4; 88:66; 113:10.
 18. See 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Alma 26:13; 31:5; Helaman 3:29; 5:17; Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–6; 42:61; 43:8–10; 50:17–22; 68:4.
 19. See John 6:63; 17:17; Alma 5:7; Doctrine and Covenants 84:43–45; 88:66; 93:36.
 20. See John 15:3; 1 Peter 1:23; Mosiah 1:5; Alma 5:7, 11–13; 32:28, 41–42; 36:26; 62:45; Helaman 14:13.
 21. See 2 Nephi 31:19–21; 32:3, 5.
 22. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
 23. Dale G. Renlund, “Choose You This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 104.
 24. This figure includes requirements of the Scouting programs, which until recently were part of the Church’s activity program for boys and young men, primarily in the United States and Canada. In areas that did not participate in Scouting, the number of requirements was over 200. In addition, the various activity programs for boys, girls, young men, and young women were structured differently, making the whole experience more complex for families.
 25. See “Let Them Lead,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood-quorums/my-calling/leader-instruction/let-them-lead.
 26. See Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 9:20; 12:19; Doctrine and Covenants 64:34. “A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 69).
 27. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 167; in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2019), 13; see also Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
 28. Meeting with Elder David A. Bednar; see also “2020 Temple and Family History Leadership Instruction,” Feb. 27, 2020, ChurchofJesusChrist.org/family-history.
 29. Neal A. Maxwell, “Unto the Rising Generation,” 11. Elder Maxwell continued: “Functionally, how many deacons and teachers quorum presidencies consist of merely calling on someone to offer a prayer or pass the sacrament? Brethren, these really are special spirits, and they can do things of significance if given a chance!”
 30. See *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2.2, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
 31. Several resources are available in the Gospel Library to help the youth lead, including “Quorum and Class Presidency Resources,” “Using *Come, Follow Me—For Aaronic Priesthood Quorums and Young Women Classes*,” and in the resources for Young Women classes and Aaronic Priesthood quorums in “Ward or Branch Callings.”
 32. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. During this same devotional, President Nelson said: “Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are you!”
 33. Russell M. Nelson, opening remarks in “Children and Youth: A Face to Face Event with Elder Gerrit W. Gong,” Nov. 17, 2019, broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
 34. President Nelson said: “We need to let the young people lead, particularly those who have been called and set apart to serve in class and quorum presidencies. Priesthood authority will have been delegated to them. They will learn how to receive inspiration in leading their class or quorum” (in “Children and Youth Introductory Video Presentation,” Sept. 29, 2019, ChurchofJesusChrist.org). Elder Quentin L. Cook said, “Our youth are being asked to take more individual responsibility at younger ages—without parents and leaders taking over what youth can do for themselves” (“Adjustments to Strengthen Youth,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 40).
 35. President George Q. Cannon taught: “God has reserved spirits for this dispensation who have the courage and determination to face the world, and all the powers of the evil one, visible and invisible, to proclaim the gospel and maintain the truth and establish and build up the Zion of our God fearless of all consequences. He has sent these spirits in this generation to lay the foundation of Zion never more to be overthrown, and to raise up a seed that will be righteous, and that will honor God, and honor Him supremely, and be obedient to Him under all circumstances” (“Remarks,” *Deseret News*, May 31, 1866, 203); see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 186.
 36. Moroni 10:32.