

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • NOVEMBER 2015

# Liahona



## General Conference Addresses

Elders Ronald A. Rasband,  
Gary E. Stevenson, and  
Dale G. Renlund Sustained to  
the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*Seated, from left: President Russell M. Nelson, Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder M. Russell Ballard, Elder Robert D. Hales, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland.*

*Standing, from left: Elder David A. Bednar, Elder Quentin L. Cook, Elder D. Todd Christofferson, Elder Neil L. Andersen,*

*Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, Elder Dale G. Renlund.*

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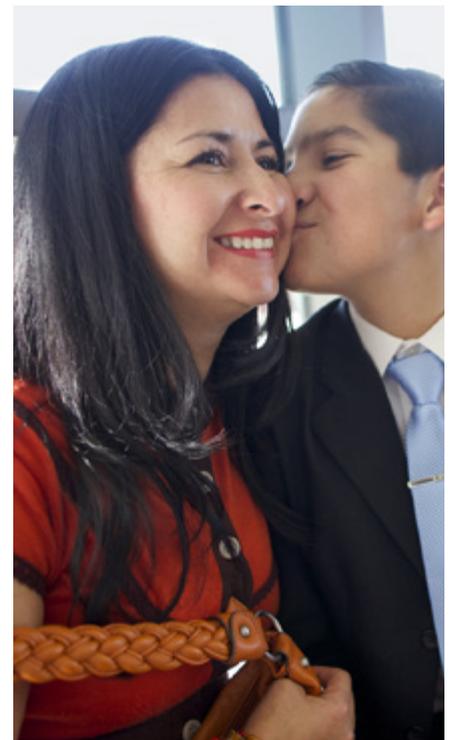
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# The 185th Semiannual General Conference

## Saturday Evening, September 26, 2015, General Women's Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: Bonnie L. Oscarson.

Invocation: Abby Morgan.

Benediction: Grace Teh.

Music by a combined Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society choir from stakes in southern Cache Valley, Utah; Claudia Bigler, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist; Sarah Johnson, flutist: "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 58; medley, arr. Mohlman, unpublished: "I Will Follow God's Plan," *Children's Songbook*, 164, and "Faith in Every Footstep," Dayley, accompanied by flute and organ; "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days," *Hymns*, no. 256, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "Dearest Children, God Is Near You," *Hymns*, no. 96, arr. Watkins, unpublished; "Go Forth with Faith," *Hymns*, no. 263, descant arr. Bigler, unpublished.

## Saturday Morning, October 3, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Mary R. Durham.

Benediction: Elder Adrián Ochoa.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Clay Christiansen, organist: "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81; "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83; "I Know That My Savior Loves Me," Creamer, arr. Murphy, pub. by Jackman; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19; "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer," *Hymns*, no. 103, arr. Manookin, pub. by Jackman; "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford.

## Saturday Afternoon, October 3, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Terence M. Vinson.

Benediction: Elder Kazuhiko Yamashita.

Music by a Primary choir from stakes in Riverton, Utah; Emily Wadley, director; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "Beautiful Savior," *Children's Songbook*, 62, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; medley, arr. DeFord, unpublished: "Search, Ponder, and Pray," *Children's Songbook*, 109, and "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story," *Children's Songbook*, 56; "Come, Follow Me," *Hymns*, no. 116; "I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74, arr. Cardon, pub. by Jackman.

## Saturday Evening, October 3, 2015, General Priesthood Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Larry S. Kacher.

Benediction: Stephen W. Owen.

Music by a father-and-son choir from stakes in Orem, Utah; Cory Mendenhall, director; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise," *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. McDavitt, pub. by McDavitt; "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," *Hymns*, no. 141, arr. McDavitt, pub. by McDavitt; "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72; "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220; "We'll Bring the World His Truth," *Children's Songbook*, 172, arr. McDavitt, pub. by McDavitt.

## Sunday Morning, October 4, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Chi Hong (Sam) Wong.

Benediction: Cheryl A. Esplin.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "Arise, O God, and Shine," *Hymns*, no. 265; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Hinshaw; "If the Savior Stood Beside Me," DeFord, arr. Cardon/Elliott, unpublished; "How Firm

a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85; "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, 227, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Jackman.

## Sunday Afternoon, October 4, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Jörg Klebingat.

Benediction: Elder Scott D. Whiting.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice," *Hymns*, no. 73, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "Our God Is a God of Love," Cundick, pub. by Jackman; "Rejoice, the Lord Is King," *Hymns*, no. 66; "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Love One Another," *Hymns*, no. 308, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

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The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning “compass” or “director”) is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

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November 2015 Vol. 39 No. 11. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org). (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 707.4.12.5).

NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.



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## Highlights from the 185th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

“You are a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father,” said President Thomas S. Monson in the Sunday morning session of general conference. “You have come from His presence to live on this earth for a season, to reflect the Savior’s love and teachings, and to bravely let your light shine for all to see. When that season on earth has ended, if you have done your part, yours will be the glorious blessing of returning to live with Him forever” (page 88).

This general conference noted the recent passing of President Boyd K. Packer and Elders L. Tom Perry and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Church members

sustained three new members of the quorum: Elders Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, and Dale G. Renlund.

Other highlights:

- Talks by Elders M. Russell Ballard, David A. Bednar, and D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles underscored why the Lord set up His Church, with prophets and apostles as its foundation, to do His work and empower us to return to Him (see pages 24, 128, and 108).
- Talks by President Russell M. Nelson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve



Apostles explained the vital roles of women. President Nelson noted: “The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!” (page 96).

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reaffirmed that “our Savior experienced and suffered the fulness of all mortal challenges. . . . And because of this, His Atonement empowers Him to succor us—to give us the strength to bear it all” (pages 61–62).



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS CONFERENCE CENTER



By Rosemary M. Wixom  
Primary General President

# Discovering the Divinity Within

*We come to this earth to nurture and discover the seeds of divine nature that are within us.*

Sisters, we love you! I testify that life is a gift. God has a plan for each one of us, and our individual purpose began long before we came to this earth.

Lately I have come to recognize the miracle of a baby's birth into mortality as part of the Lord's plan. Each one of us developed physically within our mother's womb while relying for many months on her body to sustain ours. Eventually, however, the process of birth—dramatic for both mother and child—separated us.

As a baby emerges into this world, the change of temperature and light and the sudden release of pressure on the chest induce the baby to take its first gasping breath. Those little lungs suddenly fill with air for the first time, the organs spring into action, and the baby begins to breathe. As the umbilical cord is clamped, that lifeline between mother and baby is forever severed, and the baby's life on earth begins.

Job said, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."<sup>1</sup>

We come into this world "trailing clouds of glory."<sup>2</sup> "The Family: A

Proclamation to the World" teaches that each one of us "is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents" and "each has a divine nature and destiny."<sup>3</sup> Heavenly Father generously shares a portion of His divinity within us. That divine nature comes as a gift from Him with a love that only a parent can feel.

We come to this earth to nurture and discover the seeds of divine nature that are within us.

## We Know Why

Elaine Cannon, a former Young Women general president, said, "There are two important days in a woman's life: The day she is born and the day she finds out why."<sup>4</sup>

We know why. We have come to this earth to help build His kingdom and to prepare for the Second Coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. With every breath we take, we strive to follow Him. The divine nature within each one of us is refined and magnified by the effort we make to draw nearer to our Father and His Son.

Our divine nature has nothing to do with our personal accomplishments, the status we achieve, the

number of marathons we run, or our popularity and self-esteem. Our divine nature comes from God. It was established in an existence that preceded our birth and will continue on into eternity.

## We Are Loved

We identify with our divine nature as we feel and give the love of our Father in Heaven. We have the agency to nurture it, let it flourish, and help it



Cavite City, Cavite, Philippines

grow. Peter said we are given "precious promises" that we "might be partakers of the divine nature."<sup>5</sup> As we understand who we are—daughters of God—we begin to feel those precious promises.

Looking out through a window, not just into a mirror, allows us to see ourselves as His. We naturally turn to Him in prayer, and we are eager to read His words and to do His will. We are able to take our validation vertically from Him, not horizontally from the world around us or from those on Facebook or Instagram.

If you ever question that spark of divinity within you, kneel in prayer and ask Heavenly Father, "Am I really



Thy daughter, and dost Thou love me?" Elder M. Russell Ballard said, "One of the sweetest messages the Spirit will relay is how the Lord feels about you."<sup>6</sup>

We are His. Paul said, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."<sup>7</sup> Often the first Primary song we learn is "I Am a Child of God."<sup>8</sup> Now it is time to take that beloved phrase "I am a child of God" and add the words "Therefore, what?" We might even ask questions such as these: "What will I do to live my life as a child of God?" "How can I develop the divine nature that is within me?"

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said, "God sent you here to prepare for a future greater than anything you can imagine."<sup>9</sup> That future, a day at a time, comes alive when you do more than

just exist; it comes alive when you live your life to fill the measure of your creation. This invites the Lord into your life, and you begin to let His will become yours.

#### **We Learn Because of Our Divine Nature**

Divine nature breathes into us the desire to know these eternal truths for ourselves.

A young woman named Amy recently taught me this lesson when she wrote: "It is hard being a teenager these days. The path is getting narrower. Satan is really trying. It is either right or wrong; there is no in-between."

She continued: "Good friends are sometimes hard to find. Even when you think you have best friends who will never leave, that could change for any reason. That is why I am so glad

that I have family, Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who can be my companions whenever things with friends go wrong."

Amy went on to say: "One night I was troubled. I told my sister I didn't know what to do."

Later that night her sister sent her a text and quoted Elder Jeffrey R. Holland when he said: "Don't give up. . . . Don't you quit. You keep walking. You keep trying. There is help and happiness ahead. . . . It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come."<sup>10</sup>

Amy explained: "I remembered reading that and just praying that I would feel love from God if He really was there for me."

She said: "As soon as I asked and believed that He was there, I felt the most amazing, happy, warm feeling.



Words can't describe it. I knew He was there and that He loved me."

Because you are His child, He knows who you can become. He knows your fears and your dreams. He relishes your potential. He waits for you to come to Him in prayer. Because you are His child, you not only need Him, but He also needs you. Those sitting around you right now in this meeting need you. The world needs you, and your divine nature allows you to be His trusted disciple to all His children. Once we begin to see the divinity in ourselves, we can see it in others.

#### **We Serve Because of Our Divine Nature**

Divine nature breathes into us the desire to serve others.

Recently, Sharon Eubank, the director of Humanitarian Services and LDS Charities, told of an experience shared by Elder Glenn L. Pace. There was widespread drought and extreme famine in Ethiopia in the mid-1980s. To provide relief, feeding stations with water and food were created for those who could get to them. An old man who was starving was walking a long distance to get to a feeding station. He was passing a village when he heard the cry of a baby. He searched until he found the baby sitting on the ground next to his dead mother. Picking up the baby, the man continued to walk 25 miles (40 km) to the feeding station. When he arrived, his first words were not "I'm hungry" or "Help me." They were "What can be done for this baby?"<sup>11</sup>

The divine nature within us ignites our desire to reach out to others and prompts us to act. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ can help us find the strength to do so. Could the Lord be asking us, "What can be done for this daughter, this brother, this father, or this friend?"

It is through the whisperings of the Spirit that the divine nature of a doubter, after gasping for breath, finds the peace to breathe again.

When the prophet speaks, his words resonate with our divine nature and give us strength to follow.

Partaking of the sacrament each week breathes hope into the divinity within us, and we remember our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I promise that as you seek to discover the depth of the divine nature that lies within you, you will begin to further magnify your precious gift. Let it guide you to become His daughter, walking the path back to Him—where we will be "restored to that God who gave [us] breath."<sup>12</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. Job 33:4.
2. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1924), 359.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. Elaine Cannon, in "Let Me Soar," *Women Counseled*, *Church News*, Oct. 17, 1981, 3.
5. 2 Peter 1:4.
6. M. Russell Ballard, "Women of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 72; *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 42.
7. Romans 8:16.
8. See "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Living the Gospel Joyful," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 121.
10. Jeffrey R. Holland, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 45.
11. See Glenn L. Pace, "Infinite Needs and Finite Resources," *Ensign*, June 1993, 52; *Tambuli*, Mar. 1995, 18–19.
12. 2 Nephi 9:26.



By **Linda S. Reeves**  
Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Worthy of Our Promised Blessings

*A vision of our Father’s incredible promised blessings must be the central focus before our eyes every day.*

Don’t you love this sister in the video? We know that many of you who have not had the opportunity to bear children of your own have spent your lives loving, teaching, and blessing children. And, oh, how our Heavenly Father and we, your sisters, love you for it!

Have we all, including you dear younger sisters in Primary and Young Women, had the opportunity to hold a newborn baby in our arms and have him or her look up into our eyes? Have we sensed the sacred and holy feeling surrounding this celestial spirit, so recently sent by our Father in Heaven to its newly created, pure little body? I have seldom experienced feelings quite so sweet, so tender, and so spiritual.

Our bodies are sacred gifts from our Heavenly Father. They are personal temples. As we keep them clean and pure, we can be worthy to help our Heavenly Father create bodies for His beloved spirit children.

In President Boyd K. Packer’s final general conference talk, which you may remember as “a cookie and a kiss,” he testified that “the commandment to

multiply and replenish the earth . . . is essential . . . and is the source of



human happiness. Through the righteous exercise of this [creative] power, we may come close to our Father in Heaven and experience a fulness of joy, even godhood. The power of procreation is not an incidental part of the plan; it is the plan.”

He continued:

“True love requires reserving until after marriage the sharing of that affection which unlocks those sacred powers . . . [by] avoiding situations where physical desire might take control. . . .

“ . . . Our happiness in mortal life, our joy and exaltation are dependent upon how we respond to these persistent, compelling physical desires.”<sup>1</sup>

My dear sisters, both young and not so young, I have felt a great anxiety as I have prepared this talk. As Alma the Younger expressed, “I wish from the inmost part of my heart . . . that ye would . . . call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, . . . that ye may be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>2</sup>

Later, Mormon also testified that in Alma’s day, Korihor, the anti-Christ, “did preach . . . leading away the hearts of . . . many women.”<sup>3</sup>

Sisters, Satan has raised a Korihor-like banner in our day with increasing success. What are some of his tools? Seductive romance novels, TV soap operas, married women and old boy-friends connecting on social media, and pornography. We must be so careful, dear sisters! We cannot play with Satan's fiery darts and not get burned. I know of nothing that will qualify us for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost as much as virtue.

Many in today's world are looking for instant gratification and instant knowledge on the Internet. In contrast, we will be exceedingly blessed if we exercise faith and patience and go to our Heavenly Father, the source of all truth, with our concerns.

So many answers and assurances can come through daily searching and studying the scriptures and with sincere and pleading prayer, but there are no such promises on the Internet. The prophet Jacob testifies: "For the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be."<sup>4</sup>

When we are involved in watching, reading, or experiencing anything that is below our Heavenly Father's standards, it weakens us. Regardless of our age, if what we look at, read, listen to, or choose to do does not meet the Lord's standards in *For the Strength of Youth*, turn it off, rip it up, throw it out, and slam the door.

None of us is perfect, but when we have sinned, President Packer reminded us:

"The promise is: 'Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more' (D&C 58:42). . . .

". . . The Atonement, which can reclaim each one of us, bears no scars. That means that no matter what we have done or where we have been or how something happened, if we truly repent, He has promised that He would atone. And when He atoned, that settled that. There are so many of us who are thrashing around . . . with feelings of guilt, not knowing quite how to escape. You escape by accepting the Atonement of Christ, and all that was



heartache can turn to beauty and love and eternity.”<sup>5</sup>

Besides repentance, what helps or tools have we been given to help us stay clean and virtuous? Our Primary children and young women all know and sing the song “Scripture Power.”<sup>6</sup> Can we expand it to “Prayer Power,” “Temple Power,” “Covenants Power,” “Sabbath Day Power,” “Prophet Power,” and “Virtue Power”?

There are also great blessings and protecting promises associated with the proper wearing of our temple garment. I have come to feel that I am symbolically putting on royal robes given me by my Heavenly Father. I testify, sisters, that when we strive to wear the garment properly, our Father recognizes it as a great sign of our love and devotion to Him. It is a sign of the covenants we have made with Him, and He has promised, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no *promise*.”<sup>7</sup>

Recently I talked to an old friend who has gone through two divorces due to the addictions and unfaithfulness of her husbands. She and her three children have suffered greatly. She pleaded, “I have tried so hard to live righteously. Why have I had so many trials? What have I done wrong? What does Heavenly Father want me to do? I pray and read my scriptures, help my children, and go to the temple often.”

As I listened to this sister, I felt like shouting out, “You are doing it! You are doing all that Heavenly Father wants and hopes you will do!”

Understandably, many have expressed that our Father’s promised blessings are just “way too far away,” particularly when our lives are overflowing with challenges. But Amulek taught that “this life is the time . . . to



prepare to meet God.”<sup>8</sup> It is not the time to receive all of our blessings. President Packer explained: “‘And they all lived happily ever after’ is never written into the second act. That line belongs in the third act, when the mysteries are solved and everything is put right.”<sup>9</sup> However, a vision of our Father’s incredible promised blessings must be the central focus before our eyes every day—as well as an awareness “of the multitude of his tender mercies”<sup>10</sup> that we experience on a daily basis.

Sisters, I do not know why we have the many trials that we have, but it is my personal feeling that the reward is so great, so eternal and everlasting, so joyful and beyond our understanding that in that day of reward, we may feel to say to our merciful, loving Father, “Was that *all* that was required?” I believe that if we could daily remember and recognize the depth of that love our Heavenly Father and our Savior have for us, we would be willing to do anything to be back in Their presence again, surrounded by Their love eternally.

What will it matter, dear sisters, what we suffered here if, in the end, those trials are the very things which qualify us for eternal life and exaltation in the kingdom of God with our Father and Savior?

I testify that our bodies are sacred gifts from our Heavenly Father and that as we keep our lives pure and clean through the atoning sacrifice of our Savior and keep the vision of our Father’s promised rewards daily in front of us, we will one day receive “all that [our] Father hath.”<sup>11</sup> In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 26–27.
2. Alma 13:27–29.
3. Alma 30:18.
4. Jacob 4:13.
5. Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 28.
6. Clive Romney, “Scripture Power,” [lds.org/callings/primary/sharing-time-music](https://www.lds.org/callings/primary/sharing-time-music).
7. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10; emphasis added.
8. Alma 34:32.
9. Boyd K. Packer, “The Play and the Plan” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, May 7, 1995), 2, [si.lds.org](https://www.lds.org).
10. Ether 6:12.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.



**By Carol F. McConkie**  
First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Here to Serve a Righteous Cause

*May we choose to serve a righteous cause as valiant emissaries of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I am grateful that we may gather together with faithful women such as Lisa—the sister in the video—who are pure in heart, who love the Lord and serve Him, even amid their own trials. Lisa’s story reminds me that we must love one another and see in one another the beauty of the soul. The Savior taught, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”<sup>1</sup> Whether we are age 8 or 108, each of us is “precious in [His] sight.”<sup>2</sup> He loves us. We are daughters of God. We are sisters in Zion. We have a divine nature, and we each have a glorious work to do.

Over the summer I visited with a lovely young mother of daughters. She shared with me her feeling that our young women need a cause, something to help them feel valued. She knew that we may discover our individual and eternal worth by acting in accordance with our divine purpose in mortality. Tonight, this beautiful and remarkable choir sang words that teach our purpose. Through test and trial, even through fear and in the midst of despair, we have valiant hearts. We are resolved to do our part. We are here

to serve a righteous cause.<sup>3</sup> Sisters, in this cause we are all valued. We are all needed.

The righteous cause we serve is the cause of Christ. It is the work of salvation.<sup>4</sup> The Lord taught, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>5</sup> We are the cause for which Jesus Christ suffered, bled from every pore, and in perfect love gave His life. His cause is the good news, “the

glad tidings, . . . that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved.”<sup>6</sup> Our Savior has “marked the path and led the way.”<sup>7</sup> I testify that as we follow His example, love God, and serve one another with kindness and compassion, we may stand in purity, “blameless before God at the last day.”<sup>8</sup> We choose to serve the Lord in His righteous cause that we may become one with the Father and with the Son.<sup>9</sup>

The prophet Mormon boldly declared, “For we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.”<sup>10</sup> The early Church leaders and pioneers of the past pressed forward with heroic courage and determined faithfulness to establish the restored gospel and build temples where ordinances of exaltation could be performed. The pioneers of the present, meaning you and me, also



press forward in faith, “to labor in [the Lord’s] vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.”<sup>11</sup> And, as President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “How magnificent will be the future as the Almighty rolls on His glorious work . . . through the selfless [service] of those whose hearts are filled with love for the Redeemer of the world.”<sup>12</sup> We join with faithful sisters of the past, of the present, and of the rising generation when we join together in the work of salvation!

Before we were born, we accepted our Heavenly Father’s plan “by which [we] could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”<sup>13</sup> Of this premortal covenant, Elder John A. Widtsoe explained: “We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves but . . . saviors for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Savior’s work, but also our work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation.”<sup>14</sup>

Here in mortality we have again covenanted to serve the Savior in the work of salvation. By participating in sacred priesthood ordinances, we pledge that we will embark in the service of God with heart, might, mind, and strength.<sup>15</sup> We receive the Holy Ghost and seek His promptings to guide our efforts. Righteousness emanates out to the world when we understand what God wants us to do and then we do it.

I know a Primary child who said to a friend while standing at the bus stop, “Hey! You ought to come to church with me and learn about Jesus!”



I saw the girls in a Young Women class link arms together and make a commitment to minister to one another and then plan an appropriate way to help a young woman who was struggling with an addiction.

I have seen young mothers give everything of their time, their talents, and their energies to teach and exemplify the principles of the gospel so that their children, like the sons of Helaman, may stand courageously and faithfully through trial, temptation, and adversity.

But perhaps most humbling to me was to hear a single adult sister declare with the fire of pure testimony that the most important work we can do is to prepare for marriage and family. Although this is not her experience, she knows that family is the very heart of the work of salvation. “The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave.”<sup>16</sup> We honor the Father’s plan and glorify God when we strengthen and ennoble those relationships in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. We choose to live pure and virtuous lives so that when the opportunity



*Sister Ella Hoskins with two young women from her ward.*

comes, we are prepared to make that sacred covenant in the house of the Lord and keep it forever.

We all experience times and seasons in our lives. But whether we are at school, at work, in the community, or especially in the home, we are the Lord’s agents and we are on His errand.

In the work of salvation, there is no room for comparison, criticism, or condemnation. It is not about age, experience, or public acclaim. This sacred work is about developing a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a willingness



to use our divine gifts and unique talents to do the Lord's work in His way. It is having the humility to fall on our knees and say, "O my Father, . . . not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>17</sup>

In the strength of the Lord, we "can do all things."<sup>18</sup> We continually seek His guidance in prayer, in the scriptures, and in the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. One sister, faced with an overwhelming assignment, wrote, "Sometimes I wonder if the sisters in the early history of the Church didn't, like us, put their heads on their pillows at night and pray, 'Whatever tomorrow brings, will Thou help me through it?'" Then she wrote, "One of the blessings is [that] we have each other and we are in this together!"<sup>19</sup> Whatever our circumstances, wherever we are along the path toward salvation, we unite as one in our commitment to the Savior. We sustain one another in His service.

Recently, you may have read about Sister Ella Hoskins, who at 100 years old was called to help the young women in her ward with Personal Progress.<sup>20</sup> About two years later, at 102, Sister Hoskins earned her Young

Womanhood Recognition award. The young women, the ward and stake Young Women and Relief Society presidencies, and family members gathered together to celebrate her accomplishment. Boundaries of age, organization, and marital status faded away in faithful service. Young women expressed gratitude for Sister Hoskins, for her teaching, and for her righteous example. They want to be like her. Afterward, I asked Sister Hoskins, "How did you do it?"

She promptly responded, "I repent every day."

From a gentle lady, so full of the Spirit of the Lord that she glowed with pure light, I was reminded that to shine with the beauty of holiness, to stand with the Savior, and to bless others, we must be clean. Purity is possible through the grace of Christ as we deny ungodliness and choose to love God with might, mind, and strength.<sup>21</sup> The Apostle Paul taught, "Flee . . . youthful lusts: . . . follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."<sup>22</sup> None of us is perfect. We have all made mistakes. But we repent so that we may be better

and "retain the name [of Christ] written always in [our] hearts."<sup>23</sup> When we serve in the name of the Lord, with purity of heart, we reflect the Savior's love and give others a glimpse of heaven.

May we choose to serve a righteous cause as valiant emissaries of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us stand together and "with a song in [our] heart[s] move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building [His] kingdom."<sup>24</sup> I testify that in this glorious work, we may know the pure love of God. We may receive true joy and obtain all the glories of eternity. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
2. Isaiah 43:4.
3. See "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days," *Hymns*, no. 256.
4. "This work of salvation includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel" (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], introduction to chapter 5).
5. Moses 1:39.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 76:40–42.
7. "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
9. See John 17:20–23; 4 Nephi 1:15–17; Doctrine and Covenants 35:2; 38:27; Moses 6:68.
10. Moroni 9:6.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 138:56.
12. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stay the Course—Keep the Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72.
13. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
14. John A. Widtsoe, "The Worth of Souls," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, 189.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
16. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
17. Matthew 26:39.
18. Alma 26:12.
19. Personal correspondence.
20. See Marianne Holman Prescott, "She Just Doesn't Quit," *Church News*, Sept. 6, 2015, 15.
21. See Moroni 10:32.
22. 2 Timothy 2:22.
23. Mosiah 5:12.
24. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 72.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# A Summer with Great-Aunt Rose

*As you walk along your own bright path of discipleship, I pray that faith will fortify every footstep along your way.*

My beloved sisters and dear friends, I am delighted to be with you today, and I am grateful to be in the presence of our dear prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. President, we love you. We are saddened by the loss of our three precious friends and true Apostles of the Lord. We miss President Packer, Elder Perry, and Elder Scott; we love them. We pray for their families and friends.

I always look forward to this session of conference—the beautiful music and the counsel from our inspired sisters bring the Spirit in great abundance. I am a better person after being in your company.

As I pondered what I should say to you today, my thoughts turned to the way the Savior taught. It is interesting how He was able to teach the most sublime truths using simple stories. His parables invited His disciples to embrace truths not just with their minds but also with their hearts and to connect eternal principles with their everyday lives.<sup>1</sup> Our dear President Monson is also a master at teaching with personal experiences that touch the heart.<sup>2</sup>

Today, I too will give my message by expressing my thoughts and feelings in the form of a story. I invite you to listen with the Spirit. The Holy Ghost will help you to find the message *for you* in this parable.



## Great-Aunt Rose

The story is about a girl named Eva. There are two important things you should know about Eva. One is that she was 11 years old in this story. And the other is that she absolutely, positively did *not* want to go and live with her great-aunt Rose. Not at all. No way.

But Eva's mother was going to have surgery that required a lengthy recovery. So Eva's parents were sending her to spend the summer with Great-Aunt Rose.

In Eva's mind, there were a thousand reasons why this was a bad idea. For one thing, it would mean being away from her mother. It would also mean leaving her family and friends. And besides, she didn't even know Great-Aunt Rose. She was quite comfortable, thank you very much, right where she was.

But no amount of arguing or eye-rolling could change the decision. So Eva packed up a suitcase and took the long drive with her father to Great-Aunt Rose's house.

From the moment Eva stepped inside the house, she hated it.

Everything was so old! Every inch was packed with old books, strange-colored bottles, and plastic bins spilling over with beads, bows, and buttons.

Great-Aunt Rose lived there alone; she had never married. The only other inhabitant was a gray cat who liked to find the highest point in every room and perch there, staring like a hungry tiger at everything below.

Even the house itself seemed lonely. It was out in the countryside, where the houses are far apart. No one Eva's age lived within half a mile. That made Eva feel lonely too.

At first she didn't pay much attention to Great-Aunt Rose. She mostly thought about her mother. Sometimes,

she would stay awake at night, praying with all her soul that her mother would be well. And though it didn't happen right away, Eva began to feel that God was watching over her mother.

Word finally came that the operation was a success, and now all that was left for Eva to do was to endure till the end of summer. But oh, how she hated enduring!

With her mind now at ease about her mother, Eva began to notice Great-Aunt Rose a little more. She was a large woman—everything about her was large: her voice, her smile, her personality. It wasn't easy for her to get around, but she always sang and laughed while she worked, and the sound of her laughter filled the house. Every night she sat down on her overstuffed sofa,

pulled out her scriptures, and read out loud. And as she read, she sometimes made comments like “Oh, he shouldn't have done that!” or “What wouldn't I give to have been there!” or “Isn't that the most beautiful thing you've ever heard!” And every evening as the two of them knelt by Eva's bed to pray, Great-Aunt Rose would say the most beautiful prayers, thanking her Heavenly Father for the blue jays and the spruce trees, the sunsets and the stars, and the “wonder of being alive.” It sounded to Eva as though Rose knew God as a friend.

Over time, Eva made a surprising discovery: Great-Aunt Rose was quite possibly the happiest person she had ever known!

But how could that be?

What did she have to be happy about?

She had never married, she had no children, she had no one to keep her company except that creepy cat, and she had a hard time doing simple things like tying her shoes and walking up stairs.

When she went to town, she wore embarrassingly big, bright hats. But people didn't laugh at her. Instead, they crowded around her, wanting to talk to her. Rose had been a schoolteacher, and it wasn't uncommon for former students—now grown up with children of their own—to stop and chat. They thanked her for being a good influence in their lives. They often laughed. Sometimes they even cried.

As the summer progressed, Eva spent more and more time with Rose. They went on long walks, and Eva learned the difference between sparrows and finches. She picked wild elderberries and made marmalade from oranges. She learned about her great-great-grandmother who left her beloved homeland, sailed across an





doesn't go right in life, so anyone can work themselves into a puddle of pessimism and a mess of melancholy. But I know people who, even when things don't work out, focus on the wonders and miracles of life. These folks are the happiest people I know."

"But," Eva said, "you can't just flip a switch and go from sad to happy."

"No, perhaps not," Aunt Rose smiled gently, "but God didn't design us to be sad. He created us to have joy!<sup>3</sup> So if we trust Him, He will help us to notice the good, bright, hopeful things of life. And sure enough, the world will become brighter. No, it doesn't happen instantly, but honestly, how many good things do? Seems to me that the best things, like homemade bread or orange marmalade, take patience and work."

Eva thought about it a moment and said, "Maybe it's not so simple for people who don't have everything perfect in their lives."

"Dear Eva, do you really think that my life is perfect?" Aunt Rose sat with Eva on the overstuffed sofa. "There was

ocean, and walked across the plains to be with the Saints.

Soon Eva made another startling discovery: not only was Great-Aunt Rose one of the happiest persons she knew, but Eva herself was happier whenever she was around her.

The days of summer were passing more quickly now. Before Eva knew it, Great-Aunt Rose said it would soon be time for Eva to return home. Though Eva had been looking forward to that moment since the day she arrived, she wasn't quite sure how to feel about it now. She realized she was actually going to miss this strange old house with the stalker cat and her beloved great-aunt Rose.

The day before her father arrived to pick her up, Eva asked the question she had been wondering about for weeks: "Aunt Rose, why are you so happy?"

Aunt Rose looked at her carefully and then guided her to a painting that hung in the front room. It had been a gift from a talented dear friend.

"What do you see there?" she asked.

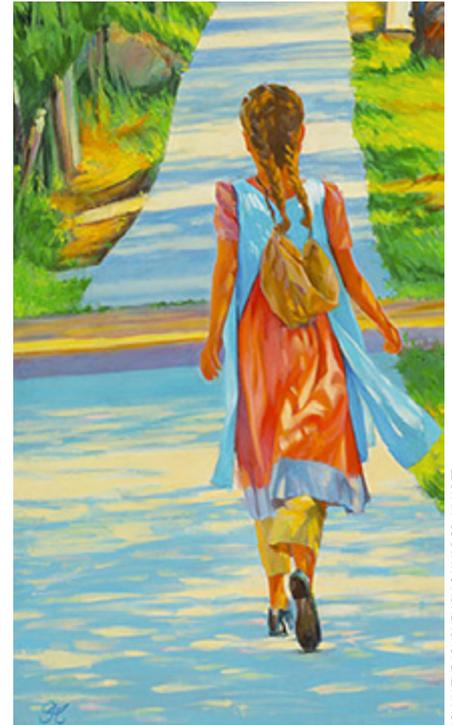
Eva had noticed the painting before, but she hadn't really looked at it closely. A girl in pioneer dress skipped along a bright blue path. The grass and trees were a vibrant green. Eva said,

"It's a painting of a girl. Looks like she's skipping."

"Yes, it is a *pioneer* girl skipping along happily," Aunt Rose said. "I imagine there were many dark and dreary days for the pioneers. Their life was so hard—we can't even imagine. But in this painting, everything is bright and hopeful. This girl has a spring in her step, and she is moving forward and upward."

Eva was silent, so Great-Aunt Rose continued: "There is enough that





JOY IN THE JOURNEY BY SALVADOR ALVAREZ

*As you, like the pioneer girl in the painting, walk along your own bright path of discipleship, I pray that faith will fortify every footstep along your way.*

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”<sup>4</sup>

Great-Aunt Rose looked at Eva. Her smile was wide as she whispered, with a slight quiver in her voice, “Isn’t that the most beautiful thing you’ve ever heard?”

It really did sound beautiful, Eva thought.

Aunt Rose turned a few pages and pointed to a verse for Eva to read: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>5</sup>

“With such a glorious future,” Aunt Rose said, “why get swallowed up in past or present things that don’t go quite the way we planned?”

a time when I was so discouraged I didn’t want to go on.”

“You?” Eva asked.

Aunt Rose nodded. “There were so many things I wished for in my life.” As she spoke, a sadness entered her voice that Eva had never heard before. “Most of them never happened. It was one heartbreak after another. One day I realized that it would never be the way I had hoped for. That was a depressing day. I was ready to give up and be miserable.”

“So what did you do?”

“Nothing for a time. I was just angry. I was an absolute monster to be around.” Then she laughed a little, but it was not her usual big, room-filling laugh. “‘It’s not fair’ was the song I sang over and over in my head. But eventually I discovered something that turned my whole life around.”

“What was it?”

“Faith,” Aunt Rose smiled. “I discovered faith. And faith led to hope. And faith and hope gave me confidence that one day everything would make sense, that because of the Savior, all the wrongs would be made right. After that, I saw that the path before me wasn’t as dreary and dusty as I had

thought. I began to notice the bright blues, the verdant greens, and the fiery reds, and I decided I had a choice—I could hang my head and drag my feet on the dusty road of self-pity, or I could have a little faith, put on a bright dress, slip on my dancing shoes, and skip down the path of life, singing as I went.” Now her voice was skipping along like the girl in the painting.

Aunt Rose reached over to the end table and pulled her well-worn scriptures onto her lap. “I don’t think I was clinically depressed—I’m not sure you can talk yourself out of that. But I sure had talked myself into being miserable! Yes, I had some dark days, but all my brooding and worrying wasn’t going to change that—it was only making things worse. Faith in the Savior taught me that no matter what happened in the past, my story could have a happy ending.”

“How do you know that?” Eva asked.

Aunt Rose turned a page in her Bible and said, “It says it right here:

“God . . . will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no

Eva furrowed her brow. “But wait a minute,” she said. “Are you saying that being happy means just looking forward to happiness in the future? Is all our happiness in eternity? Can’t some of it happen now?”

“Oh, of course it can!” Aunt Rose exclaimed. “Dear child, now is *part* of eternity. It doesn’t only begin after we die! Faith and hope will open your eyes to the happiness that is placed before you.

“I know a poem that says, ‘Forever—is composed of Nows.’<sup>6</sup> I didn’t want my forever to be composed of dark and fearful ‘Nows.’ And I didn’t want to live in the gloom of a bunker, gritting my teeth, closing my eyes, and resentfully enduring to the bitter end. Faith gave me the hope I needed to live joyfully now!”

“So what did you do then?” Eva asked.

“I exercised faith in God’s promises by filling my life with meaningful things. I went to school. I got an education. That led me to a career that I loved.”

Eva thought about this for a moment and said, “But surely being busy isn’t what made you happy. There are a lot of busy people who aren’t happy.”

“How can you be so wise for someone so young?” Aunt Rose asked. “You’re absolutely right. And most of those busy, unhappy people have forgotten the one thing that matters most in all the world—the thing Jesus said is the heart of His gospel.”

“And what is that?” Eva asked.

“It is love—the pure love of Christ,” Rose said. “You see, everything else in the gospel—all the *shoulds* and the *musts* and the *thou shalt*s—lead to love. When we love God, we want to serve Him. We want to be like Him. When we love our neighbors, we stop

thinking so much about our own problems and help others to solve theirs.”<sup>7</sup>

“And that is what makes us happy?” Eva asked.

Great-Aunt Rose nodded and smiled, her eyes filling with tears. “Yes, my dear. *That* is what makes us happy.”

#### Never the Same

The next day Eva hugged her great-aunt Rose and thanked her for everything she had done. She returned home to her family and her friends and her house and her neighborhood.

But she was never quite the same.

As Eva grew older, she often thought of the words of her great-aunt Rose. Eva eventually married, raised children, and lived a long and wonderful life.

And one day, as she was standing in her own home, admiring a painting of a girl in pioneer dress skipping down a bright blue path, she realized that somehow she had reached the same age her great-aunt Rose was during that remarkable summer.

When she realized this, she felt a special prayer swell within her heart. And Eva felt grateful for her life, for her



family, for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and for that summer so long ago when Great-Aunt Rose<sup>8</sup> taught her about faith, hope, and love.<sup>9</sup>

#### A Blessing

My beloved sisters, my dear friends in Christ, I hope and pray that something in this story has touched your heart and inspired your soul. I know that God lives and that He loves each and every one of you.

As you walk along your own bright path of discipleship, I pray that faith will fortify every footstep along your way; that hope will open your eyes to the glories Heavenly Father has in store for you; and that love for God and all His children will fill your hearts. As an Apostle of the Lord, I leave this as my testimony and blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, Matthew 13:24–30; 18:23–35; 20:1–16; 22:1–14; 25; Luke 10:25–37; 15:11–32.
2. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, “Guided Safely Home,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 67–69; “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 91–94; “We Never Walk Alone,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 121–24; “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 89–92.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
4. Revelation 21:3–4.
5. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
6. “Forever—is composed of Nows,” in *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson’s Poems*, sel. Thomas H. Johnson (1961), 158; see also [poetryfoundation.org/poem/182912](http://poetryfoundation.org/poem/182912).
7. See Luke 9:24.
8. “Often the prickly thorn produces tender roses” (Ovid, *Epistulae ex ponto*, book 2, epistle 2, line 34; “Saepe creat molles aspera spina rosas”).
9. See Moroni 7:42.



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By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# It Works Wonderfully!

*I pray that we will focus on “the simplicity that is in Christ” and allow His grace to lift and carry us.*

My beloved brothers and sisters, my dear friends, it is a joy to be with you today. We are saddened by the sight of three empty places here on the stand. We miss President Packer, Elder Perry, and Elder Scott. We love them, and we pray for the well-being of their families.

During this conference weekend, we will be privileged to sustain three who have been called by the Lord to take their place among the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Our prayers on their behalf will strengthen them as they bear the sacred mantle of apostleship.

### Is the Gospel Working for You?

Not long ago I saw a quote that made me stop and think. It went like this: “Tell a man there are trillions of stars in the universe, and he’ll believe you. Tell him there’s wet paint on the wall, and he’ll touch it just to be sure.”

Aren’t we all a little bit like this? After a recent medical procedure, my very capable doctors explained what

I needed to do to heal properly. But first I had to relearn something about myself I should have known for a long time: as a patient, I’m not very patient.

Consequently I decided to expedite the healing process by undertaking my own Internet search. I suppose I expected to discover truth of which my doctors were unaware or had tried to keep from me.

It took me a little while before I realized the irony of what I was doing. Of course, researching things for ourselves is not a bad idea. But I was disregarding truth I could rely on and instead found myself being drawn to the often outlandish claims of Internet lore.

Sometimes the truth may just seem too straightforward, too plain, and too simple for us to fully appreciate its great value. So we set aside what we have experienced and know to be true in pursuit of more mysterious or complicated information. Hopefully we will learn that when we chase after shadows, we are pursuing matters that have little substance and value.

When it comes to spiritual truth, how can we know that we are on the right path?

One way is by asking the right questions—the kind that help us ponder our progress and evaluate how things are working for us. Questions like:

“Does my life have meaning?”

“Do I believe in God?”

“Do I believe that God knows and loves me?”

“Do I believe that God hears and answers my prayers?”

“Am I truly happy?”

“Are my efforts leading me to the highest spiritual goals and values in life?”

Profound questions regarding the purpose of life have led many individuals and families throughout the world





to search for truth. Often that search has led them to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to the restored gospel.

I wonder if we as Church members might also benefit from asking ourselves from time to time: “Is my experience in the Church working for me? Is it bringing me closer to Christ? Is it blessing me and my family with peace and joy as promised in the gospel?”

Alma posed similar questions to Church members in Zarahemla when he asked: “Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? . . . [And] can [you] feel [it] now?”<sup>1</sup> Such contemplation may help us to refocus or realign our daily efforts with the divine plan of salvation.

Many members will answer with great warmth that their experience as a member of the Church is working exceptionally well for them. They will testify that whether during times of poverty or prosperity, whether things

are pleasant or painful, they find great meaning, peace, and joy because of their commitment to the Lord and their dedicated service in the Church. Every day I meet Church members who are filled with a radiant joy and who demonstrate in word and deed that their lives are immeasurably enriched by the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I also recognize that there are some who have a less-than-fulfilling experience—who feel that their membership in the Church sometimes isn’t quite what they had hoped for.

This saddens me because I know firsthand how the gospel can invigorate and renew one’s spirit—how it can fill our hearts with hope and our minds with light. I know for myself how the fruits of the gospel of Jesus Christ can transform lives from the ordinary and dreary to the extraordinary and sublime.

But why does it seem to work better for some than for others? What is the difference between those whose

experience in the Church fills their souls with songs of redeeming love<sup>2</sup> and those who feel that something is lacking?

As I have pondered these questions, a flood of thoughts came to mind. Today I’d like to share two.

#### **Simplify**

First: are we making our discipleship too complicated?

This beautiful gospel is so simple a child can grasp it, yet so profound and complex that it will take a lifetime—even an eternity—of study and discovery to fully understand it.

But sometimes we take the beautiful lily of God’s truth and gild it with layer upon layer of man-made good ideas, programs, and expectations. Each one, by itself, might be helpful and appropriate for a certain time and circumstance, but when they are laid on top of each other, they can create a mountain of sediment that becomes



so thick and heavy that we risk losing sight of that precious flower we once loved so dearly.

Therefore, as leaders we must strictly protect the Church and the gospel in its purity and plainness and avoid putting unnecessary burdens on our members.

And all of us, as members of the Church, *we* need to make a conscientious effort to devote our energy and time to the things that truly matter, while uplifting our fellowmen and building the kingdom of God.

One sister, a Relief Society instructor, was known for preparing flawless lessons. One time she decided to create a beautiful quilt that would serve as the perfect backdrop to the theme of her lesson. But life intervened—there were children to pick up from school, a neighbor who needed help moving, a husband who had a fever, and a friend who felt lonely. The day of the lesson approached, and the quilt was not completed. Finally, the night before her lesson, she did not sleep much as she worked all night on the quilt.

The next day she was exhausted and barely able to organize her thoughts, but she bravely stood and delivered her lesson.

And the quilt was stunning—the stitches were perfect, the colors vibrant, and the design intricate. And at the center of it all was a single word that triumphantly echoed the theme of her lesson: “Simplify.”

Brothers and sisters, living the gospel doesn’t need to be complicated.

It is really straightforward. It could be described like this:

- Hearing the word of God with earnest intent leads us to believe in God and to trust His promises.<sup>3</sup>
- The more we trust God, the more our hearts are filled with love for Him and for each other.
- Because of our love for God, we desire to follow Him and bring our actions in alignment with His word.
- Because we love God, we want to serve Him; we want to bless the lives of others and help the poor and the needy.
- The more we walk in this path of discipleship, the more we desire to learn the word of God.

And so it goes, each step leading to the next and filling us with ever-increasing faith, hope, and charity.

It is beautifully simple, and it works beautifully.

Brothers and sisters, if you ever think that the gospel isn’t working so well for you, I invite you to step back, look at your life from a higher plane, and simplify your approach to discipleship. Focus on the basic doctrines, principles, and applications of the gospel. I promise that God will guide and bless you on your path to a fulfilling life, and the gospel will definitely work better for you.

#### Start Where You Are

My second suggestion is: start where you are.

Sometimes we feel discouraged because we are not “more” of something—more spiritual, respected, intelligent, healthy, rich, friendly, or capable. Naturally, there is nothing wrong with wanting to improve. God created us to grow and progress. But remember, our weaknesses can help us to be humble and turn us to Christ, who will “make weak things become strong.”<sup>4</sup> Satan, on the other hand, uses our weaknesses to the point that we are discouraged from even trying.

I learned in my life that we don’t need to be “more” of anything to start



to become the person God intended us to become.

God will take you as you are at this very moment and begin to work with you. All you need is a willing heart, a desire to believe, and trust in the Lord.

Gideon saw himself as a poor farmer, the least of his father's house. But God saw him as a mighty man of valor.<sup>5</sup>

When Samuel chose Saul to be king, Saul tried to talk him out of it. Saul was from one of the smallest tribes of the house of Israel. How could he be king?<sup>6</sup> But God saw him as “a choice young man.”<sup>7</sup>

Even the great prophet Moses felt so overwhelmed and discouraged at one point that he wanted to give up and die.<sup>8</sup> But God did not give up on Moses.

My dear brothers and sisters, if we look at ourselves only through our mortal eyes, we may not see ourselves as good enough. But our Heavenly Father sees us as who we truly are and who we can become. He sees us as His sons and daughters, as beings of eternal light with everlasting potential and with a divine destiny.<sup>9</sup>

The Savior's sacrifice opened the door of salvation for all to return to God. His “grace is sufficient for all [who] humble themselves before [God].”<sup>10</sup> His grace is the enabling power that allows access into God's kingdoms of salvation. Because of His grace, we will all be resurrected and saved in a kingdom of glory.

Even the lowest kingdom of glory, the telestial kingdom, “surpasses all understanding,”<sup>11</sup> and numberless people will inherit this salvation.<sup>12</sup>

But the Savior's grace can do much more for us. As members of The



Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we aspire to something unimaginably greater. It is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. It is life eternal in the presence of our Father in Heaven. It is the greatest gift of God.<sup>13</sup> In the celestial kingdom, we receive “of his fulness, and of his glory.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, all that the Father hath shall be given unto us.<sup>15</sup>

Exaltation is our goal; discipleship is our journey.

As you exercise a little faith and begin your walk as a peaceable follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, your heart will change.<sup>16</sup> Your whole being will be filled with light.<sup>17</sup>

God will help you become something greater than you ever thought possible. And you will discover that the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed working in your life. It works.

#### It Works!

Brothers and sisters, dear friends, I pray that we will focus on “the simplicity that is in Christ”<sup>18</sup> and allow His grace to lift and carry us during our journey from where we are now to our glorious destiny in our Father's presence.

As we do so and someone asks us, “How is being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints working for you?” we will be able to say with pride, in all humility, and with great joy, “It works wonderfully! Thank you for asking! Would you like to know more?”

This is my hope, my prayer, my testimony, and my blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Alma 5:14, 26.
2. See Alma 5:26.
3. See Romans 10:17.
4. Ether 12:27.
5. See Judges 6:12–16.
6. See 1 Samuel 9:21.
7. 1 Samuel 9:2.
8. See Numbers 11:14–15.
9. See 1 John 3:1–3.
10. Ether 12:27.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:109.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 76:56.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
16. See 1 Samuel 10:9.
17. See Matthew 6:22.
18. 2 Corinthians 11:3.



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

## God Is at the Helm

*Commandments and covenants are priceless truths and doctrines found in the Old Ship Zion, where God is at the helm.*

In last October's general conference, I invited listeners to follow Brigham Young's counsel to stay on the Old Ship Zion, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to hold on with both hands.<sup>1</sup> Since then, I am happy to know that some of my family and others were listening and have asked me this question: "What's in the Old Ship Zion that we should hang on to?" I reminded them of what President Brigham Young said: "We are on the old ship Zion. . . . [God] is at the helm and will stay there. . . . He dictates, guides and directs. If the people will have implicit confidence in their God, never forsake their covenants nor their God, He will guide us right."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ have outfitted the Old Ship Zion with clear and simple eternal truths that will help us stay the course through the troubled waters of mortal life. Here are just a few.

The Church of Jesus Christ has always been led by living prophets and apostles. Though mortal and subject to human imperfection, the Lord's servants are inspired to help us avoid obstacles that are spiritually life threatening and to help us pass safely through mortality to our final, ultimate, heavenly destination.

During my nearly 40 years of close association, I have been a personal witness as both quiet inspiration and profound revelation have moved to action the prophets and apostles, the other General Authorities, and the auxiliary leaders. While neither perfect nor infallible, these good men and women have been perfectly dedicated to leading the work of the Lord forward as He has directed.

And make no mistake about it: the Lord directs His Church through living

prophets and apostles. This is the way He has always done His work. Indeed, the Savior taught, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me."<sup>3</sup> We cannot separate Christ from His servants. Without His first Apostles, we would not have an eyewitness account of many of His teachings, His ministry, His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His death on the cross. Without their testimonies, we would not have an apostolic witness of the empty tomb and the Resurrection.

He commanded those first Apostles:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."<sup>4</sup>

This commission was renewed in our own day when the Lord called Joseph Smith to restore the Church, with ordained Apostles to declare His gospel one last time before He will come again.



It has always been a challenge for the world to accept living prophets and apostles, but it is so essential to do so in order to fully understand the Atonement and the teachings of Jesus Christ and to receive a fulness of the blessings of the priesthood that are given to those He has called.

Too many people think Church leaders and members should be perfect or nearly perfect. They forget that the Lord's grace is sufficient to accomplish His work through mortals. Our leaders have the best intentions, but sometimes we make mistakes. This is not unique to Church relationships, as the same thing occurs in our relationships among friends, neighbors, and workplace associates and even between spouses and in families.

Looking for human weakness in others is rather easy. However, we make a serious mistake by noticing only the human nature of one another and then failing to see God's hand working through those He has called.

Focusing on how the Lord inspires His chosen leaders and how He moves the Saints to do remarkable and extraordinary things despite their humanity is one way that we hold on to the gospel of Jesus Christ and stay safely aboard the Old Ship Zion.

A second truth is the doctrine of the plan of salvation. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, God gave the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and many additional teachings to the Church. These include a knowledge of the plan of salvation, which is a map of where we came from, our purpose here on earth, and where we are going when we die. The plan also provides us with a unique, eternal perspective that we are God's spirit children. By understanding who our Heavenly Father is and our relationship to Him and to His Beloved



Son, Jesus Christ, we will accept Their commandments and make covenants with Them that will lead us back into Their eternal presence.

Every time I hold a newborn child, I find myself wondering: "Who are you, little one? What will you become through the Atonement of Christ?"

We ask similarly reflective questions when someone we love dies: "Where are they? What are they seeing and experiencing? Does life continue? What will be the nature of our most cherished relationships in the great world of the spirits of the dead?"

In that world, our family has two granddaughters, Sara and Emily, and a grandson, Nathan. With each grandchild's passing, we as a family held on to the gospel truths with both hands. Our questions were answered with comfort and assurance through the Atonement of the Savior. Although we miss our grandchildren, we know they live, and we know we will see them again. How grateful we are for this spiritual understanding in times of personal and familial turbulence.

Another key truth in the Church is that Heavenly Father created Adam and Eve for a lofty purpose. It was their charge—and, subsequently, the charge of their posterity—to create mortal bodies for God's spirit children so they could experience mortality. By this process, Heavenly Father sends His spirit children to earth to learn and grow through the experiences of earth life. Because He loves His children, God sends heavenly messengers and Apostles to teach them about Jesus Christ's central role as our Savior.

Through the centuries, prophets have fulfilled their duty when they have warned people of the dangers before them. The Lord's Apostles are duty bound to watch, warn, and reach out to help those seeking answers to life's questions.

Twenty years ago, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." In that inspired document, we concluded with the following: "We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity,



who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”<sup>5</sup>

As Apostles, we reaffirm this solemn warning again today. Please remember that commandments and covenants are priceless truths and doctrines found in the Old Ship Zion, where God is at the helm.

Another important doctrine that we should cling to is to observe the Sabbath day. This helps us remain unspotted from the world, provides us with physical rest, and gives each of us the spiritual refreshment of worshipping the Father and the Son every Sunday.<sup>6</sup> When we delight in the Sabbath day, it is a sign of our love for Them.<sup>7</sup>

As part of our efforts to make the Sabbath a delight, we have asked local leaders and Church members to remember that sacrament meeting is the Lord’s and should be rooted and grounded in His teachings. The presentation of the ordinance of the sacrament is when we renew our covenants and reconfirm our love for the Savior and remember His sacrifice and His Atonement.

This same spirit of worship should permeate our monthly fast and testimony meetings. This sacrament meeting is for members to briefly express gratitude, love, and appreciation for our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel and to bear personal witness of these things. Fast and testimony meeting is a time to share brief inspirational thoughts and bear solemn testimony. It is not a time to give a speech.

Young children should practice sharing their testimonies in Primary and with their parents in family home evening gatherings until they understand the important meaning of a testimony.

The recent emphasis of making the Sabbath a delight is a direct result of inspiration from the Lord through the leaders of the Church. Ward council members should assist the bishopric several weeks in advance by reviewing music and topics that have been recommended for each sacrament meeting.

All of us are blessed when the Sabbath is filled with love for the Lord at home and at church. When our children are taught in the ways of the Lord, they learn to feel and to respond to His Spirit. We will all desire to attend

each Sunday to partake of the sacrament when we feel the Spirit of the Lord. And all, young and old, who are carrying heavy burdens will feel the spiritual uplift and comfort that comes from a Sabbath day of devoted contemplation of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, Christ is always near, waiting and willing to help us when we pray for help and are willing to repent and come unto Him.

Now, as we ponder just these few truths that exist within the Old Ship Zion, let us stay on board and remember that, by definition, a ship is a vehicle, and the purpose of a vehicle is to take us to a destination.

Our ship’s destination is the full blessings of the gospel, the kingdom of heaven, the celestial glory, and the presence of God!

God’s plan is in place. He is at the helm, and His great and powerful ship flows toward salvation and exaltation. Remember that we cannot get there by jumping out of the boat and trying to swim there by ourselves.



Exaltation is the goal of this mortal journey, and no one gets there without the means of the gospel of Jesus Christ: His Atonement, the ordinances, and the guiding doctrine and principles that are found in the Church.

It is the Church wherein we learn the works of God and accept the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves us. It is within the Church that we form the commitments and covenants of eternal families that become our passport to exaltation. It is the Church that is powered by the priesthood to propel us through the unpredictable waters of mortality.

Let us be grateful for the beautiful Old Ship Zion, for without it we are cast adrift, alone and powerless, swept along without rudder or oar, swirling with the strong currents of the adversary's wind and waves.

Hold tight, brothers and sisters, and sail on within the glorious ship, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we will reach our eternal destination. This is my testimony and prayer for all of us in the name of Him for whom the Old Ship Zion is named, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See M. Russell Ballard, "Stay in the Boat and Hold On!" *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 89–92.
2. Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, Nov. 18, 1857, 291.
3. John 13:20.
4. Matthew 28:19–20.
5. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–23.
7. See Isaiah 58:13–14.



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By Elder Richard J. Maynes  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

## The Joy of Living a Christ-Centered Life

*Our lives must be centered with exactness in Christ if we are to find true joy and peace in this life.*

The world in which we live is putting great pressure on good people everywhere to lower or even abandon their standards of righteous living. However, despite the evils and temptations that surround us each day, we can and will find true joy today in living a Christ-centered life.

Centering our lives in Jesus Christ and His gospel will bring stability and happiness to our lives, as the following examples illustrate.

Elder Taiichi Aoba of the Seventy, who resides in a small mountain village in Shikoku, Japan, was asked to teach a class at a youth conference. "Stand Ye in Holy Places" was selected as the theme of the conference. After considering the theme and what to teach, Elder Aoba decided to use his vocation as a teaching tool. His work is making pottery.

Elder Aoba relates that his classroom of youth really sprang to life when they saw how he was able to almost magically transform the shape of the clay in his hands to plates, bowls, and cups. After his demonstration, he asked them if any of them would like to give it a try. They all raised their hands.

Elder Aoba had several of the youth come forward to try out their new interest. They assumed, after watching him, that this would be quite simple. However, none of them were successful in their attempts to make even a simple bowl. They proclaimed: "I can't do this!" "Why is this so hard?" "This is so difficult." These comments took place as the clay flew all around the room.



He asked the youth why they were having such difficulty making pottery. They responded with various answers: “I don’t have any experience,” “I have never been trained,” or “I have no talent.” Based on the result, what they said was all true; however, the most important reason for their failure was due to the clay not being centered on the wheel. The youth thought that they had placed the clay in the center, but from a professional’s perspective, it wasn’t in the exact center. He then told them, “Let’s try this one more time.”



*Like the clay on Elder Taiichi Aoba’s potter’s wheel, our lives must be centered with exactness in Christ if we are to find true joy and peace in this life.*

This time, Elder Aoba placed the clay in the exact center of the wheel and then started to turn the wheel, making a hole in the middle of the clay. Several of the youth tried again. This time everyone started clapping when they said: “Wow, it’s not shaking,” “I can do this,” or “I did it!” Of course, the shapes weren’t perfect, but the outcome was totally different from the first attempt. The reason for their success

was because the clay was perfectly centered on the wheel.

The world in which we live is similar to the potter’s spinning wheel, and the speed of that wheel is increasing. Like the clay on the potter’s wheel, we must be centered as well. Our core, the center of our lives, must be Jesus Christ and His gospel. Living a Christ-centered life means we learn about Jesus Christ and His gospel and then we follow His example and keep His commandments with exactness.

The ancient prophet Isaiah stated, “But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”<sup>1</sup>

If our lives are centered in Jesus Christ, He can successfully mold us into who we need to be in order to return to His and Heavenly Father’s presence in the celestial kingdom. The joy we experience in this life will be in direct proportion to how well our lives are

centered on the teachings, example, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I was born into a multigenerational Latter-day Saint family, so the blessings and joy of having the gospel of Jesus Christ as the basis of our family culture was woven into our everyday life. It wasn’t until my full-time mission as a young man that I realized the incredibly positive impact the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has on those who have never previously experienced its blessings in their lives. This verse in Matthew reflects the process that people who are converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ experience: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”<sup>2</sup>

Let me share with you an example from the Book of Mormon that illustrates what one convert was willing to pay in order to receive the joy associated with finding the treasure spoken



of by Jesus in the parable of the treasure hidden in the field.

Remember in the book of Alma chapter 20, Ammon and Lamoni were traveling to the city of Middoni for the purpose of finding and delivering Ammon's brother Aaron out of prison. During their journey they encountered Lamoni's father, who was the Lamanite king over all the land.

The king was very upset that his son Lamoni was traveling with Ammon, a Nephite missionary, whom he considered an enemy. He felt that his son should have attended a great feast he had sponsored for his sons and his people. The Lamanite king was so upset that he commanded his son Lamoni to slay Ammon with his sword. When Lamoni refused, the king drew his own sword to slay his son for disobedience; however, Ammon interceded to save Lamoni's life. He ultimately overpowered the king and could have killed him.

This is what the king said to Ammon after finding himself in this life-and-death situation: "If thou wilt spare me I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

So the king was willing to pay the price of one-half his kingdom in order to spare his own life. The king must have been astonished when Ammon requested only that he release his brother Aaron and his associates from prison and that the king's son Lamoni retain his kingdom.

Later on, due to this encounter, Ammon's brother Aaron was released from the Middoni prison. After his release he was inspired to travel to where the Lamanite king ruled over the land. Aaron was introduced to the king and had the privilege of teaching him the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including the great plan



of redemption. The teachings of Aaron inspired the king deeply.

The king's response to Aaron's teachings is found in verse 15 of Alma chapter 22: "And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy."

Amazingly enough, in contrast to giving up one-half his kingdom to spare his life, the Lamanite king was now willing to give up his entire kingdom that he might receive the joy that comes from understanding, accepting, and living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My wife, Nancy, is also a convert to the Church. She has mentioned to me many times over the years the joy she has felt in her life since finding, accepting, and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. What follows is a reflection from Sister Maynes on her experience:

"As a young adult in my early 20s, I was at a point in my life when I knew

I needed to change something in order to be a happier person. I felt like I was adrift with no real purpose and direction, and I didn't know where to go to find it. I had always known that Heavenly Father existed and occasionally throughout my life had said prayers, feeling that He listened.

"As I began my search, I attended several different churches but would always fall back into the same feelings and discouragement. I feel very blessed because my prayer for direction and purpose in life was ultimately answered, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was brought into my life. For the first time I felt like I had a purpose, and the plan of happiness brought real joy into my life."

Another experience from the Book of Mormon clearly illustrates how living a Christ-centered life can fill us with great happiness even when we are surrounded with incredible hardships.

After the prophet Lehi and his family left Jerusalem in 600 B.C., they wandered approximately eight years in the wilderness until they finally arrived in a land they called Bountiful, which was near the seashore. Nephi describes their life of tribulation in the wilderness this way: "We had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, . . . even so

much that we cannot write them all.”<sup>4</sup>

While living in Bountiful, Nephi was charged by the Lord with the responsibility to build the ship which would take them across the sea to the promised land. After they arrived in the promised land, great conflicts continued to arise between the people who centered their lives in Christ and the nonbelievers, who followed the examples of Laman and Lemuel. Ultimately, the risk of violence between the two groups was so great that Nephi and those who followed the teachings of the Lord separated themselves and fled into the wilderness for safety. At this point in time, some 30 years after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem, Nephi makes a well-documented and somewhat surprising statement, especially after recording in the scriptures the many afflictions and tribulations they had faced for so long. These are his words: “And it came to pass that we [did live] after the manner of happiness.”<sup>5</sup> Despite their hardships, they were able to live after the manner of happiness because they were centered in Christ and His gospel.

Brothers and sisters, like the clay on the potter’s wheel, our lives must be centered with exactness in Christ if we are to find true joy and peace in this life. The examples of the Lamanite king; my wife, Nancy; and the Nephite people all support this true principle.

I bear you my witness today that we too can find that peace, that happiness, that true joy if we choose to live Christ-centered lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Isaiah 64:8.
2. Matthew 13:44 (Revised Standard Version).
3. Alma 20:23.
4. 1 Nephi 17:6.
5. 2 Nephi 5:27.



By Neill F. Marriott

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

## Yielding Our Hearts to God

*When we open ourselves to the Spirit, we learn God’s way and feel His will.*

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, in April general conference, spoke of the need “to reform our personal lives.”<sup>1</sup>

I submit that personal reformation begins with a change of heart—no matter your life experiences or your place of birth.

I come from the Deep South of the United States, and in my youth the words of old Protestant hymns taught me of a true disciple’s heart—one that has been changed. Consider these lyrics, so dear to me:

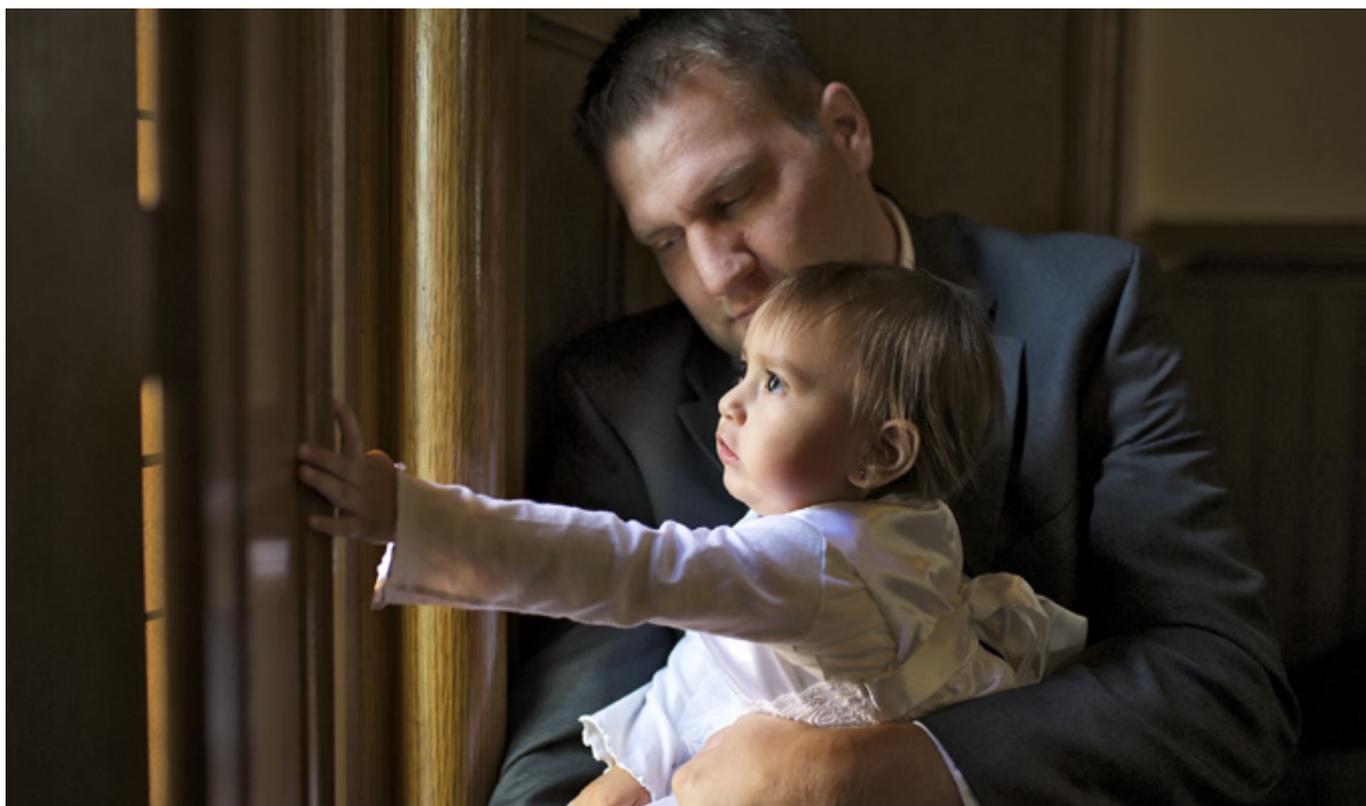
*Have Thine own way, Lord!  
Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter;  
I am the clay.  
Mould me and make me  
After Thy will,  
While I am waiting,  
Yielded and still.*<sup>2</sup>

How do we, a modern, busy, competitive people, become yielded and still? How do we make the Lord’s ways our ways? I believe we begin by learning of Him and praying for understanding. As our trust in Him grows, we open our hearts, seek to do His will, and wait for answers that will help us understand.

My own change of heart started when, as a 12-year-old, I began to search for God. Other than saying the Lord’s Prayer,<sup>3</sup> I didn’t really know how to pray. I remember kneeling, hoping I could feel His love, and asking, “Where are You, Heavenly Father? I know You must be out there somewhere, but where?” All through my teen years, I asked. I did have glimpses of the reality of Jesus Christ, but Heavenly Father, in His wisdom, let me seek and wait for 10 years.

In 1970, when the missionaries taught me about the Father’s plan of salvation and of the Savior’s Atonement,





my waiting ended. I embraced these truths and was baptized.

Based on this knowledge of the Lord's mercy and power, my husband, children, and I chose this family motto: "It will all work out." Yet how can we say those words to one another when deep troubles come and answers aren't readily available?

When our delightful, worthy, 21-year-old daughter, Georgia, was hospitalized in critical condition following a bike accident, our family said, "It will all work out." As I flew immediately from our mission in Brazil to Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, to be with her, I clung to our family motto. However, our lovely daughter passed into the spirit world just hours before my plane landed. With grief and shock running through our family like a current, how could we look at one another and *still* say, "It will all work out"?

Following Georgia's mortal death, our feelings were raw, we struggled, and still today we have moments of great sorrow, but we hold to the understanding that no one ever really dies. Despite our anguish when Georgia's

physical body stopped functioning, we had faith that she went right on living as a spirit, and we believe we will live with her eternally if we adhere to our temple covenants. Faith in our Redeemer and His Resurrection, faith in His priesthood power, and faith in eternal sealings let us state our motto with conviction.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "If you do your best, it will all work out. Put your trust in God. . . . The Lord will not forsake us."<sup>4</sup>

Our family motto doesn't say, "It will all work out *now*." It speaks of our hope in the eternal outcome—not necessarily of present results. Scripture says, "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good."<sup>5</sup> This doesn't mean all things *are* good, but for the meek and faithful, things—both positive and negative—work *together* for good, and the timing is the Lord's. We wait on Him, sometimes like Job in his suffering, knowing that God "maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole."<sup>6</sup> A meek heart accepts the trial

and the waiting for that time of healing and wholeness to come.

When we open ourselves to the Spirit, we learn God's way and feel His will. During the sacrament, which I call the heart of the Sabbath, I have found that after I pray for forgiveness of sins, it is instructive for me to ask Heavenly Father, "Father, is there more?" When we are yielded and still, our minds can be directed to *something more* we may need to change—something that is limiting our capacity to receive spiritual guidance or even healing and help.

For example, perhaps I have a carefully guarded resentment toward someone. When I ask if there is more to confess, that "secret" comes clearly to my memory. In essence, the Holy Ghost is whispering, "You honestly asked if there was more, and here it is. Your resentment diminishes your progress and damages your ability to have healthy relationships. You can let this go." Oh, it is hard work—we may feel quite justified in our animosity—but yielding to the Lord's way is the only way to lasting happiness.



In time and by degrees, we receive His gracious strength and direction—perhaps leading us to frequent the temple or to study more deeply the Savior’s Atonement or to consult with a friend, a bishop, a professional counselor, or even a doctor. The healing of our heart begins when we submit to and worship God.

True worship begins when our hearts are right before the Father and the Son. What is our heart condition today? Paradoxically, in order to have a healed and faithful heart, we must first allow it to break before the Lord. “Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit,”<sup>7</sup> the Lord declares. The result of sacrificing our heart, or our will, to the Lord is that we receive the spiritual guidance we need.

With a growing understanding of the Lord’s grace and mercy, we will find that our self-willed hearts begin to crack and break in gratitude. Then we reach for Him, yearning to yoke ourselves to the Only Begotten Son of God. In our brokenhearted reaching and yoking, we receive new hope and fresh guidance through the Holy Ghost.

I have struggled to banish the mortal desire to have things *my* way, eventually realizing that my way is oh so lacking, limited, and inferior to the way of Jesus Christ. “*His* way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>8</sup> Can we love Jesus Christ and His way more than we love ourselves and our own agenda?

Some may think they have failed too many times and feel too weak to change sinful acts or worldly desires of the heart. However, as covenant Israel, we don’t just try and try on our own to change. If we earnestly appeal to God, He takes us as we are—and makes us more than we ever imagined. Noted theologian Robert L. Millet writes of “a healthy longing to improve,” balanced with the spiritual “assurance that in and through Jesus Christ we are going to make it.”<sup>9</sup> With such an understanding, we can honestly say to Heavenly Father:

*So trusting my all to thy tender care,  
And knowing thou lovest me,  
I’ll do thy will with a heart sincere:  
I’ll be what you want me to be.*<sup>10</sup>

When we offer our broken heart to Jesus Christ, He accepts our offering. He takes us back. No matter what losses, wounds, and rejection we have suffered, His grace and healing are mightier than all. Truly yoked to the Savior, we can say with confidence, “It will all work out.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Parable of the Sower,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 32.
2. “Have Thine Own Way, Lord,” *The Cokesbury Worship Hymnal*, no. 72.
3. See Matthew 6:9–13.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, Jordan Utah South regional conference, priesthood session, Mar. 1, 1997; see also “Excerpts from Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 73.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
6. Job 5:18.
7. 3 Nephi 9:20.
8. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 3; emphasis added.
9. Robert L. Millet, *After All We Can Do: Grace Works* (2003), 133.
10. “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270.



By Elder Larry R. Lawrence  
Of the Seventy

## What Lack I Yet?

*If we are humble and teachable, the Holy Ghost will prompt us to improve and lead us home, but we need to ask the Lord for directions along the way.*

When I was a young adult, I began investigating the Church. At first I was drawn to the gospel by the examples of my Latter-day Saint friends, but eventually I was attracted to the unique doctrine. When I learned that faithful men and women could keep progressing and ultimately become like our heavenly parents, I was frankly amazed. I loved the concept; it rang true to me.

Soon after my baptism, I was studying the Sermon on the Mount, and I recognized that Jesus taught this same truth about eternal progression in the Bible. He said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>1</sup>

I have been a member of the Church now for over 40 years, and whenever I read this verse of scripture, I am reminded of our purpose here on earth. We came to learn and improve until we gradually become sanctified or perfected in Christ.

The journey of discipleship is not an easy one. It has been called a “course of steady improvement.”<sup>2</sup> As we travel along that strait and narrow path, the Spirit continually challenges us to be better and to climb higher. The Holy Ghost makes an ideal traveling companion. If we are humble and

teachable, He will take us by the hand and lead us home.

However, we need to ask the Lord for directions along the way. We have to ask some difficult questions, like “What do I need to change?” “How can I improve?” “What weakness needs strengthening?”

Let’s consider the New Testament account of the rich young ruler. He was a righteous young man who was already keeping the Ten Commandments, but he wanted to become better. His goal was eternal life.

When he met the Savior, he asked, “What lack I yet?”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus answered immediately, giving counsel that was intended specifically for the rich young man. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and . . . come and follow me.”<sup>4</sup>

The young man was stunned; he had never considered such a sacrifice. He was humble enough to ask the Lord but not faithful enough to follow the divine counsel he was given. We must be willing to act when we receive an answer.

President Harold B. Lee taught, “Every one of us, if we would reach perfection, must [at] one time ask ourselves this question, ‘What lack I yet?’”<sup>5</sup>

I knew a faithful mother who humbled herself and asked, “What is keeping me from progressing?” In her case, the response from the Spirit came immediately: “Stop complaining.” This answer surprised her; she had never thought of herself as a complainer. However, the message from the Holy Ghost was very clear. In the days that followed, she became conscious of her





Years ago I read in a Church magazine the story of a girl who was living away from home and going to college. She was behind in her classes, her social life was not what she had hoped for, and she was generally unhappy. Finally one day she fell to her knees and cried out, “What can I do to improve my life?” The Holy Ghost whispered, “Get up and clean your room.” This prompting came as a complete surprise, but it was just the start she needed. After taking time to organize and put things in order, she felt the Spirit fill her room and lift her heart.

The Holy Ghost doesn’t tell us to improve everything at once. If He did, we would become discouraged and give up. The Spirit works with us at our own speed, one step at a time, or as the Lord has taught, “line upon line, precept upon precept, . . . and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, . . . for unto him that receiveth I will give more.”<sup>6</sup> For example, if the Holy Ghost has been prompting you to say “thank you” more often, and you respond to that prompting, then He may feel it’s time for you to move on to something more challenging—like learning to say, “I’m sorry; that was my fault.”

A perfect time to ask, “What lack I yet?” is when we take the sacrament. The Apostle Paul taught that this is a time for each of us to examine ourselves.<sup>7</sup> In this reverent atmosphere, as our thoughts are turned heavenward, the Lord can gently tell us what we need to work on next.

Like you, I have received many messages from the Spirit over the years showing me how I could improve. Let me share a few personal examples of messages that I took to heart. These promptings have included:

habit of complaining. Grateful for the prompting to improve, she determined to count her blessings instead of her challenges. Within days, she felt the warm approval of the Spirit.

A humble young man who couldn’t seem to find the right young woman went to the Lord for help: “What is keeping me from being the right man?” he asked. This answer came into his mind and heart: “Clean up your language.” At that moment, he realized that several crude expressions had become part of his vocabulary, and he committed to change.

A single sister bravely asked the question: “What do I need to change?” and the Spirit whispered to her, “Don’t interrupt people when they are talking.” The Holy Ghost really does give

customized counsel. He is a completely honest companion and will tell us things that no one else knows or has the courage to say.

One returned missionary found himself stressed with a very heavy schedule. He was trying to find time for work, studies, family, and a Church calling. He asked the Lord for counsel: “How can I feel at peace with all that I need to do?” The answer was not what he expected; he received the impression that he should more carefully observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. He decided to dedicate Sunday to God’s service—to lay aside his school courses on that day and study the gospel instead. This small adjustment brought the peace and balance that he was seeking.

- Don't raise your voice.
- Organize yourself; create a daily list of things to do.
- Take better care of your body by eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Increase your temple attendance.
- Take time to ponder before you pray.
- Ask your wife for her counsel.
- And be patient when driving; don't exceed the speed limit. (I'm still working on that last one.)

The atoning sacrifice of the Savior is what makes perfection or sanctification possible. We could never do it on our own, but God's grace is sufficient to help us. As Elder David A. Bednar once observed: "Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better."<sup>8</sup>

I would like to suggest that each of you participate in a spiritual exercise sometime soon, perhaps even tonight while saying your prayers. Humbly ask the Lord the following question: "What is keeping me from progressing?" In other words: "What lack I yet?" Then wait quietly for a response. If you are sincere, the answer will soon become clear. It will be revelation intended just for you.

Perhaps the Spirit will tell you that you need to forgive someone. Or you may receive a message to be more selective about the movies you watch or the music you listen to. You may feel impressed to be more honest in your business dealings or more generous in your fast offerings. The possibilities are endless.

The Spirit can show us our weaknesses, but He is also able to show

us our strengths. Sometimes we need to ask what we are doing right so that the Lord can lift and encourage us. When we read our patriarchal blessings, we are reminded that our Heavenly Father knows our divine potential. He rejoices every time we take a step forward. To Him, our direction is ever more important than our speed.

Be persistent, brothers and sisters, but never be discouraged. We will have to go beyond the grave before we actually reach perfection, but here in mortality we can lay the foundation. "It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today."<sup>9</sup>

If spiritual growth is not a priority in our lives, if we are not on a course of steady improvement, we will miss out on the important experiences that God wants to give us.

Years ago I read these words of President Spencer W. Kimball, which had a lasting impact on me. He said: "I have learned that where there is a prayerful heart, a hungering after righteousness, a forsaking of sins, and

obedience to the commandments of God, the Lord pours out more and more light until there is finally power to pierce the heavenly veil. . . . A person of such righteousness has the priceless promise that one day he shall see the Lord's face and know that he is."<sup>10</sup>

It is my prayer that this ultimate experience can be ours someday as we allow the Holy Ghost to lead us home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 5:48.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, "Testifying of the Great and Glorious Atonement," *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 12; *Liahona*, Apr. 2002, 9.
3. Matthew 19:20.
4. Matthew 19:21.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 197.
6. 2 Nephi 28:30.
7. See 1 Corinthians 11:28.
8. David A. Bednar, "The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality," *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 14.
9. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:18.
10. Spencer W. Kimball, "Give the Lord Your Loyalty," *Ensign*, Mar. 1980, 4; *Tambuli*, Feb. 1981, 47.





By Elder Francisco J. Viñas  
Of the Seventy

# The Pleasing Word of God

*The pleasing word of God shows us the need for continuous repentance in our lives so we can keep the influence of the Holy Ghost.*

Many of us who are meeting to participate in this conference have come “to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul” (Jacob 2:8). That word can be found in the scriptures and in the messages from our leaders, bringing us hope and comfort in the darkness of affliction.

Through our experience in life, we learn that joy in this world is not full, but in Jesus Christ our joy is full (see D&C 101:36). He will give us strength so we will not have to suffer any manner of afflictions save they are swallowed up in His joy (see Alma 31:38).

Our hearts can be filled with anguish when we see a loved one suffer the pains of a horrible disease.

The death of someone we love can leave an empty place in our soul.

When some of our children stray from the gospel path, we may feel guilt and uncertainty about their eternal destiny.

The hope of achieving a celestial marriage and establishing a family in this life can begin to fade as time goes by.

Abuse by those who are supposed

to love us can leave deeply painful marks in our soul.

The infidelity of a spouse can destroy a relationship that we hoped would be eternal.

These and many other afflictions inherent to this probationary state sometimes cause us to ask ourselves the same question that the Prophet Joseph Smith asked: “O God, where art thou?” (D&C 121:1).

In those difficult moments in our lives, the pleasing word of God that heals the wounded soul brings the following message of comfort to our heart and mind:

“Peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7–8).

The pleasing word of God fills us with hope, because we know that those who are faithful in tribulation will have the greater reward in the kingdom of heaven and that “after much tribulation come the blessings” (see D&C 58:3–4).

The pleasing word of God, as spoken through the prophets, gives us the security that our eternal sealing, sustained by our faithfulness to the divine promises that we were given for our valiant service in the cause of truth, will bless us and our posterity (see Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 110).

It also gives us the security that, after we have lived a faithful life, we will not





lose any blessing for not having done certain things if we were never given the opportunity to do them. If we have lived faithfully until the time of our death, we “will have all the blessings, exaltation, and glory that any man or woman [who has had that opportunity] will have.” (See *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 138.)

Now, it is important to understand that some suffering and affliction can also enter our lives if we fail to truly repent of our sins. President Marion G. Romney taught: “The suffering and distress endured by people of this earth is the result of unrepented and unremitted sin. . . . Just as suffering and sorrow attend sin, so happiness and joy attend forgiveness of sins” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 11).

Why does lack of repentance cause suffering and pain?

One of the possible answers is that “a punishment [was] affixed, and a just law given, which brought [about] remorse of conscience” (Alma 42:18; see also verse 16). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we are the ones who condemn ourselves and that it

is the torment of disappointment in our mind that makes it as intense as a burning lake of fire and brimstone (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 224).

If we attempt to appease our conscience by trying to “excuse [ourselves] in the least point because of [our] sins” (Alma 42:30) or by trying to hide them, the only thing we will accomplish is to offend the Spirit (see D&C 121:37) and delay our repentance. This type of relief, besides being temporary, will ultimately bring more pain and grief into our lives and will diminish our possibility of receiving a remission of our sins.

For this type of suffering, the pleasing word of God also brings comfort and hope; it tells us that there is relief from the pain caused by the effects of sin. This relief comes from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and takes effect if we exercise faith in Him, repent, and are obedient to His commandments.

It is important that we realize that just like the remission of sins, repentance is a process and not something that happens at one particular moment. It requires consistency in each of its steps.

For example, when we partake of the sacrament, we show the Lord that we are going to remember Him always and keep His commandments. That is an expression of our sincere intent.

The moment we begin to remember Him and keep His commandments every day—and not just on the Sabbath day—is when the remission of our sins begins to gradually take effect and His promise of having His Spirit with us begins to be fulfilled.

Without the proper obedience that must accompany our intent, the effect of remission may disappear before long and the companionship of the Spirit begins to withdraw. We will run the risk of honoring Him with our lips while removing our hearts from Him (see 2 Nephi 27:25).

In addition to comforting us, the pleasing word of God warns us that this process of receiving a remission of our sins can be interrupted when we become entangled “in the vanities of the world,” and it can be resumed through faith if we sincerely repent and humble ourselves (see D&C 20:5–6).

What might be some of those vanities that can interfere in the process of



San Pedro, Belize

receiving a remission of our sins and that are associated with keeping the Sabbath day holy?

Some examples include arriving late for sacrament meeting without a valid reason; arriving, without previously having examined ourselves, to eat the bread and drink from the cup unworthily (see 1 Corinthians 11:28); and arriving without first having confessed our sins and having asked God for forgiveness for them.

Other examples: being irreverent by exchanging messages on our electronic devices, leaving the meeting after partaking of the sacrament, and engaging in activities in our homes that are inappropriate for that sacred day.

What might be one of the reasons why we, knowing all these things, often fail to keep the Sabbath day holy?

In the book of Isaiah, we can find an answer that, though related to the Sabbath, also applies to other commandments that we must keep: “Turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day” (Isaiah 58:13).

The key words are “turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure,” or in other words, doing God’s will. Oftentimes, our will—shaped by the desires,

appetites, and passions of the natural man—conflicts with the will of God. The prophet Brigham Young taught that “when the will, passions, and feelings of a person are perfectly submissive to God and his requirements, that person is sanctified.—It is, for my will to be swallowed up in the will of God, that will lead me into all good, and crown me ultimately with immortality and eternal lives” (*Deseret News*, Sept. 7, 1854, 1).

The pleasing word of God invites us to use the power of the Atonement of Christ to apply it to ourselves and become reconciled with His will—and not with the will of the devil and the flesh—so we, through His grace, can be saved (see 2 Nephi 10:24–25).

The pleasing word of God that we share today shows us the need for continuous repentance in our lives so we can keep the influence of the Holy Ghost for as long as possible.

Having the companionship of the Spirit will make us better people. “It will whisper peace and joy to [our] souls, . . . it will take malice, hatred, envying, strife, and all evil from [our] hearts; and [our] whole desire will be to do good, bring forth

righteousness, and build up the kingdom of God” (see *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 98).

With the influence of the Holy Ghost, we will not be offended, nor will we offend others; we will feel happier, and our minds will be cleaner.



Our love for others will increase. We will be more willing to forgive and spread happiness to those around us.

We will feel grateful to see how others progress, and we will seek the good in others.

It is my prayer that we may experience the joy that comes from striving to live in righteousness and that we may keep the companionship of the Holy Ghost in our lives through sincere and continuous repentance. We will become better people, and our families will be blessed. Of these principles I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

# Shipshape and Bristol Fashion: Be Temple Worthy—in Good Times and Bad Times

*Adherence to sacred gospel principles will allow us to be temple worthy, enable us to find happiness in this life, and lead us back to our heavenly home.*

The prophet Lehi declared, “If there be no righteousness there be no happiness.”<sup>1</sup>

The adversary has been successful in planting a great myth in the minds of many people. He and his emissaries declare that the real choice we have is between happiness and pleasure *now in this life* and happiness in a *life to come* (which the adversary asserts may not exist). This myth is a false choice, but it is very seductive.<sup>2</sup>

The ultimate noble purpose of God’s plan of happiness is for righteous disciples and covenant families to be united in love, harmony, and peace in this life<sup>3</sup> and attain celestial glory in the eternities with God the Father, our Creator; and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior.<sup>4</sup>

When I was a young missionary assigned to the British Mission, my

first area of labor was in what was then the Bristol District. One of the local Church leaders emphasized that missionaries serving in that area needed to be “shipshape and Bristol fashion.”



Initially I didn’t understand the point he was making. I soon learned the history and meaning of the nautical phrase “shipshape and Bristol fashion.” At one time Bristol was the second busiest port in the United Kingdom. It had a very high tidal range of 43 feet (13 m), the second highest in the world. At low tide when the water receded, the old ships would hit bottom and fall on their sides, and if the ships were not well built, they would be damaged. In addition, everything that was not carefully stowed away or tied down would be thrown in a chaotic fashion and ruined or spoiled.<sup>5</sup> After I understood what that phrase meant, it was clear that this leader was telling us that, as missionaries, we must be righteous, follow rules, and be prepared for difficult situations.

This same challenge is applicable to each of us. I would describe being “shipshape and Bristol fashion” as being temple worthy—in good times and in bad times.

While the fluctuation of the tide in the Bristol Channel is somewhat predictable and can be prepared for, the storms and temptations of this life are often unpredictable. But this we know: they will come! In order to overcome the challenges and temptations that each of us inevitably faces, it will require righteous preparation and the use of divinely provided protections. We must determine to be temple worthy regardless of what befalls us. If we are prepared, we shall not fear.<sup>6</sup>

Happiness in this life and happiness in the life to come are interconnected by righteousness. Even in the period between death and the Resurrection, “the spirits of those who are *righteous* are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace.”<sup>7</sup>



*Above: Just as for the old ships in Bristol Harbor, there will be times when the tide goes out and everything keeping us afloat disappears. Amid such trials, living and maintaining temple-worthy lives will hold together all that really matters. Right: Exercising self-control and living righteously strengthen our ability to resist temptation.*

At the commencement of the Savior's earthly ministry in Israel and later among the Nephites, the Savior addressed the issue of happiness both in this life and in eternity. He stressed ordinances, but He also placed great emphasis on moral behavior. For example, disciples would be blessed if they would hunger and thirst after righteousness, be merciful, be pure in heart, be peacemakers, and follow other basic moral principles. Clearly, our Lord Jesus Christ emphasized, as a foundational doctrinal message, both righteous attitudes and conduct in day-to-day living. His teachings not only replaced and transcended elements of the law of Moses<sup>8</sup> but also were a rejection of the false philosophies of men.

For many centuries the gospel of Jesus Christ has inspired beliefs and established standards of conduct as to what is righteous, desirable, and moral and results in happiness, felicity, and joy. However, the principles and basic morality the Savior taught are under serious attack in today's world. Christianity is under attack. Many believe that what is moral has basically changed.<sup>9</sup>

We live in difficult times. There is an increased tendency to "call evil good, and good evil."<sup>10</sup> A world that emphasizes self-aggrandizement and secularism is cause for great concern. One prominent writer, not of our faith, has put it this way: "Unfortunately I see little evidence that people are actually happier in the emerging dispensation, or that their children are better off, or

that the cause of social justice is well-served, or that declining marriage rates and thinning family trees . . . promise anything save greater loneliness for the majority, and stagnation overall."<sup>11</sup>

As disciples of the Savior, we are expected to plan and prepare. In the plan of happiness, moral agency is a central organizing principle and our choices matter.<sup>12</sup> The Savior emphasized this throughout His ministry, including in His parables of the foolish virgins and



the talents.<sup>13</sup> In each of these, the Lord commended preparation and action and condemned procrastination and idleness.

I recognize that, despite the overwhelming happiness embodied in God's divine plan, sometimes it can feel far away and disconnected from our current circumstances. It may feel beyond our reach as struggling disciples. From our limited perspective, current temptations and distractions can seem attractive. The rewards for resisting those temptations, on the other hand, can feel distant and unattainable. But a true understanding of the Father's plan reveals that the rewards of righteousness are available right now. Wickedness, such as immoral conduct, is never part of the answer.

Alma said it clearly to his son Corianton: “Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.”<sup>14</sup>

Our doctrine is clearly stated by Amulek in Alma 34:32: “Behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”

How, then, do we prepare in such a difficult time? In addition to being temple worthy, there are many principles that contribute to righteousness. I will emphasize three.

#### **First: Righteous Self-Control and Conduct**

I believe that sometimes our loving Father in Heaven must view us with the amusement we feel when we watch our own small children as they learn and grow. We all stumble and fall as we gain experience.

I appreciated the conference address President Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave in 2010<sup>15</sup> about the famous marshmallow experiment conducted at Stanford University in the 1960s. You will remember that four-year-olds were given a single marshmallow. If they could wait for 15 or 20 minutes without eating it, they would receive a second marshmallow. Videos have been produced showing the contortions that many children used to avoid eating the marshmallow. Some did not succeed.<sup>16</sup>

Last year the professor who conducted the original experiment, Dr. Walter Mischel, wrote a book in which he said the study grew in part out of his concerns about self-control and his own addiction to smoking. He was particularly concerned after the U.S. Surgeon General’s report of 1964 concluded that smoking caused lung cancer.<sup>17</sup> After years of study, one of his professional colleagues reported that “self-control is like a muscle: the more you use it, the stronger it gets. Avoiding

something tempting once will help you develop the ability to resist other temptations in the future.”<sup>18</sup>

A principle of eternal progression is that exercising self-control and living righteously strengthen our ability to resist temptation. This is true both in the spiritual realm and in temporal matters.

Our missionaries are an excellent example. They develop Christlike attributes and emphasize obedience and spirituality. They are expected to adhere to a rigorous schedule and spend their days in the service of others. They have a modest, conservative appearance instead of the casual or immodest manner of dress so prevalent today. Their conduct and appearance convey a moral, serious message.<sup>19</sup>

We have approximately 230,000 young people who are currently serving as missionaries or who have returned from missionary service in the last five years. They have developed remarkable spiritual strength and self-discipline that need to be continually exercised, or these qualities will atrophy just like muscles that are not used. All of us need to develop and demonstrate conduct and appearance that declare we are true followers of Christ. Those who abandon either righteous conduct or a wholesome, modest appearance expose themselves to lifestyles that bring neither joy nor happiness.

The restored gospel gives us the blueprint of the plan of happiness and an incentive to understand and exercise self-control and avoid temptation. It also teaches us how to repent when violations have occurred.

#### **Second: Honoring the Sabbath Will Increase Righteousness and Be a Protection for the Family**

The early Christian Church changed observance of the Sabbath from

Saturday to Sunday to commemorate the Lord’s Resurrection. Other basic sacred purposes of the Sabbath remained unchanged. For Jews and Christians, the Sabbath symbolizes the mighty works of God.<sup>20</sup>

My wife and I, and two of my colleagues and their wives, recently participated in a Jewish Shabbat (Sabbath) at the invitation of a dear friend, Robert Abrams and his wife, Diane, in their New York home.<sup>21</sup> It commenced at the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath on a Friday evening. The focus was honoring God as the Creator. It began by blessing the family and singing a Sabbath hymn.<sup>22</sup> We joined in the ceremonial washing of hands, the blessing of the bread, the prayers, the kosher meal, the recitation of scripture, and singing Sabbath songs in a celebratory mood. We listened to the Hebrew words, following along with English translations. The most poignant scriptures read from the Old Testament, which are also dear to us, were from Isaiah, declaring the Sabbath a delight,<sup>23</sup> and from Ezekiel, that the Sabbath “shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.”<sup>24</sup>

The overwhelming impression from this wonderful evening was of family love, devotion, and accountability to God. As I thought about this event, I reflected on the extreme persecution that the Jews have experienced over centuries. Clearly, honoring the Sabbath has been “a perpetual covenant,” preserving and blessing the Jewish people in fulfillment of scripture.<sup>25</sup> It has also contributed to the extraordinary family life and happiness that are evident in the lives of many Jewish people.<sup>26</sup>

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, honoring the Sabbath is a form of righteousness that



will bless and strengthen families, connect us with our Creator, and increase happiness. The Sabbath can help separate us from that which is frivolous, inappropriate, or immoral. It allows us to be in the world but not of the world.

In the last six months, a most remarkable change has occurred in the Church. This has been in the response of the members to renewed emphasis on the Sabbath by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve and to President Russell M. Nelson’s challenge to make the Sabbath a delight.<sup>27</sup> Many members understand that truly keeping the Sabbath day holy is a refuge from the storms of this life. It is also a sign of our devotion to our Father in Heaven and an increased understanding of the sacredness of sacrament meeting. Still, we have a long way to go, but we have a wonderful beginning. I challenge all of us to continue to embrace this counsel and improve our Sabbath worship.

### Third: Divine Protections Are Provided When We Are Righteous

As part of God’s divine plan, we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift “is the right to have, whenever one is worthy, the companionship of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>28</sup> This member of the Godhead serves as a cleansing agent if the gospel is first in our lives. He also is a voice of warning against evil and a voice of protection against danger. As we navigate the seas of life, following the impressions of the Holy Ghost is essential. The Spirit will help us avoid

temptations and dangers, and comfort and lead us through challenges. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”<sup>29</sup>

Adherence to sacred gospel principles will allow us to be temple worthy, enable us to find happiness in this life, and lead us back to our heavenly home.

My dear brothers and sisters, life is not easy, nor was it meant to be. It is a time of testing and trial. Like the old ships in Bristol Harbor, there will be times when the tide goes out and it seems as if everything in this world keeping us afloat disappears. We may hit the bottom and even be tipped over on our sides. Amid such trials, I promise you that living and maintaining temple-worthy lives will hold together all that really matters. The sweet blessings of peace, happiness, and joy, along with the blessings of eternal life and celestial glory with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, will be realized. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:13. This scripture is part of a parallelism in the Book of Mormon. It is interesting that many of the prophets whose writings and sermons are included in the Book of Mormon used this literary approach to emphasize important doctrinal concepts. See, for example, 2 Nephi 9:25 (Jacob) and 2 Nephi 11:7 (Nephi).
2. See 2 Nephi 28.
3. See 4 Nephi 1:15–17.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
5. See Wiktionary, “shipshape and Bristol fashion,” [wiktionary.org](http://wiktionary.org).
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
7. Alma 40:12; emphasis added.
8. See Matthew 5, chapter summary.
9. See Carl Cederstrom, “The Dangers of

Happiness,” *New York Times*, July 19, 2015, Sunday Review section, 8.

10. 2 Nephi 15:20.
11. Ross Douthat, “Gay Conservatism and Straight Liberation,” *New York Times*, June 28, 2015, Sunday Review section, 11.
12. See 2 Nephi 2.
13. See Matthew 25:1–30.
14. Alma 41:10.
15. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 56.
16. See Walter Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control* (2014); see also Jacoba Urist, “What the Marshmallow Test Really Teaches about Self-Control,” *Atlantic*, Sept. 24, 2014, [theatlantic.com](http://theatlantic.com).
17. See Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test*, 136–38.
18. Maria Konnikova, “The Struggles of a Psychologist Studying Self-Control,” *New Yorker*, Oct. 9, 2014, [newyorker.com](http://newyorker.com), citing Roy Baumeister, a professor of psychology at Florida State University who studies willpower and self-control.
19. See Malia Wollan, “How to Proselytize,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 19, 2015, 21. She quotes Mario Dias of the Brazil Missionary Training Center.
20. See Bible Dictionary, “Sabbath.”
21. Elder Von G. Keetch and his wife, Bernice, and John Taylor and his wife, Jan, joined my wife and me for a delightful Shabbat with Robert Abrams and his wife, Diane, on May 8, 2015. Mr. Abrams has served four terms as attorney general for the state of New York and has been a friend of the Church for many years. Mr. Abrams had also invited two of his Jewish colleagues and their wives.
22. The Sabbath table hymn *Shalom Aleichem* (“Peace upon You”) was sung.
23. See Isaiah 58:13–14.
24. Ezekiel 20:20.
25. See Exodus 31:16–17.
26. See Joe Lieberman, *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath* (2011). Senator Lieberman’s delightful book describes the Jewish Shabbat and provides inspirational insights.
27. See Isaiah 58:13–14; see also Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.
28. Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost.”
29. Galatians 5:22.



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**Presented by President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

**B**rothers and sisters, President Monson has asked that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

The vote has been noted.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell M. Nelson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen, and, as new members of the Quorum of the Twelve, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, and Dale G. Renlund.

Those in favor, please signify by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate.

The vote has been noted.

It is proposed that we sustain the

counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

The vote has been noted.

With their calls to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve, we hereby release Ronald A. Rasband as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder Rasband and Elder Dale G. Renlund as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may so indicate.

It is proposed that we release with appreciation for their devoted service Elder Don R. Clarke as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Elders Koichi Aoyagi and Bruce A. Carlson as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.





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

Those who wish to join with us in expressing gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

We also extend a release to Serhii A. Kovalov as an Area Seventy.

Those who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for his service, please so signify.

At this time we note the releases of Brother John S. Tanner as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency and Brother Devin G. Durrant as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. As previously announced, Brother Tanner has been appointed to serve as president of BYU–Hawaii.

All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation to these brethren for their service and devotion, please manifest it.

Brother Devin G. Durrant has now been called to serve as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency and Brother Brian K. Ashton to serve as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

The voting has been noted. We invite those who have opposed any of the proposals to contact their stake presidents.

Brothers and sisters, we appreciate your faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church.

We now ask the new members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to take their places on the stand. They will have the opportunity to address us tomorrow morning. ■

## Meeting the Challenges of Today's World

*The choices you make—mission, education, marriage, career, and service in the Church—will shape your eternal destiny.*

Much has been written and said about today's generation of young adults. Research shows that many resist organized religion. Many are in debt and unemployed. A majority like the *idea* of marriage, but many are reluctant to take that step. A growing number don't want children. Without the gospel and inspired guidance, many are wandering in strange paths and losing their way.

Fortunately, young adult members of the Church lag behind in these troubling trends, in part because they are blessed with the gospel plan. That eternal plan includes holding fast to the iron rod—cleaving to God's word and the word of His prophets. We need to tighten our grip on the rod that leads us back to Him. Now is the “day of choosing”<sup>1</sup> for all of us.

As a boy, when I was about to make a poorly considered choice, my father sometimes would say, “Robert, straighten up and fly right!” You have been there. In the spirit of his plain talk, I would like to speak specifically to the youth—the noble youth—and noble young adults, for “my soul delighteth in plainness . . . that [we] may learn.”<sup>2</sup>

You are living through a critical period of your life. The choices you make—mission, education, marriage, career, and service in the Church—will shape your eternal destiny. This means you will always be looking ahead—looking to the future.

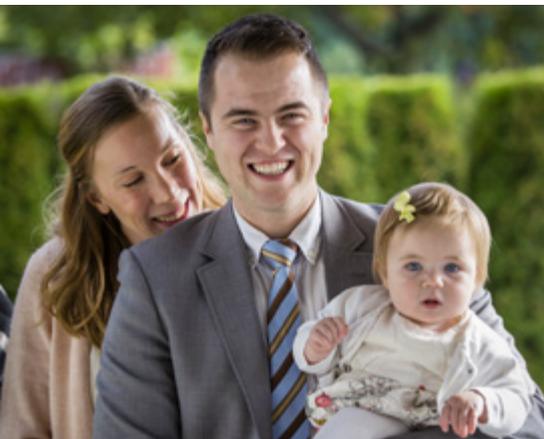
As a pilot in the air force, I learned this principle: never deliberately fly into a thunderstorm. (I won't tell you how I found that out.) Instead, fly around it, take another route, or wait for the storm to clear before landing.

Beloved young adult brothers and sisters, I want to help you “fly right” in the gathering storms of the last days. You are the pilots. You are responsible to think about the consequences of every choice you make. Ask yourself, “If I make this choice, what is the worst thing that could happen?” Your righteous choices will keep you from getting off course.

Think of it: If you choose not to take a drink of alcohol, you will not become an alcoholic! If you never choose to go into debt, you will avoid the possibility of bankruptcy!

One of the purposes of the scriptures is to show us how righteous

people respond to temptation and evil. In short, they avoid it! Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife.<sup>3</sup> Lehi took his family and left Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Mary and Joseph fled into Egypt to escape Herod's wicked plot.<sup>5</sup> In every instance, Heavenly Father warned these believers. Similarly, He will help us know whether to fight, flee, or go with the flow of our unfolding



*Drammen, Norway*

circumstances. He will speak to us through prayer, and when we pray, we will have the Holy Ghost, who will guide us. We have the scriptures, the teachings of living prophets, patriarchal blessings, the counsel of inspired parents, priesthood and auxiliary leaders, and, above all, the still, small voice of the Spirit.

The Lord will always keep His promise: "I will lead you along."<sup>6</sup> The only question is, will we let ourselves be led? Will we hear His voice and the voice of His servants?

I testify that if you are there for the Lord, He will be there for you.<sup>7</sup> If you love Him and keep His commandments, you will have His Spirit to be with you and guide you. "Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do



good. . . . By this shall you know, all things . . . pertaining unto things of righteousness."<sup>8</sup>

With those principles as a foundation, may I give you some practical counsel?

Many of your generation are facing crushing debt. When I was a young adult, my stake president was an investment banker on Wall Street. He taught me, "You are rich if you can live happily within your means." How can you do it? Pay your tithing and then save! When you earn more, save more. Don't compete with others to have expensive toys. Don't buy what you can't afford.

Many young adults in the world are going into debt to get an education, only to find the cost of school is greater than they can repay. Seek out scholarships and grants. Obtain part-time employment, if possible, to help pay your own way. This will require some sacrifice, but it will help you succeed.

Education prepares you for better employment opportunities. It puts you in a better position to serve and to bless those around you. It will set

you on a path of lifelong learning. It will strengthen you to fight against ignorance and error. As Joseph Smith taught: "Knowledge does away with darkness, suspense and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is. . . . In knowledge there is power."<sup>9</sup> "To be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God."<sup>10</sup> Education will prepare you for what is ahead, including marriage.

Again, may I speak frankly? The track that leads to marriage passes through the terrain called dating! Dating is the opportunity for lengthy conversations. When you date, learn everything you can about each other. Get to know each other's families when possible. Are your goals compatible? Do you share the same feelings about the commandments, the Savior, the priesthood, the temple, parenting, callings in the Church, and serving others? Have you observed one another under stress, responding to success and failure, resisting anger, and dealing with setbacks? Does the person you are dating tear others down or build them up? Is his or her attitude and language



young adult years, I sought counsel from my parents and from faithful, trusted advisers. One was a priesthood leader; another was a teacher who believed in me. Both said to me, “If you want my counsel, be prepared to take it.” I understood what that meant. Prayerfully select mentors who have your spiritual well-being at heart. Be careful about taking advice from your peers. If you want more than you now have, reach *up*, not across!<sup>16</sup>

Remember, no one can reach upward on your behalf. Only *your* faith and prayers will cause you to lift yourself and have the mighty change of heart. Only *your* resolve to be obedient can change your life. Because of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice for you, the power is in you.<sup>17</sup> You have your agency, you have strong testimonies if you are obedient, and you can follow the Spirit that guides you.

Recently, a young filmmaker said he felt he was part of a “generation of prodigals”—a generation “looking for hope and joy and fulfillment, but looking in all the wrong places and in the wrong ways.”<sup>18</sup>

In the Savior’s parable of the prodigal son, the son had many blessings awaiting him, but before he could claim them, he had to look closely at his life, his choices, and his circumstances. The miracle that happened next is described in the scriptures with a simple phrase: “He came to himself.”<sup>19</sup> May I encourage you to come to yourself? In the Church, when important decisions must be made, we often hold council meetings. Family councils serve a similar purpose. You may want to conduct what I’ll call a “personal council.” After praying, spend some time alone. Think about what is ahead. Ask yourself: “What areas of my life do I want to

and conduct what you would like to live with every day?

That said, none of us marry *perfection*; we marry *potential*. The right marriage is not only about what I want; it’s also about what she—who’s going to be my companion—wants and needs me to be.

Speaking plainly, please don’t date all through your 20s just to “have a good time,” thus delaying marriage in favor of other interests and activities. Why? Because dating and marriage aren’t final destinations. They are the gateway to where you ultimately want to go. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.”<sup>11</sup>

Your responsibility now is to be worthy of the person you want to marry. If you want to marry a wholesome, attractive, honest, happy, hard-working, spiritual person, *be* that kind of person. If you *are* that person and you are not married, be patient. Wait upon the Lord. I testify that the Lord knows your desires and loves you for your faithful devotion to Him. He has

a plan for you, whether it be in this life or the next. Listen to His Spirit. “Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand.”<sup>12</sup> In this life or the next, His promises will be fulfilled. “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear.”<sup>13</sup>

If you don’t have abundant resources, don’t worry. A wonderful Church member recently told me, “I didn’t raise my children on money; I raised them on faith.” There is a great truth to that. Begin exercising your faith in every area of your life. If you don’t, you will suffer what I would call “faith atrophy.” The very strength needed to exercise your faith will be diminished. So exercise your faith every day, and you will “wax stronger and stronger . . . and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

To be ready for marriage, make certain you are worthy to take the sacrament and hold a temple recommend. Go to the temple regularly. Serve in the Church. In addition to serving in Church callings, follow the example of the Savior, who simply “went about doing good.”<sup>15</sup>

Now, you may have serious questions about the choices ahead. In my

strengthen so that I can strengthen others? Where do I want to be a year from now? two years from now? What choices do I need to make to get there?" Just remember, you are a pilot, and you are in charge. I testify that as you come to yourself, your Heavenly Father will come to you. By the comforting hand of His Holy Spirit, He will help you along.

I bear my testimony that God lives. I bear my special witness that the Savior loves you. "Shall we not go on in [His great] cause? Go forward and not backward."<sup>20</sup> As you follow Him, He will strengthen and uphold you. He will bring you up to your highest home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 105:35.
2. 2 Nephi 25:4.
3. See Genesis 39.
4. See 1 Nephi 2.
5. See Matthew 2.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12, 14.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 265.
10. 2 Nephi 9:29.
11. Genesis 2:24.
12. Jacob 4:10.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
14. Helaman 3:35.
15. Acts 10:38.
16. See Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975), 145.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:28.
18. Nathan Clarkson, in Emma Koonse, "Confessions of a Prodigal Son' Writer Says 'We Are All Prodigals,' Modern Retelling of Story Aimed at Millennials," *Christian Post*, Jan. 26, 2015, christianpost.com.
19. Luke 15:17.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.



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

## Behold Thy Mother

*No love in mortality comes closer to approximating the pure love of Jesus Christ than the selfless love a devoted mother has for her child.*

May I join with all of you in welcoming Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, and Elder Dale G. Renlund and their wives to the sweetest association they could possibly imagine.

Prophesying of the Savior's Atonement, Isaiah wrote, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."<sup>1</sup> A majestic latter-day vision emphasized that "[Jesus] came into the world . . . to bear the sins of the world."<sup>2</sup> Both ancient and modern scripture testify that "he redeemed them, and bore them, and carried them all the days of old."<sup>3</sup> A favorite hymn pleads with us to "hear your great Deliv'rer's voice!"<sup>4</sup>

*Bear, borne, carry, deliver.* These are powerful, heartening messianic words. They convey help and hope for safe movement from where we are to where we need to be—but cannot get without assistance. These words also connote burden, struggle, and fatigue—words most appropriate in describing the mission of Him who, at unspeakable cost, lifts us up when we have fallen, carries us forward when strength is gone, delivers us safely home when safety seems far beyond our reach. "My Father sent me," He said, "that I might be lifted up upon the cross; . . . that as I have been lifted up . . . even so should men be lifted up . . . to . . . me."<sup>5</sup>



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But can you hear in this language another arena of human endeavor in which we use words like *bear* and *borne*, *carry* and *lift*, *labor* and *deliver*? As Jesus said to John while in the very act of Atonement, so He says to us all, “Behold thy mother!”<sup>6</sup>

Today I declare from this pulpit what has been said here before: that no love in mortality comes closer to approximating the pure love of Jesus Christ than the selfless love a devoted mother has for her child. When Isaiah, speaking messianically, wanted to convey Jehovah’s love, he invoked the image of a mother’s devotion. “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” he asks. How absurd, he implies, though not as absurd as thinking Christ will ever forget us.<sup>7</sup>

This kind of resolute love “suffereth long, and is kind, . . . seeketh not her own, . . . but . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”<sup>8</sup> Most encouraging of all, such fidelity “never faileth.”<sup>9</sup> “For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed,” Jehovah said, “but my kindness shall not depart from thee.”<sup>10</sup> So too say our mothers.

You see, it is not only that they bear us, but they continue bearing *with us*. It is not only the prenatal carrying but the lifelong carrying that makes mothering such a staggering feat. Of course, there

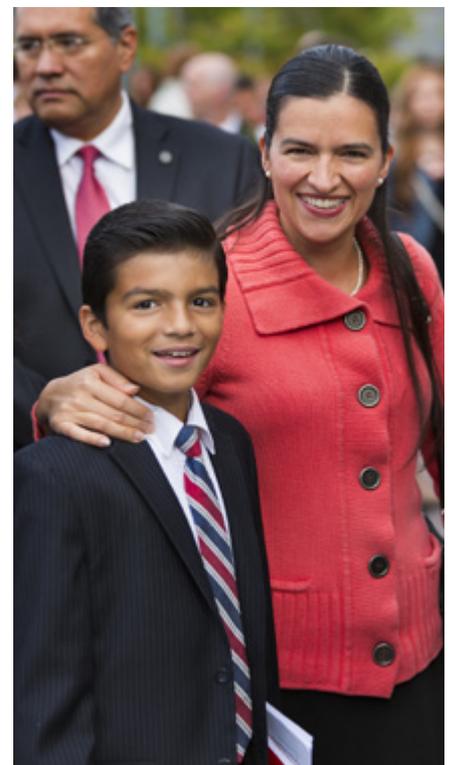
are heartbreaking exceptions, but most mothers know intuitively, instinctively that this is a sacred trust of the highest order. The weight of that realization, especially on young maternal shoulders, can be very daunting.

A wonderful young mother recently wrote to me: “How is it that a human being can love a child so deeply that you willingly give up a major portion of your freedom for it? How can mortal love be so strong that you voluntarily subject yourself to responsibility, vulnerability, anxiety, and heartache and just keep coming back for more of the same? What kind of mortal love can make you feel, once you have a child, that your life is never, ever your own again? Maternal love *has* to be divine. There is no other explanation for it. What mothers do is an essential element of Christ’s work. Knowing that should be enough to tell us the impact of such love will range between unbearable and transcendent, over and over again, until with the safety and salvation of the very last child on earth, we can [then] say with Jesus, [Father!] I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”<sup>11</sup>

With the elegance of that letter echoing in our minds, let me share three experiences reflecting the majestic influence of mothers, witnessed in my ministry in just the past few weeks:

My first account is a cautionary one, reminding us that not every maternal effort has a storybook ending, at least not immediately. That reminder stems from my conversation with a beloved friend of more than 50 years who was dying away from this Church he knew in his heart to be true. No matter how much I tried to comfort him, I could not seem to bring him peace. Finally he leveled with me. “Jeff,” he said, “however painful it is going to be for me to stand before God, I cannot bear the thought of standing before my mother. The gospel and her children meant everything to her. I know I have broken her heart, and that is breaking mine.”

Now, I am absolutely certain that upon his passing, his mother received my friend with open, loving arms; that is what parents do. But the cautionary portion of this story is that children *can* break their mothers’ heart. Here too we see another comparison with the divine. I need not remind us that Jesus died of a broken heart, one weary and worn out from bearing the sins of the world. So in any moment



of temptation, may we “behold [our] mother” as well as our Savior and spare them both the sorrow of our sinning.

Secondly, I speak of a young man who entered the mission field worthily but by his own choice returned home early due to same-sex attraction and some trauma he experienced in that regard. He was still worthy, but his faith was at crisis level, his emotional burden grew ever heavier, and his spiritual pain was more and more profound. He was by turns hurt, confused, angry, and desolate.

His mission president, his stake president, his bishop spent countless hours searching and weeping and blessing him as they held on to him, but much of his wound was so personal that he kept at least parts of it beyond their reach. The beloved father in this story poured his entire soul into helping this child, but his very demanding employment circumstance meant that often the long, dark nights of the soul were faced by just this boy and his mother. Day and night, first for weeks, then for months that turned into years, they sought healing together. Through periods of bitterness (mostly his but sometimes hers) and unending fear (mostly hers but sometimes his), she bore—there’s that beautiful, burdensome word again—she bore to her son her testimony of God’s power, of His Church, but especially of His love for this child. In the same breath she testified of her own uncompromised, undying love for him as well. To bring together those two absolutely crucial, essential pillars of her very existence—the gospel of Jesus Christ and her family—she poured out her soul in prayer endlessly. She fasted and wept, she wept and fasted, and then she listened and listened as this son repeatedly told her of how his heart was breaking. Thus she carried



him—again—only this time it was not for nine months. This time she thought that laboring through the battered landscape of his despair would take forever.

But with the grace of God, her own tenacity, and the help of scores of Church leaders, friends, family members, and professionals, this importuning mother has seen her son come home to the promised land. Sadly we acknowledge that such a blessing does not, or at least has not yet, come to all parents who anguish over a wide variety of their children’s circumstances, but here there was hope. And, I must say, this son’s sexual orientation did not somehow miraculously change—no one assumed it would. But little by little, his heart changed.

He started back to church. He chose to partake of the sacrament willingly and worthily. He again obtained a temple recommend and accepted a call to serve as an early-morning seminary teacher, where he was wonderfully successful. And now, after *five years*,

he has, at his own request and with the Church’s considerable assistance, reentered the mission field to complete his service to the Lord. I have wept over the courage, integrity, and determination of this young man and his family to work things out and to help him keep his faith. He knows he owes much to many, but he knows he owes the most to two messianic figures in his life, two who bore him and carried him, labored with him and delivered him—his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his determined, redemptive, absolutely saintly mother.

Lastly, this from the rededication of the Mexico City Mexico Temple just three weeks ago. It was there with President Henry B. Eyring that we saw our beloved friend Lisa Tuttle Pieper stand in that moving dedicatory service. But she stood with some difficulty because with one arm she was holding up her beloved but severely challenged daughter, Dora, while with the other she was trying to manipulate Dora’s

dysfunctional right hand so this limited but eternally precious daughter of God could wave a white handkerchief and, with groans intelligible only to herself and the angels of heaven, cry out, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb.”<sup>12</sup>

To all of our mothers everywhere, past, present, or future, I say, “Thank you. Thank you for giving birth, for shaping souls, for forming character, and for demonstrating the pure love of Christ.” To Mother Eve, to Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, to Mary of Nazareth, and to a Mother in Heaven, I say, “Thank you for your crucial role in fulfilling the purposes of eternity.” To all mothers in every circumstance, including those who struggle—and all will—I say, “Be peaceful. Believe in God and yourself. You are doing better than you think you are. In fact, you are saviors on Mount Zion,<sup>13</sup> and like the Master you follow, your love ‘never faileth.’<sup>14</sup>” I can pay no higher tribute to anyone. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Isaiah 53:4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 76:41.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 133:53; see also Isaiah 63:9.
4. “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,” *Hymns*, no. 7.
5. 3 Nephi 27:14.
6. John 19:27.
7. See Isaiah 49:15.
8. Moroni 7:45; see also 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.
9. Moroni 7:46; see also 1 Corinthians 13:8.
10. 3 Nephi 22:10; see also Isaiah 54:10.
11. John 17:4.
12. See *History of the Church*, 2:427–28.
13. See Obadiah 1:21.
14. Moroni 7:46; see also 1 Corinthians 13:8.



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By Elder Bradley D. Foster  
Of the Seventy

## It’s Never Too Early and It’s Never Too Late

*It’s never too early and it’s never too late to lead, guide, and walk beside our children, because families are forever.*

Brothers and sisters, we are engaged in a battle with the world. In the past, the world competed for our children’s energy and time. Today, it fights for their identity and mind. Many loud and prominent voices are trying to define who our children are and what they should believe. We cannot let society give our family a makeover in the image of the world. We must win this battle. Everything depends on it.

The children of the Church sing a song that teaches them about their real identity: “I am a child of God. . . . He has sent me here, has given me an earthly home with parents.” Then the children’s plea to us: “Lead me, guide me, walk beside me. . . . Help me to understand his words before it grows too late.”<sup>1</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson taught us in our last general conference that, from here on out, we must be engaged in “intentional parenting.”<sup>2</sup> These are perilous times. But the good news is God knew this would be the case, and He has provided counsel in the scriptures for us to know how to help our children and our grandchildren.

In the Book of Mormon, the Savior appeared to the Nephites. He gathered their little children around Him. He blessed them, prayed for them, and wept over them.<sup>3</sup> Then He said to the parents, “Behold your little ones.”<sup>4</sup>

The word *behold* means to look and see. What did Jesus want the parents to see in their little ones? Did He want them to catch a glimpse of their children’s divine potential?



As we look at our children and our grandchildren today, what does the Savior want us to see in them? Do we recognize that our children are the largest group of investigators of the Church? What must we do to bring about their lasting conversion?

In the book of Matthew, the Savior teaches us about lasting conversion. A large group of people had gathered near the Sea of Galilee to hear Him teach.

On this occasion, Jesus told a story about planting seeds—the parable of the sower.<sup>5</sup> In explaining this to His disciples, and ultimately to us, He said, “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it *not*, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.”<sup>6</sup> The message for parents is clear: there is a difference between hearing and understanding. If our children merely hear but do not understand the gospel, then the door is left open for Satan to remove these truths from their hearts.

However, if we can help them grow roots of deep conversion, then in the heat of the day, when this life gets tough—and it will—the gospel of Jesus Christ can give them something within that cannot be affected from without. How can we ensure that these powerful truths are not just going in one ear and out the other? Hearing words just might not be enough.

We all know that words evolve. Sometimes we say our words, and they hear their words. You might say to your young children, “You sound like a broken record.” They’d probably respond with, “Dad, what’s a record?”

Our Heavenly Father wants us to succeed because really, after all, they were His children before they were ours. As parents in Zion, you have



received the gift of the Holy Ghost. As you pray for guidance, “it will show unto you all things what ye should do”<sup>7</sup> in teaching your children. As you develop processes of learning, “the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children.”<sup>8</sup>

I can’t think of a better example of helping someone gain understanding than the story of Helen Keller. She was blind and deaf and lived in a world that was dark and quiet. A teacher named Anne Sullivan came to help her. How would you teach a child who can’t even see or hear you?

For a long time, Anne struggled to connect with Helen. One day around noon, she took her out to the water pump. She put one of Helen’s hands under the waterspout and began to pump the water. Anne then spelled out the word *W-A-T-E-R* on Helen’s other hand. Nothing happened. So she tried again. *W-A-T-E-R*. Helen squeezed Anne’s hand because she began to understand. By nightfall, she had learned 30 words. Within a matter of months, she had learned 600 words and was able to read Braille. Helen Keller went on to earn a college degree and helped change the world for people who couldn’t see or hear.<sup>9</sup> It was a miracle, and her teacher was the miracle worker, just like you will be, parents.

I saw the results of another great teacher while serving as the president of a single adult stake at BYU–Idaho. That experience changed my life. On one particular Tuesday evening, I interviewed a young man named Pablo, from Mexico City, who wanted to serve a mission. I asked him about his testimony and his desire to serve. His answers to my questions were perfect. Then I asked about his worthiness. His answers were exact. In fact, they were so good, I wondered, “Maybe he doesn’t understand what I’m asking him.” So I rephrased the questions and determined that he knew exactly what I meant and was completely honest.

I was so impressed with this young man that I asked him, “Pablo, who was it that helped you come to this point in your life standing so uprightly before the Lord?”

He said, “My dad.”

I said, “Pablo, tell me your story.”

Pablo continued: “When I was nine, my dad took me aside and said, ‘Pablo, I was nine once too. Here are some things you may come across. You’ll see people cheating in school. You might be around people who swear. You’ll probably have days when you don’t want to go to church. Now, when these things happen—or anything else that troubles you—I want you to come and talk to me, and I’ll help you get



through them. And then I'll tell you what comes next.”

“So, Pablo, what did he tell you when you were 10?”

“Well, he warned me about pornography and dirty jokes.”

“What about when you were 11?” I asked.

“He cautioned me about things that could be addictive and reminded me about using my agency.”

Here was a father, year after year, “line upon line; here a little, and there a little,”<sup>10</sup> who helped his son not only hear but also understand. Pablo's father knew our children learn when they are ready to learn, not just when we are ready to teach them. I was proud of Pablo when we submitted his missionary application that night, but I was even prouder of Pablo's dad.

When I drove home that night, I asked myself, “What kind of father will Pablo be?” And the answer was crystal clear: he'll be just like his dad. Jesus said, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”<sup>11</sup> This is the pattern of how Heavenly Father blesses His children from generation to generation.

As I continued to think about my experience with Pablo, I felt sad

because my four daughters were grown and the nine grandchildren I had at the time didn't live nearby. I then thought, “How could I ever help them the way Pablo's father helped him? Had too much time gone by?” As I offered a prayer in my heart, the Spirit whispered this profound truth: “It's never too early and it's never too late to begin this important process.” I knew immediately what that meant. I could hardly wait to get home. I asked my wife, Sharol, to call all of our children and tell them that we needed to visit with them; I had something really important to tell them. My urgency startled them a little.

We began with our oldest daughter and her husband. I said: “Your mother and I want you to know that we were your age once. We were 31, with a small family. We have an idea of what you might encounter. It might be a financial or health challenge. It may be a crisis of faith. You may just get overwhelmed with life. When these things happen, we want you to come and talk to us. We'll help you get through them. Now, we don't want to be in your business all the time, but we want you to know that we are always in your corner. And while we're together, I want to tell you about

an interview I just had with a young man named Pablo.”

After the story, I said, “We don't want you to miss helping your children and our grandchildren understand these important truths.”

Brothers and sisters, I now realize in a more meaningful way what the Lord expects of me as a father and as a grandfather in establishing a process to help my family not only hear but understand.

As I grow older, I find myself reflecting on these words:

*O time, O time, go back in flight,  
And let them be my little children for  
just one more night!*<sup>12</sup>

I know I can't turn back time, but this I now know—that it's never too early and it's never too late to lead, guide, and walk beside our children, because families are forever.

It is my witness that our Heavenly Father loved us so much that He sent His Only Begotten Son to live the life of a mortal so that Jesus could say to us, “I've been where you are, I know what comes next, and I'll help you through it.” I know He will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 131.
3. See 3 Nephi 17:21.
4. 3 Nephi 17:23.
5. See Matthew 13:1–13.
6. Matthew 13:19; emphasis added.
7. 2 Nephi 32:5.
8. 2 Nephi 33:1.
9. See “Anne Sullivan,” [biography.com/people/anne-sullivan-9498826](http://biography.com/people/anne-sullivan-9498826); “Helen Keller,” [biography.com/people/helen-keller-9361967](http://biography.com/people/helen-keller-9361967).
10. Isaiah 28:10.
11. John 5:19.
12. Adapted from Elizabeth Akers Allen's poem “Rock Me to Sleep,” in William Cullen Bryant, ed., *The Family Library of Poetry and Song* (1870), 222–23.



By Elder Hugo Montoya  
Of the Seventy

# Tested and Tempted— but Helped

*We can help each other as children of our Heavenly Father in our trials and temptations.*

During the course of life, we are tested and tempted. We also have the opportunity to exercise agency and to help one another. These truths are part of the wonderful and perfect plan of our Heavenly Father.

President John Taylor taught: “I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: ‘You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings.’”<sup>1</sup>

Once we reach the age of accountability, trials and temptations are universal. Sometimes they can become heavy burdens, but they also give us strength and growth as we successfully overcome them.

Fortunately, these burdens are not to be carried alone. Alma taught, “Ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light.”<sup>2</sup> These words indicate that we have the responsibility to help each other. That responsibility

can come from a Church calling, an assignment, or a friendship or as part of our divine duty as parents, spouses, or family members—or simply from being part of God’s family.

I will illustrate four ways our burdens are lightened as we help each other.

1. The Savior said, “Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”<sup>3</sup> For example, we are

asked to attend the temple regularly, as our individual circumstances allow. Attending the temple requires sacrifice of time and resources, especially for those who must travel a great distance. Nevertheless, this sacrifice could be considered part of the first mile.

We begin walking the second mile when we understand the words “find, take, teach,”<sup>4</sup> when we search for and prepare the names of our ancestors for temple ordinances, when we help in indexing, when we serve as temple workers, and when we look for ways to help others have meaningful temple experiences.

While I was serving as an Area Seventy, one of the stakes in my coordinating council participated in a large temple excursion. The temple the members attended is small, and unfortunately there were several members who, despite making the long 12-hour journey, were not able to enter the temple because it had exceeded the daily capacity.

A few days after this trip, I visited this stake and asked the president if I





could talk with some of the members who were unable to attend the temple that day. One of the brothers I visited told me: “Elder, do not worry. I was at the house of the Lord. I sat on a bench in the garden and pondered in my mind the ordinances. Then I was given the opportunity to enter, but instead I allowed another brother, who had come to the temple for the first time to be sealed to his wife, to take my place. They then had the opportunity to attend two sessions that day. The Lord knows me, and He has blessed me, and we are fine.”

2. Smile. This small action can help those who are overwhelmed or burdened. During the priesthood session of this past April general conference, I was seated on the stand as one of the five newly called General Authorities. We were sitting where the sisters of the auxiliary presidencies are now seated. I was feeling very nervous and overwhelmed with my new call.

When we were singing the intermediate hymn, I felt a strong impression that someone was watching me.

I thought to myself: “There are more than 20,000 people in this building, and most of them are facing this way. Of course someone is watching you.”

While I continued singing, I again felt the strong impression that someone was watching me. I looked over to the row where the Twelve Apostles were sitting and saw that President Russell M. Nelson was turned all the way around in his seat, looking at where we were seated. I caught his eye, and he gave me a big smile. That smile brought peace to my overwhelmed heart.

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ visited His other sheep. He called and ordained twelve disciples, and with that authority, they ministered to the people. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself stood among them. The Lord asked them to kneel and pray. I am not sure if the newly called and ordained twelve disciples were overwhelmed with their calling, but the scripture says, “It came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did *smile* upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine

upon them.”<sup>5</sup> During the last general conference, a smile lightened my burdens in an immediate and extraordinary way.

3. Express feelings of compassion to others. If you are a priesthood holder, please use your power on behalf of the children of God, giving blessings to them. Express words of consolation and comfort to people who are suffering or experiencing afflictions.

4. The cornerstone of God’s plan is the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. At least once a week, we should meditate as President Joseph F. Smith did on “the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world.”<sup>6</sup> Inviting others to come to church and to worthily partake of the sacrament will allow more of Heavenly Father’s children to reflect on the Atonement. And if we are not worthy, we can repent. Remember that the Son of the Highest descended below all and took upon Him our offenses, sins, transgressions, sicknesses, pains, afflictions, and loneliness. The scripture teaches us that Christ “ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things.”<sup>7</sup>

It does not matter what our personal struggles are—whether they are disease or prolonged loneliness or suffering the temptations and tests of the adversary—the Good Shepherd is there. He calls us by name and says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”<sup>8</sup>

I want to summarize the four points:

- First—go the second mile.
- Second—please smile. Your smile will help others.
- Third—express compassion.
- Fourth—invite others to come to church.



By Elder Vern P. Stanfill  
Of the Seventy

I bear my testimony of the Savior. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and He lives. I know that He sustains, with all His might and power, the Father's plan. I know that President Thomas S. Monson is a living prophet. He holds all the keys to successfully carry out God's work on the earth. I know that we can help each other as children of our Heavenly Father in our trials and temptations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John Taylor, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 231.
2. Mosiah 18:8.
3. Matthew 5:41.
4. See Quentin L. Cook, "Our Father's Plan Is about Families" (address given at RootsTech 2015 family history conference, Feb. 14, 2015), [lds.org/topics/family-history/fdd/plan-about-families-full](https://www.lds.org/topics/family-history/fdd/plan-about-families-full); see also [lds.org/media-library/video/2015-07-01-find-take-teach](https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2015-07-01-find-take-teach).
5. 3 Nephi 19:25; emphasis added.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 138:3.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6.
8. Matthew 11:28.

## Choose the Light

*We must choose to heed prophetic counsel, recognize and act upon spiritual promptings, be obedient to God's commandments, and seek personal revelation.*

Not long ago, my wife and I decided that we should more fully experience the beauty of an area close to our home in northwest Montana. We determined to take our bicycles to the Hiawatha Trail, a converted rail line that crosses the beautiful Rocky Mountains between Montana and Idaho. We anticipated a fun day with good friends, enjoying the natural beauty of the area.

We knew our ride along the magnificent 15-mile (24 km) trail would include trestles stretching over deep canyons and long tunnels penetrating rugged mountains. So we prepared ourselves with lights strapped to our helmets and bicycles.

Those who had gone before warned us that the tunnels were dark and that we needed really strong lights. As we gathered in front of the massive stone opening of the Taft Tunnel, a caretaker explained some of the dangers of the trail, including deep ditches along the edges, rough walls, and complete darkness. Impatiently, we pushed forward into the tunnel. After we had ridden only a few minutes, the predicted darkness engulfed us. The lights I brought proved inadequate, and the darkness soon overwhelmed them. Suddenly, I began to feel anxious, confused, and disoriented.

I was embarrassed to admit my anxieties to my friends and family. Although an experienced cyclist, I now felt as though I had never ridden a bicycle. I struggled to stay upright as my confusion increased. Finally, after I did express my discomfort to those around me, I was able to draw closer to the more powerful light of a friend.





In fact, everyone in the group began to form a tight circle around him. By staying close to him and relying for a time on his light and the collective light of the group, we pushed deeper into the darkness of the tunnel.

After what seemed like hours, I saw a pinpoint of light. Almost immediately, I began to feel reassured that all would be well. I continued to press forward, relying on both the light of my friends and the growing pinpoint of light. My confidence gradually returned as the light grew in size and intensity. Long before reaching the end of the tunnel, I no longer needed the assistance of my friends. All anxiety disappeared as we pedaled quickly toward the light. I felt calm and reassured even before we rode into the morning full of warmth and splendor.

We live in a world in which we will experience challenges to our faith. We may feel confident that we are ready to face these challenges—only to find that our preparations have been insufficient. And just as my friend had warned me about the darkness, we are warned today. Apostolic voices urge us to prepare ourselves with the powerful light of spiritual strength.

Likewise, we might feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or confused

spiritually when we encounter a challenge to our faith. Generally, the intensity and duration of these feelings will depend upon our reaction to them. If we do nothing, doubt, pride, and eventually apostasy may drive us from the light.

I learned some important lessons from my experience in the tunnel. I'll share just a few of them.

**First, no matter how intense the darkness of doubt, we choose how long and to what extent we allow it to influence us.** We must remember how much our Heavenly Father and His Son love us. They will neither abandon us, nor will They allow us to be overcome if we seek Their help. Remember Peter's experience in the hostile waves of the Sea of Galilee. As Peter felt the cold darkness close around him, he recognized his dilemma immediately and chose in that very moment to call out for help. He did not question the Savior's power to save him; he simply called out, "Lord, save me."<sup>1</sup>

In our lives, the extended hand of the Savior may take the form of help from a trusted friend, leader, or loving parent. While we are struggling in the darkness, there is nothing wrong with relying temporarily upon the light of

those who love us and have our best interests at heart.

When we consider thoughtfully, why would we listen to the faceless, cynical voices of those in the great and spacious buildings of our time and ignore the pleas of those who genuinely love us? These ever-present naysayers prefer to tear down rather than elevate and to ridicule rather than uplift. Their mocking words can burrow into our lives, often through split-second bursts of electronic distortions carefully and deliberately composed to destroy our faith. Is it wise to place our eternal well-being in the hands of strangers? Is it wise to claim enlightenment from those who have no light to give or who may have private agendas hidden from us? These anonymous individuals, if presented to us honestly, would never be given a moment of our time, but because they exploit social media, hidden from scrutiny, they receive undeserved credibility.

Our choice to heed those who mock sacred things will distance us from the saving and life-giving light of the Savior. John recorded: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>2</sup> Remember, those who truly love us can help us build our faith.

Just as I was embarrassed in the tunnel, we might feel too embarrassed to ask for help when we doubt. Perhaps we are one to whom others have looked for strength, and now we need help. When we realize that the light and the comfort the Savior can extend to us are far too precious to lose to pride, then inspired Church leaders, parents, and trusted friends can help. They stand ready to assist us in gaining



spiritual assurances that will fortify us against challenges of faith.

**Second, we must trust in the Lord in order to develop spiritual strength within ourselves.** We cannot rely upon the light of others forever. I knew that the darkness in the tunnel would not last if I kept pedaling beside my friend and within the safety of the group. But my expectation was to be able to proceed on my own once I could see the light. The Lord teaches us, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”<sup>3</sup> We must act, expecting that the Lord will fulfill His promise to lift us from the darkness if we draw near unto Him. The adversary, however, will try to convince us that we have never felt the influence of the Spirit and that it will be easier just to stop trying.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf counsels us to “doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.”<sup>4</sup> In my home ward, a young man recently said, “There are things I have felt that cannot be explained in any other way except that they are of God.” This is spiritual integrity.

When faced with questions or tempted to doubt, we should remember

the spiritual blessings and feelings that have penetrated our hearts and lives in the past and place our faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I am reminded of the counsel given in a familiar hymn: “Doubt not the Lord nor his goodness [for] we’ve proved him in days that are past.”<sup>5</sup> To ignore and discount past spiritual experiences will distance us from God.

Our quest for light will be enhanced by our willingness to recognize when it shines in our lives. Modern scripture defines light and gives a promise to those who accept it: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”<sup>6</sup> Just as when we kept pedaling toward the light, the more we persist, the brighter His influence becomes in our lives. Like the light at the end of the tunnel, His influence will bring us confidence, determination, comfort, and—most important—the power to know that He lives.

**Third, there is no darkness so dense, so menacing, or so difficult that it cannot be overcome by light.** Elder Neil L. Andersen recently taught: “As evil increases in the world, there is a compensatory spiritual power for

the righteous. As the world slides from its spiritual moorings, the Lord prepares the way for those who seek Him, offering them greater assurance, greater confirmation, and greater confidence in the spiritual direction they are traveling. The gift of the Holy Ghost becomes a brighter light in the emerging twilight.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we have not been left alone to be influenced by every whim and change in the world’s attitude, but we have the power to choose belief over doubt. In order to access the promised compensatory spiritual power, we must choose to heed prophetic counsel, recognize and act upon spiritual promptings, be obedient to God’s commandments, and seek personal revelation. We must choose. May we choose the light of the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 14:25–31.
2. John 8:12.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 23.
5. “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
7. Neil L. Andersen, “A Compensatory Spiritual Power for the Righteous” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 18, 2015), [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).



By Elder James B. Martino  
Of the Seventy

# Turn to Him and Answers Will Come

*Be obedient, remember the times when you have felt the Spirit in the past, and ask in faith. Your answer will come.*

When I was a young man, my parents joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We knew that the missionaries had been teaching them, but my parents had taken the missionary lessons alone.

After this surprising announcement, my brothers and I began to listen to the missionaries as well, and they each received the message of the Restoration with gladness. Although I was curious, my heart was not into changing my life. I did, however, accept the challenge to pray about whether the Book of Mormon was the word of God, but I did not receive an answer.

You might ask why Heavenly Father did not answer that prayer; I certainly wondered. I have learned since that the promise made by Moroni is accurate. God does answer our prayers about the truthfulness of the gospel, but He answers them when we have “a sincere heart” and “real intent.”<sup>1</sup> He does not answer just to respond to our curiosity.

Perhaps there is something in your life that you have a question about. Perhaps there is a problem you do not know quite how to answer. Today I would like to share some thoughts

that may help you obtain the answers or help you are seeking. The process begins with being converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Receiving Revelation Depends on the Condition and Intent of Our Hearts

I have thought about the accounts of several individuals in the scriptures.

Take, for example, Laman and Lemuel. Like Nephi, they were “born of goodly parents” and taught “in all the learning of [their] father.”<sup>2</sup> Yet they murmured because their father was a visionary man. From their point of view, his decisions defied logic, for they knew not the things of God, and therefore they would not believe.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that their choices allowed them access to potentially faith-building experiences. They left their home and their riches. They suffered through wanderings in the wilderness. They eventually helped build the boat, and they agreed to journey to an unknown land.

Nephi passed through these same experiences. But did these actions build their faith? Nephi’s faith was made strong, but Laman and Lemuel grew more cynical and angry. These brothers even saw and heard an angel, but alas, they continued to doubt.<sup>4</sup>

Mortal life is not easy for any of us. We are placed on earth to be tried and



tested. Our response to life's experiences will often greatly influence our testimonies. Consider some of the reactions of Laman and Lemuel: They murmured when their father asked them to do hard things.<sup>5</sup> They attempted to obtain the brass plates, but when success did not come, they gave up. Their attitude was "We've tried; what more can we do?"<sup>6</sup>

There was even a time when they were sorrowful for doing wrong and asked for forgiveness.<sup>7</sup> They prayed and were forgiven. But the scriptures record that later they returned to complaining and they refused to pray. They came to Nephi and said they could not "understand the words which [their] father [had] spoken."<sup>8</sup> Nephi asked them if they had "inquired of the Lord."<sup>9</sup> Notice their response: "We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us."<sup>10</sup>

#### Continuing Obedience Allows Us to Receive Answers

Nephi's reply to his brothers is a key for us to receive continual answers to prayer:

"How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? How is it that ye will perish, because of the hardness of your hearts?"

"Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things [will] be made known unto you."<sup>11</sup>

I know some returned missionaries who have had undeniable spiritual experiences, but the lack of certain spiritual habits seems to have caused them to forget the times when God has spoken to them. To those returned missionaries and to all of us, if you



"have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?"<sup>12</sup> If you do not feel it now, you can feel it again, but consider Nephi's counsel. Be obedient, remember the times when you have felt the Spirit in the past, and ask in faith. Your answer will come, and you will feel the love and peace of the Savior. It may not come as quickly or in the format you desire, but the answer will come. Do not give up! Never give up!

Let us compare Laman and Lemuel to the sons of Mosiah. Both groups of men were raised in righteous families, yet both strayed. Both were called to repentance by an angel, but what was different about the experience of the sons of Mosiah?

#### Trials Will Build Our Faith

Their missionary success is unforgettable. Thousands were converted to the ways of the Lord. However, we often forget that as they began their missions, their "hearts were depressed, and [they] were about to turn back, [but] the Lord comforted [them]." They were counseled by the Lord to "bear with patience [their] afflictions."<sup>13</sup>

#### The Study of the Scriptures Tells Us God's Will

Why did the trials of these sons of Mosiah strengthen their faith and commitment rather than cause them to murmur or doubt? The key is that "they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God."<sup>14</sup> We will all face trials and have questions, but remember that we must be "continually holding fast to the rod of iron."<sup>15</sup> "The words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do."<sup>16</sup> We must make scripture study a daily part of our lives, as this will open doors of revelation.

#### Prayer, Combined with Fasting, Invites Revelation

For the sons of Mosiah, "this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation."<sup>17</sup> Prayer and fasting will allow us to be susceptible to spiritual promptings. Communicating with Heavenly Father while purposefully abstaining from food and drink allows us to "loose the bands of wickedness

[and] to undo the heavy burdens.”<sup>18</sup> Prayer, combined with fasting, will provide so that when we “call, . . . the Lord shall answer; . . . [and when we] cry, . . . he shall say, Here I am.”<sup>19</sup>

#### Turn to Him

These personal religious habits—obedience, scripture study, prayer, and fasting—strengthened the sons of Mosiah. The lack of these same personal religious habits was a major reason that Laman and Lemuel were left vulnerable to the temptation to murmur and doubt.

If you have been tempted to murmur, if you have had doubt that leads to unbelief, if trials seem more than you can bear, turn to Him. If you are one who has turned away or rationalized your behavior, turn to Him. Can you remember when He did “speak peace to your mind . . . ? What greater witness can you have than from God?”<sup>20</sup> Ask yourself, “Am I as close to living like Christ now as I was before?” Please, turn to Him.

May I return to my personal story. Eventually I began to be sincere. I remember when the missionary who was teaching me asked if I was ready to be baptized. I replied that I still had some questions. This wise missionary told me that he could answer them but that I would have to answer his question first. He asked me if the Book of Mormon was true and if Joseph Smith was a prophet. I told him that I did not know, but I wanted to know.

My questions led to increased faith. For me, the answer came not as an event but as a process. I noticed that as I did “experiment upon [the] words” and began to “exercise a particle of faith,” the Book of Mormon became “delicious to me” and it did “enlighten my understanding” and truly did

“enlarge my soul.” Eventually I had that experience the scriptures describe as a swelling within your breast.<sup>21</sup> It was at this point that I desired to be baptized and to commit my life to Jesus Christ.

I truly know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet. Oh, I still have things I do not comprehend, but my testimony of truth draws me closer to the Savior and builds my faith.

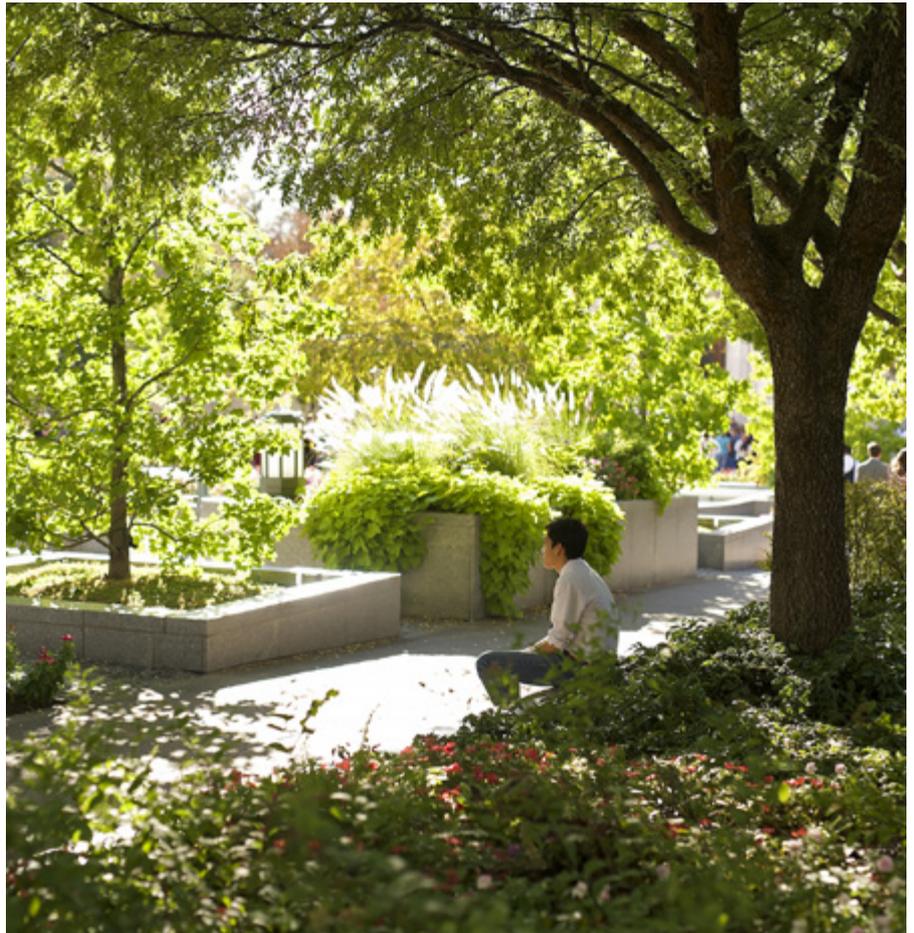
Brothers and sisters, remember Nephi and the sons of Mosiah, who had spiritual experiences and then acted in faith so that answers came and their faithfulness grew. Contrast this with Laman and Lemuel, who doubted and murmured. Even though they sometimes acted in worthwhile ways, work without faith is dead. We must have faith with works to receive answers.

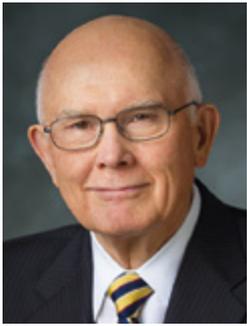
I hope as you have listened this morning that the Spirit has impressed

on your minds and hearts something that you might do to have your questions answered or to find an inspired solution to the problem you face. I bear a solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ. Turn to Him and your prayers will be answered. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moroni 10:4.
2. 1 Nephi 1:1.
3. See 1 Nephi 2:11–12.
4. See 1 Nephi 4:3–4.
5. See 1 Nephi 3:5.
6. See 1 Nephi 3:14.
7. See 1 Nephi 7:20–21.
8. 1 Nephi 15:7.
9. 1 Nephi 15:8.
10. 1 Nephi 15:9.
11. 1 Nephi 15:10–11.
12. Alma 5:26.
13. Alma 26:27.
14. Alma 17:2.
15. 1 Nephi 8:30.
16. 2 Nephi 32:3.
17. Alma 17:3.
18. Isaiah 58:6.
19. Isaiah 58:9.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23.
21. See Alma 32:27–28.





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

# Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ

*Because of His Atonement, the Savior has the power to succor—to help—every mortal pain and affliction.*

In mortality we have the certainty of death and the burden of sin. The Atonement of Jesus Christ offsets these two certainties of mortal life. But apart from death and sin, we have many other challenges as we struggle through mortality. Because of that same Atonement, our Savior can provide us the strength we need to overcome these mortal challenges. That is my subject today.

I.

Most scriptural accounts of the Atonement concern the Savior’s breaking the bands of death and suffering for our sins. In his sermon recorded in the Book of Mormon, Alma taught these fundamentals. But he also provided our clearest scriptural assurances that the Savior also experienced the pains and sicknesses and infirmities of His people.

Alma described this part of the Savior’s Atonement: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith

he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11; also see 2 Nephi 9:21).

Think of it! In the Savior’s Atonement, He suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind.” As President Boyd K. Packer explained: “He had no debt to pay. He had committed no wrong.

Nevertheless, an accumulation of all of the guilt, the grief and sorrow, the pain and humiliation, all of the mental, emotional, and physical torments known to man—He experienced them all.”<sup>1</sup>

Why did He suffer these mortal challenges “of every kind”? Alma explained, “And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

For example, the Apostle Paul declared that because the Savior “hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). Similarly, President James E. Faust taught, “Since the Savior has suffered anything and everything that we could ever feel or experience, He can help the weak to become stronger.”<sup>2</sup>

Our Savior experienced and suffered the fulness of all mortal challenges “according to the flesh” so He could know “according to the flesh” how to “succor [which means to give relief or aid to] his people according to



their infirmities.” He therefore knows our struggles, our heartaches, our temptations, and our suffering, for He willingly experienced them all as an essential part of His Atonement. And because of this, His Atonement empowers Him to succor us—to give us the strength to bear it all.

II.

While Alma’s teaching in the seventh chapter is the single clearest of all the scriptures on this essential power of the Atonement, it is also taught throughout holy writ.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus explained that He was sent “to heal the brokenhearted” (Luke 4:18). The Bible often tells us of His healing people “of their infirmities” (Luke 5:15; 7:21). The Book of Mormon records His healing those “that were afflicted in any manner” (3 Nephi 17:9). The

Gospel of Matthew explains that Jesus healed the people “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17).

Isaiah taught that the Messiah would bear our “griefs” and our “sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). Isaiah also taught of His strengthening us: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:10).

Thus, we sing:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, . . .  
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*<sup>3</sup>

*The Savior knows our struggles, our heartaches, our temptations, and our suffering, for He willingly experienced them all as an essential part of His Atonement.*

Speaking of some of his own mortal challenges, the Apostle Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

And so we see that because of His Atonement, the Savior has the power to succor—to help—every mortal pain and affliction. Sometimes His power heals an infirmity, but the scriptures and our experiences teach that sometimes He succors or helps by giving us the strength or patience to endure our infirmities.<sup>4</sup>

III.

What are these mortal pains and afflictions and infirmities that our Savior experienced and suffered?

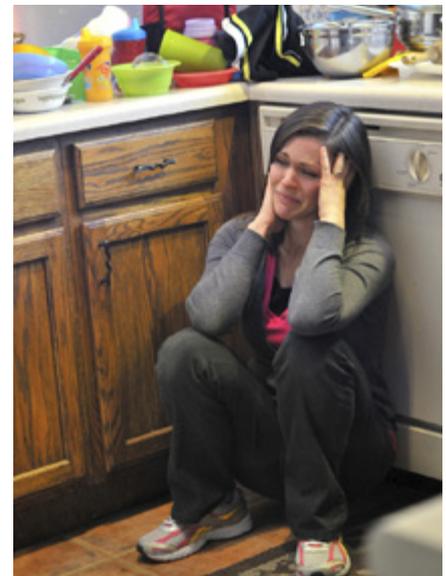
We all have pains and afflictions and infirmities at one time or another. Apart from what we experience because of our sins, mortality is filled



*Racial and ethnic prejudices produce painful rejections for youth and adults.*



*All of us suffer and grieve in connection with the death of a loved one.*



*For many, the infirmity of depression is painful or permanently disabling.*



with frequent struggles, heartaches, and suffering.

We and those we love suffer sickness. At some time each of us also experiences pain from traumatic injuries or from other physical or mental difficulties. All of us suffer and grieve in connection with the death of a loved one. We all experience failure in our personal responsibilities, our family relationships, or our occupations.

When a spouse or a child rejects what we know to be true and strays from the path of righteousness, we experience particularly stressful pain, just like the father of the prodigal son in Jesus's memorable parable (see Luke 15:11–32).

As the Psalmist declared, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

Thus, our hymns contain this true assurance: “Earth has no sorrow that heav’n cannot cure.”<sup>5</sup> What cures us is our Savior and His Atonement.

Particularly poignant for teenagers is the feeling of rejection when peers seem to join in happy relationships

and activities and deliberately leave them out. Racial and ethnic prejudices produce other painful rejections, for youth and adults. Life has many other challenges, such as unemployment or other reverses in our plans.

I am still speaking of mortal infirmities not caused by our sins. Some are born with physical or mental disabilities that cause personal suffering for them and struggles for those who love and care for them. For many, the infirmity of depression is painful or permanently disabling. Another painful affliction is the circumstance of singleness. Those who suffer this circumstance should remember that our Savior experienced this kind of pain also and that, through His Atonement, He offers the strength to bear it.

Few disabilities are more crippling to our temporal or spiritual lives than addictions. Some of these, like addictions to pornography or drugs, are likely to have been caused by sinful behavior. Even when that behavior has been repented of, the addiction may remain. That disabling grip can also be relieved by the decisive strength

available from the Savior. So can the severe challenge experienced by those sent to prison for crimes. A recent letter testifies to the strength that can come even to one in that circumstance: “I know that our Savior is walking these halls, and I have often felt Christ’s love within these prison walls.”<sup>6</sup>

I love the testimony of our poetess and friend Emma Lou Thayne. In words we now sing as a hymn, she wrote:

*Where can I turn for peace?  
Where is my solace  
When other sources cease to make  
me whole?  
When with a wounded heart, anger,  
or malice,  
I draw myself apart,  
Searching my soul?*

*Where, when my aching grows,  
Where, when I languish,  
Where, in my need to know, where can  
I run?  
Where is the quiet hand to calm my  
anguish?  
Who, who can understand?  
He, only One.<sup>7</sup>*



#### IV.

Who can be succored and strengthened through the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Alma taught that the Savior would “take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of *his people*” and “succor *his people*” (Alma 7:11, 12; emphasis added). Who are “his people” in this promise? Is it all mortals—all who enjoy the reality of resurrection through the Atonement? Or is it only those select servants qualified through ordinances and covenants?

The word *people* has many meanings in the scriptures. The meaning most appropriate for the teaching that the Savior will succor “his people” is the meaning Ammon employed when he taught that “God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in” (Alma 26:37). That is also what the angels meant when they announced the birth of the Christ child: “Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10).

Because of His atoning experience in mortality, our Savior is able to comfort, heal, and strengthen all men and women everywhere, but I believe He does so only for those who seek Him and ask for His help. The Apostle James taught, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10). We qualify for that blessing when we believe in Him and pray for His help.

There are millions of God-fearing people who pray to God to be lifted out of their afflictions. Our Savior has revealed that He “descended below all things” (D&C 88:6). As Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “Having ‘descended below all things,’ He comprehends, perfectly and personally, the full range of human suffering.”<sup>8</sup> We might even say that having descended beneath it all, He is perfectly positioned to lift us and give us the strength we need to endure our afflictions. We have only to ask.

Many times in modern revelation, the Lord declares, “Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you” (for example, D&C 6:5; 11:5; see also Matthew 7:7). Indeed, because of Their all-encompassing love, our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, hear and suitably answer the prayers of all who seek Them in faith. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

I know these things to be true. Our Savior’s Atonement does more than assure us of immortality by a universal resurrection and give us the opportunity to be cleansed from sin by repentance and baptism. His Atonement also provides the opportunity to call upon Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality. He

knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. Like the good Samaritan, when He finds us wounded at the wayside, He will bind up our wounds and care for us (see Luke 10:34). The healing and strengthening power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement is for all of us who will ask. I testify of that as I also testify of our Savior, who makes it all possible.

One day all of these mortal burdens will pass away and there will be no more pain (see Revelation 21:4). I pray that we will all understand the hope and strength of our Savior’s Atonement: the assurance of immortality, the opportunity for eternal life, and the sustaining strength we can receive if only we will ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

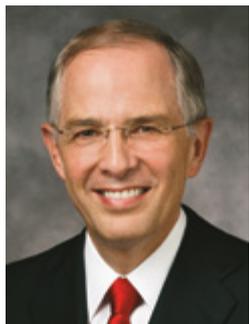
#### NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Savior’s Selfless and Sacred Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2015, 40; *Liahona*, Apr. 2015, 38.
2. James E. Faust, “The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 20; *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 22.
3. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
4. See, generally, Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 223–34; David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47; *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 12–19; Bruce C. Hafen and Marie K. Hafen, “‘Fear Not, I Am with Thee’: The Redeeming, Strengthening, and Perfecting Blessings of Christ’s Atonement,” *Religious Educator*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2015), 11–31, especially 18–25; Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (2000), 206–10.
5. “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” *Hymns*, no. 115.
6. From a 2014 letter received by Bishop Bobby O. Hales, who oversees the Henry Branch of the Central Utah Correctional Facility.
7. “Where Can I Turn for Peace?” *Hymns*, no. 129.
8. Neal A. Maxwell, “Apply the Atoning Blood of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 23.



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

# Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice

*Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from heaven that comes as we choose to believe and as we seek it and hold on to it.*

The Savior perceived the strength or weakness in the faith of those around Him. To one, He said approvingly, “Great is thy faith.”<sup>1</sup> He lamented to another, “O ye of little faith.”<sup>2</sup> He questioned others, “Where is your faith?”<sup>3</sup> And Jesus distinguished yet another with, “[In all Israel] I have not found so great faith.”<sup>4</sup>

I ask myself, “How does the Savior see my faith?” And tonight I ask you, “How does the Savior see your faith?”

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not something ethereal, floating loosely in the air. Faith does not fall upon us by chance or stay with us by birthright. It is, as the scriptures say, “substance . . . , the evidence of things not seen.”<sup>5</sup> Faith emits a spiritual light, and that light is discernible.<sup>6</sup> Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from heaven that comes as we choose to believe<sup>7</sup> and as we seek it and hold on to it. Your faith is either growing stronger or becoming weaker. Faith is a principle of power, important not only in this life but also in our progression beyond the veil.<sup>8</sup> By the grace of Christ, we will one day be saved through faith on His name.<sup>9</sup> The future of your faith is not by chance, but by choice.

## The Faith of a Young Brazilian

A month ago in Brazil, I met Aroldo Cavalcante. He was baptized at age 21, the first member of the Church in his family. His faith burned brightly, and he immediately began preparing to serve a mission. Sadly, Aroldo’s mother was diagnosed with cancer. Three months later, only days before she died, she spoke to Aroldo of her greatest concern: There were no relatives to help. Aroldo would need to take full responsibility for his two younger

sisters and his younger brother. He solemnly made this promise to his dying mother.

By day he worked in a bank, and at night he attended the university. He continued to keep his baptismal covenants, but his hopes for a full-time mission were gone. His mission would be caring for his family.

Months later while preparing a sacrament meeting talk, Aroldo studied the words that Samuel reprovingly spoke to King Saul: “To obey,” he read, “is better than [to] sacrifice.”<sup>10</sup> Aroldo received the seemingly impossible impression that he needed to obey the prophet’s call to serve a mission. Undaunted by the obstacles before him, he moved forward with enormous faith.

Aroldo saved every Brazilian *cruszeiro* he could. At age 23, he received his mission call. He told his brother how much to withdraw each month from his account for the family. Aroldo still did not have enough money to pay the full cost of his mission and the living expenses for his brother and sisters, but with faith he entered the MTC. A week later he received the first of many blessings. The bank that had employed



Elder Cavalcante unexpectedly doubled the money he was to receive as he concluded his work. This miracle, along with others, provided the needed income for his mission and his family during his absence.

Twenty years later, Brother Cavalcante is now serving as the president of the Recife Brazil Boa Viagem Stake. Looking back, he said of those days, “As I tried to live righteously, I felt the Savior’s love and guidance. My faith grew, allowing me to overcome many challenges.”<sup>11</sup> Aroldo’s faith did not come by chance, but by choice.

There are many Christian men and women with deep faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we honor and respect them.

#### No Longer on Neutral Ground

But brethren, we have been given something more: the priesthood of God, the power of God restored to earth by holy angels. This makes you



Aroldo Cavalcante (left) with his sisters and brother. Their mother’s portrait hangs on the wall.



different. You no longer stand on neutral ground. Your faith will grow not by chance, but by choice.

How we live our lives increases or diminishes our faith. Prayer, obedience, honesty, purity of thought and deed, and unselfishness increase faith. Without these, faith diminishes. Why did the Savior say to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not?”<sup>12</sup> Because there is an adversary who delights in destroying our faith! Be relentless in protecting your faith.

#### Honest Questions

Addressing honest questions is an important part of building faith, and we use both our intellect and our feelings. The Lord said, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart.”<sup>13</sup> Not all answers will come immediately, but most questions can be resolved through sincere study and seeking answers from God. Using our mind without our heart will not bring spiritual answers. “The things of God knoweth no man, but [through] the Spirit of God.”<sup>14</sup> And to help us, Jesus promised us “another Comforter” and called Him “even the Spirit of truth.”<sup>15</sup>

Faith never demands an answer to every question but seeks the assurance and courage to move forward, sometimes acknowledging, “I don’t know everything, but I do know enough to continue on the path of discipleship.”<sup>16</sup>

Immersing oneself in persistent doubt, fueled by answers from the

faithless and the unfaithful, weakens one’s faith in Jesus Christ and the Restoration.<sup>17</sup> “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.”<sup>18</sup>

For example, questions concerning the Prophet Joseph Smith are not new. They have been hurled by his critics since this work began. To those of faith who, looking through the colored glasses of the 21st century, honestly question events or statements of the Prophet Joseph from nearly 200 years ago, may I share some friendly advice: For now, give Brother Joseph a break! In a future day, you will have 100 times more information than from all of today’s search engines combined, and it will come from our all-knowing Father in Heaven.<sup>19</sup> Consider the totality of Joseph’s life—born in poverty and given little formal education, he translated the Book of Mormon in less than 90 days.<sup>20</sup> Tens of thousands of honest, devoted men and women embraced the cause of the Restoration. At age 38, Joseph sealed his witness with his blood. I testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. Settle this in your mind, and move forward!

#### Gifts That Enlarge Our Faith

Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon give us the beautiful assurance that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I hold in my hand a copy of the first edition of the Book of Mormon in

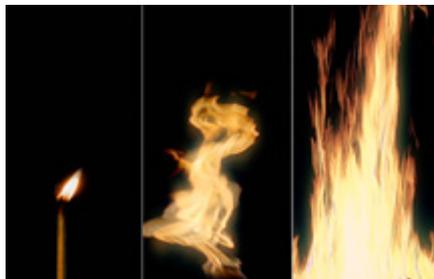
French, published by John Taylor as he began the work in France in 1852. Some or all of the Book of Mormon is now in 110 languages across the world. It provides a spiritual and tangible witness of the truthfulness of the Restoration. When was the last time that you read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover? Read it again. It will increase your faith.<sup>21</sup>

Another gift from God that enlarges our faith is the guidance of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. Today we sustained three new members of the Twelve, and I welcome Elder Rasband, Elder Stevenson, and Elder Renlund to the sacred circle of the Quorum of the Twelve. Paul said:

“He [called] apostles; and . . . prophets; . . .  
“For the perfecting of the saints . . . :  
“Till we all come in . . . unity of . . . faith, and . . . the knowledge of the Son of God . . . :  
“. . . No more . . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the . . . cunning craftiness [of those who] lie in wait to deceive.”<sup>22</sup>

The guidance of the First Presidency and the Twelve help protect our faith.

Although your beginning fire of faith may be small, righteous choices bring greater confidence in God, and your faith grows. The difficulties of mortality



*Although your beginning fire of faith may be small, righteous choices bring greater confidence in God, and your faith grows.*

blow against you, and evil forces lurk in the darkness, hoping to extinguish your faith. But as you continue to make good choices, trust in God, and follow His Son, the Lord sends increased light and knowledge, and your faith becomes settled and unwavering. President Thomas S. Monson said: “Fear not. . . . The future is as bright as your faith.”<sup>23</sup>

#### **Porter, Zane, and Max Openshaw**

The faith of the young men of this Church is remarkable!

On June 12 of this year, I received an email telling me that the bishop from a Utah ward, his wife, and two of their children had been killed in an airplane accident. Bishop Mark Openshaw had been piloting the plane as it left a small airfield, when it suddenly fell from the sky and crashed to the earth. Bishop Openshaw, his wife, Amy, and their children Tanner and Ellie were killed in the accident. Miraculously their five-year-old son, Max, thrown out of the airplane in his airplane seat, escaped with only broken bones.

I learned that their son Elder Porter Openshaw was serving in the Marshall Islands Majuro Mission and that their 17-year-old son, Zane, was on a school cultural exchange in Germany.

I called Elder Openshaw on Christmas Island. Although heartbroken by the unexpected death of his mother, father, brother, and sister, Elder Openshaw immediately turned his concern to his two younger brothers.

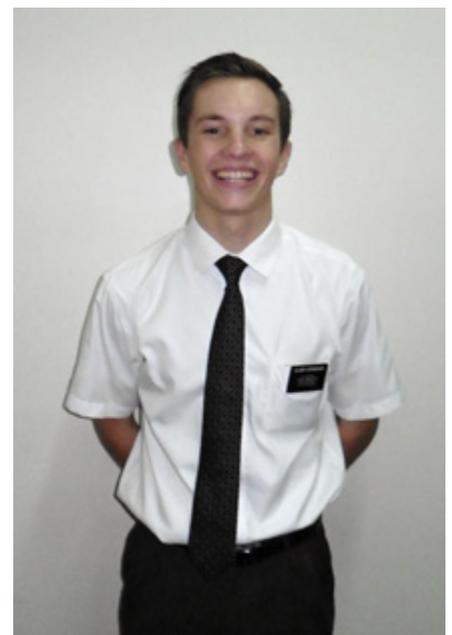
Ultimately it was Elder Openshaw and his brother Zane who decided that others could help at home and that Porter should stay on his mission. They knew it was what their parents would want.

As I spoke with Elder Openshaw, I felt his sadness but also his unquenchable fire of faith. “I have the confidence,”

he told me, “and I know without a shadow of a doubt that I will see my family again. . . . Strength in our trials is always found in . . . our Lord, Jesus Christ. . . . God’s omnipotent hand has been so apparent in helping [me] and my brothers throughout [this] very difficult challenge.”<sup>24</sup>

I met Zane for the first time at the funeral. As I looked at the four caskets before us in the chapel, I marveled at the faith of this 17-year-old as he addressed the congregation. “Today,” he said, “we have gathered with humble hearts and weary souls to remember the lives of my mom, dad, Tanner, and Ellie. . . . We have talked together, cried together, remembered together, and felt the hand of God together. . . .

“The day after I heard the news of the accident, I found a letter in my bag from my mom. In the letter she wrote: ‘Zane, remember who you are and where you come from. We will



*Elder Porter Openshaw is currently serving in the Marshall Islands Majuro Mission.*



be praying for you and missing you.’” Zane continued: “There could not be more fitting last words from my mother. I know that she, along with Tanner, Ellie, and my dad are . . . praying for [my brothers and] me. I know that . . . they pray that I remember who I am . . . because I, like you, am a child of God, and He has sent



Ultimately it was Elder Openshaw and his brother Zane (pictured with younger brother Max) who decided that others could help at home and that Porter should stay on his mission. They knew it was what their parents would want.

me here. I testify [that] . . . no matter how alone we feel, God will not forsake us.”<sup>25</sup>

My dear friends, your faith did not begin at birth, and it will not end at death. Faith is a choice. Strengthen your faith, and live to be deserving of the Savior’s approving words: “Great is thy faith.” As you do, I promise you that your faith, through the grace of Jesus Christ, will one day allow you to stand with those you love, clean and pure in the presence of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 15:28.
2. Matthew 6:30.
3. Luke 8:25.
4. Matthew 8:10.
5. Hebrews 11:1.
6. See Alma 32:35.
7. See L. Whitney Clayton, “Choose to Believe,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 36–39.
8. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 3.
9. See Ephesians 2:8.
10. 1 Samuel 15:22.
11. Personal discussion with Aroldo Cavalcante, Aug. 29, 2015, Salvador, Brazil, as well as an email dated Aug. 31, 2015. There is much more to the story of Aroldo Cavalcante’s commitment to his mother to care for his sisters and brother. During the years following his mother’s death, he would openly refer to his brother and sisters as his “children.” During his mission, his letters and calls on Christmas and Mother’s Day often addressed the individual challenges of each family member. Through great sacrifice after his mission, Aroldo took financial

responsibility for their education and the mission of his brother. Aroldo waited until his sisters and brother were married before marrying at age 32. They remain a very close family.

12. Luke 22:32.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
14. 1 Corinthians 2:11.
15. John 14:16–17.
16. See Adam Kotter, “When Doubts and Questions Arise,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2015, 37–39; *Liahona*, Mar. 2015, 39–41.
17. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said: “Some insist upon studying the Church only through the eyes of its defectors—like interviewing Judas to understand Jesus. Defectors always tell us more about themselves than about that from which they have departed” (“All Hell Is Moved” [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 8, 1977], 3, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu)).
18. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
19. “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 522).
20. See John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information” (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986).
21. A spiritual witness of the Book of Mormon is central to the conversion of Latter-day Saints. It is a witness that needs to be renewed over and over again. If not, the spiritual feelings fade and one no longer remembers the power he or she once felt. “And the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a . . . wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen . . . and [began] to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing” (3 Nephi 2:1–2).
22. Ephesians 4:11–14.
23. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 92.
24. Personal email received from Elder Porter Openshaw, Aug. 23, 2015.
25. Comments by Zane Openshaw at the funeral for his family members, June 22, 2015.



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By Elder Randall K. Bennett  
Of the Seventy

## Your Next Step

*Your loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, invite you to take your next step toward Them. Don't wait. Take it now.*

**M**y heart sank during a recent meeting with wonderful Latter-day Saints. The question was asked, “Who desires to live with Heavenly Father again?” Every hand went up. The next question was “Who has confidence you’ll succeed?” Sadly and surprisingly, most hands went down.

When we perceive a gap between who we are now and who we desire to become, many of us are tempted to choose to lose faith and hope.<sup>1</sup>

Because “no unclean thing can dwell with God,”<sup>2</sup> in order to live with Him again we will need to be cleansed of sin<sup>3</sup> and sanctified.<sup>4</sup> If we had to do this *alone*, none of us would make it. But we are not alone. In fact, we are *never* alone.

We have heaven’s help because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.<sup>5</sup> The Savior said, “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”<sup>6</sup> When faith is exercised, faith increases.

Let’s consider together three principles that will help us on our journey back to our Father in Heaven.

### Become as a Child

Our youngest grandson illustrates the first principle. After learning to

crawl and then stand, he was ready to try walking. During his first few attempts, he fell, cried, and gave a look that said, “I will never—ever—try

that again! I’m simply going to keep crawling.”

When he stumbled and fell, his loving parents did not feel that he was hopeless or that he would never walk. Instead they held out their arms while calling to him, and with his eyes on them, he tried again to move toward their loving embrace.

Loving parents are always ready with outstretched arms to welcome even our smallest step in the right direction. They know that our willingness to try and try again will lead to progress and success.

The Savior taught that to inherit the kingdom of God, we must become as a little child.<sup>7</sup> So, spiritually speaking,





the first principle is that we need to do what we did as children.<sup>8</sup>

With childlike humility and willingness to focus on our Father in Heaven and our Savior, we take steps toward Them, never giving up hope, even if we fall. Our loving Heavenly Father rejoices in each and every faithful step, and if we fall, He rejoices in each effort to get back up and try again.

#### Act with Faith

A second principle is illustrated by two faithful Saints, each deeply desirous of finding an eternal companion. Both prayerfully took faith-filled steps.

Yuri, a Russian Latter-day Saint, sacrificed and saved to take a long trip to the temple. On the train he noticed a beautiful woman with a bright countenance, and he felt that he should share the gospel with her. Not knowing what else to do, he began reading from his Book of Mormon, hoping that she might notice.

Yuri didn't realize that the woman, Mariya, was already a Latter-day Saint. Not knowing that Yuri too was a member, and following a prompting she had to share the gospel with him, Mariya began reading in her Book of Mormon as well, hoping that he might notice.

Well, when they simultaneously looked up, Yuri and Mariya were astonished to see the Book of Mormon

in each other's hands—and yes, after falling in love, they were sealed in the temple. Today, Yuri and Mariya Kutepov of Voronezh, Russia, as eternal companions, contribute significantly to the growth of the Church in Russia.

The emphasis here is not only on this couple's willingness to act in faith. It's also about a second principle—the Lord more than matches our willingness to act in faith. Our willingness to take a step is not just met; it is exceeded by the Lord's promised blessings.

Heavenly Father and our Savior are *eager* to bless us. After all, They ask only for one-tenth of what They bless us with and then promise that the windows of heaven will open!<sup>9</sup>

Whenever we willingly act with faith in Jesus Christ and take another step, especially an uncomfortable step requiring change or repentance, we are blessed with strength.<sup>10</sup>

I testify that the Lord will guide us to—and *through*—our next steps. He will more than match our efforts with His power if we are willing to keep trying, repenting, and moving forward with faith in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Spiritual gifts are promised not only to those who love God and keep all of His commandments but also, gratefully, to those of us who “[seek] so to do.”<sup>11</sup>

Strength is given to those who keep seeking and trying.

Two essential weekly signposts that mark our journey back to our Father in Heaven are the perpetual covenant of the ordinance of the sacrament and our Sabbath day observance. President Russell M. Nelson taught us last general conference that the Sabbath is the Lord's gift to us. Our devoted weekly observance of the Sabbath is our sign to the Lord that we love Him.<sup>12</sup>

Each Sabbath day we witness that we are “willing to take upon [ourselves His name], and always remember him, and keep his commandments.”<sup>13</sup> In return for our repentant heart and our commitment, the Lord renews the promised remission of sin and enables us to “always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>14</sup> The Holy Spirit's influence improves, strengthens, teaches, and guides us.

If, in remembering Him each Sabbath, we turn our hearts to the Savior through these two important signposts, our efforts are again more than matched by the Lord by His promised blessings. We are promised that, with devoted Sabbath day observance, the fulness of the earth will be ours.<sup>15</sup>

The path back to our Father in Heaven leads to the house of the Lord, where we are blessed to receive saving ordinances for ourselves and for our



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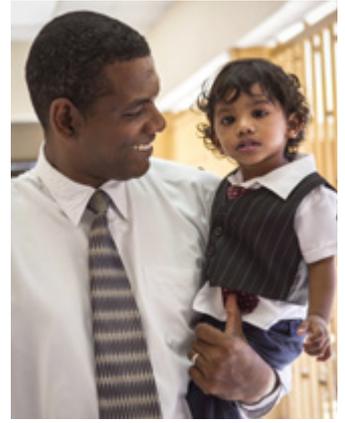
### SUNDAY SCHOOL

### YOUNG WOMEN

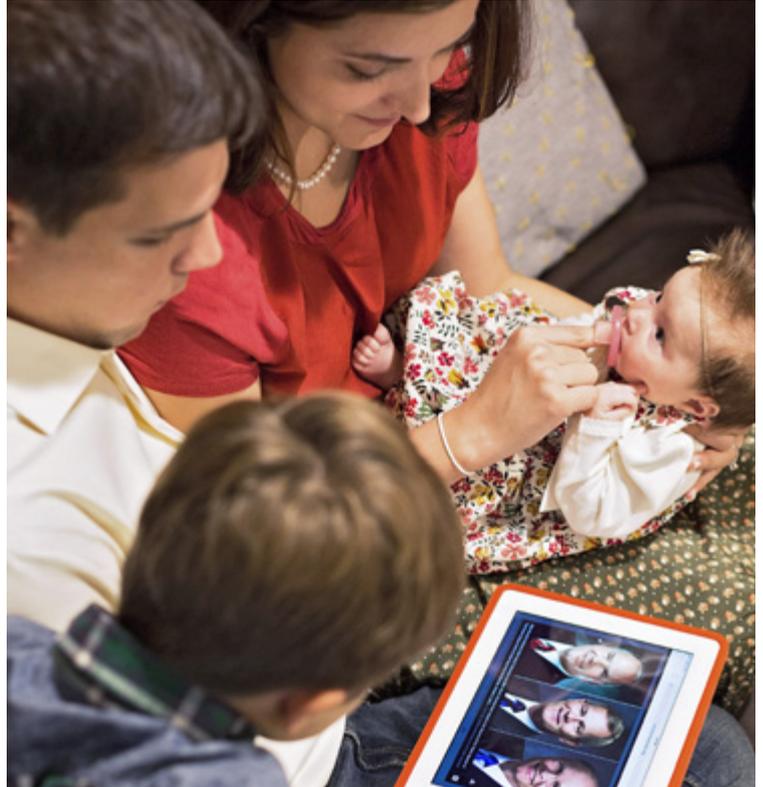
### RELIEF SOCIETY

### PRIMARY

### YOUNG MEN



*Pictured clockwise from top left are Church members and missionaries in Drammen, Norway; Arica, Chile; Belize City, Belize; Athens, Georgia, USA; Cavite City, Cavite, Philippines; Orange County, California, USA; Kyiv, Ukraine; and Bermejillo, Durango, Mexico.*



departed loved ones. President Boyd K. Packer taught that “ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into [God’s] presence.”<sup>16</sup> I pray that each of us will always be worthy of and use our temple recommends to serve regularly.

### Overcome the Natural Man

A third principle is this: we must counter the natural man’s tendency to procrastinate, to put off, or to give up.<sup>17</sup>

As we progress along the covenant path, we will make mistakes, some multiple times. Some of us struggle with behaviors or addictions we feel powerless to overcome. But faith in Heavenly Father and in Jesus Christ is a principle of action and power.<sup>18</sup> If we are willing to act, we will be blessed with the strength to repent and with the strength to change.

We fail only if we fail to take another faithful step forward. We will not, we cannot, fail if we are faithfully yoked to the Savior—He who has never failed and will never fail us!



### Promised Blessings

I promise that each faith-filled step will be met with help from heaven. Guidance will come as we pray to our Heavenly Father, rely on our Savior and follow Him, and listen to the Holy Spirit. Strength will come because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> Healing and forgiveness will come because of God’s grace.<sup>20</sup> Wisdom and patience will come by trusting in the Lord’s timing for us. Protection will come by following God’s living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson.

You were created “that [you] might have joy;”<sup>21</sup> joy you will feel when you worthily return to your Heavenly Father and your Savior and step into Their warm embrace.

I bear witness of these absolute truths. Your loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live. They know you. They love you. They lovingly invite you to take your next step toward Them. Don’t wait. Take it now. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. See Moroni 7:40–41.
2. 1 Nephi 10:21; see also Moses 6:57.
3. See Alma 5:21, 27; Doctrine and Covenants 50:28.
4. See Moroni 10:32.
5. See Mosiah 4:6–7; Alma 34:9; Moroni 7:41.
6. Moroni 7:33.
7. See 3 Nephi 11:38.
8. See Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 8:10.
9. See Malachi 3:10; Doctrine and Covenants 41:1.
10. See Moroni 7:33.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 46:9.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.
13. Moroni 4:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–10, 13, 15–16.
16. Boyd K. Packer, “Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 24.
17. See Mosiah 3:19.
18. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 3.
19. See Moroni 7:33.
20. See Moroni 10:32.
21. 2 Nephi 2:25.





By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# Be Not Afraid, Only Believe

*When we choose to believe, exercise faith unto repentance, and follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, we open our spiritual eyes to splendors we can scarcely imagine.*

## Babylon and Daniel

Twenty-six hundred years ago, Babylon was the world's great superpower. One ancient historian described the walls of Babylon that surrounded the city as more than 300 feet (90 m) high and 80 feet (25 m) thick. "In magnificence," he wrote, "there is no other city that approaches . . . it."<sup>1</sup>

In its day, Babylon was the world's center of learning, law, and philosophy. Its military might was unparalleled. It shattered the power of Egypt. It invaded, torched, and looted the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. It easily conquered Jerusalem and carried away the best and brightest of the children of Israel back to Babylon to serve King Nebuchadnezzar.

One of these captives was a young man by the name of Daniel. Many scholars believe that Daniel was between 12 and 17 years old at the time. Think of it, my beloved young Aaronic Priesthood holders: Daniel was very likely your age when he was taken into the king's court to be educated in the language, laws, religion, and science of the worldly Babylon.

Can you imagine what it would have felt like to be forced from your home, marched 500 miles (800 km) to a foreign city, and indoctrinated in the religion of your enemies?

Daniel had been raised as a follower of Jehovah. He believed in and



worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had studied the words of the prophets, and he knew of God's interaction with man.

But now, at a very young age, he was a prisoner-student in Babylon. The pressure on him must have been immense to abandon his old beliefs and adopt those of Babylon. But he stayed true to his faith—in word and in deed.

Many of you know how it feels to defend an unpopular truth. In the Internet slang of today, we talk about getting "flamed" by those who disagree with us. But Daniel wasn't just risking public ridicule. In Babylon, those who challenged the religious authorities understood what it means—figuratively and literally—to be "flamed." Just ask Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.<sup>2</sup>

I don't know if it was easy for Daniel to be a believer in such an environment. Some people are blessed with a believing heart—for them, faith seems to come as a gift from heaven. But I imagine that Daniel was like many of us who have to work for our testimonies. I'm confident that Daniel spent many hours on his knees praying, laying his questions and fears on the altar of faith, and waiting upon the Lord for understanding and wisdom.

And the Lord did bless Daniel. Though his faith was challenged and ridiculed, he stayed true to what he knew by his own experience to be right.

Daniel believed. Daniel did not doubt.

And then one night, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled his mind. He assembled his team of scholars and counselors and demanded that they describe the dream to him and also reveal the meaning of it.

Of course, they could not. “No one can do what you ask,” they pleaded. But this only made Nebuchadnezzar more furious, and he commanded that all the wise men, magicians, astrologers, and counselors be cut in pieces—including Daniel and the other young students from Israel.

You who are familiar with the book of Daniel know what happened next. Daniel asked Nebuchadnezzar for a little extra time, and he and his faithful companions went to the source of *their* faith and moral strength. They prayed to God and asked for divine help at this crucial moment in their lives. And “then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a . . . vision.”<sup>3</sup>

Daniel, the young boy from a conquered nation—who had been bullied and persecuted for believing in his strange religion—went before the king and revealed to him the dream and its interpretation.

From that day on, as a direct result of his faithfulness to God, Daniel became a trusted counselor to the king, renowned for his wisdom in all of Babylon.

The boy who believed and lived his faith had become a man of God. A prophet. A prince of righteousness.<sup>4</sup>

#### Are We like Daniel?

To all of us who bear the holy priesthood of God, I ask, are we like Daniel?

Do we stand loyal to God?

Do we practice what we preach, or are we Sunday Christians only?

Do our daily actions reflect clearly what we claim to believe?

Do we help “the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted”?<sup>5</sup>

Do we just talk the talk, or do we enthusiastically walk the walk?

Brethren, we have been given much.



We have been taught the divine truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been entrusted with priesthood authority to help our fellowmen and build up God’s kingdom on earth. We live in a time of great outpouring of spiritual power. We have the fulness of truth. We have priesthood keys to seal on earth and in heaven. Sacred scriptures and teachings of living prophets and apostles are available as never before.

My dear friends, let us not take these things lightly. With these blessings and

privileges come great responsibilities and obligations. Let us rise up to them.

The ancient city of Babylon is in ruins. Its splendor is long gone. But Babylon’s worldliness and wickedness live on. Now it falls to us to live as believers in a world of disbelief. The challenge is ours to daily practice the principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and to live true to God’s commandments. We will have to stay calm under peer pressure, not be impressed by popular trends or false prophets, disregard the ridicule of



the ungodly, resist the temptations of the evil one, and overcome our own laziness.

Just think about it. How much easier would it have been for Daniel to simply go along with the ways of Babylon? He could have set aside the restrictive code of conduct God had given the children of Israel. He could have feasted on the rich foods provided by the king and indulged in the worldly pleasures of the natural man. He would have avoided ridicule.

He would have been popular.

He would have fit in.

His path might have been much less complicated.

That is, of course, until the day when the king demanded an interpretation of his dream. Then Daniel would have found that he, like the rest of Babylon's "wise men," had lost his connection to the true source of light and wisdom.

Daniel passed his test. Ours still continues.

#### The Courage to Believe

Satan, our adversary, wants us to fail. He spreads lies as part of his effort to destroy our belief. He slyly suggests that the doubter, the skeptic, the cynic

is sophisticated and intelligent, while those who have faith in God and His miracles are naive, blind, or brain-washed. Satan will advocate that it is cool to doubt spiritual gifts and the teachings of true prophets.

I wish I could help everyone to understand this one simple fact: we *believe* in God because of things we *know* with our heart and mind, not because of things we *do not know*. Our spiritual experiences are sometimes too sacred to explain in worldly terms, but that doesn't mean they are not real.

Heavenly Father has prepared for His children a spiritual feast, offering every kind of exquisite food imaginable—and yet, instead of enjoying these spiritual gifts, the cynics content themselves with observing from a distance, sipping from their cups of skepticism, doubt, and disrespect.

Why would anyone walk through life satisfied with the light from the candle of their own understanding when, by reaching out to our Heavenly Father, they could experience the bright sun of spiritual knowledge that would expand their minds with wisdom and fill their souls with joy?

When you and I talk to people about faith and belief, don't we often hear, "I wish I could believe the way you do"?

Implied in such a statement is another of Satan's deceptions: that belief is available to some people but not to others. There is no magic to belief. But *wanting* to believe *is* the necessary first step! God is no respecter of persons.<sup>6</sup> He is your Father. He wants to speak to you. However, it requires a little scientific curiosity—it requires an experiment upon the word of God—and the exercise of a "particle of faith."<sup>7</sup> It also takes a little humility. And it requires an open heart and an open mind. It requires *seeking*, in the full meaning of the word. And, perhaps hardest of all, it requires being patient and waiting upon the Lord.

If we make no effort to believe, we are like the man who unplugs a spotlight and then blames the spotlight for not giving any light.

Recently I was surprised and saddened to hear of an Aaronic Priesthood bearer who seemed to take pride in the fact that he had distanced himself from God. He said, "If God reveals Himself to me, then I will believe. Until then, I

will find the truth relying on my own understanding and intellect to light the way before me.”

I don’t know this young man’s heart, but I couldn’t help but feel terribly sorry for him. How easily he rejected the gifts the Lord was offering him. This young man had unplugged the spotlight and then seemed self-satisfied in his clever observation that there was no light.

Unfortunately, this seems to be quite a popular attitude today. If we can put the burden of proof on God, we think we can excuse ourselves from taking God’s commandments seriously and from taking responsibility for our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Brethren, let me be clear: there is nothing noble or impressive about being cynical. Skepticism is easy—anyone can do it. It is the faithful life that requires moral strength, dedication, and courage. Those who hold fast to faith are far more impressive than those who give in to doubt when mysterious questions or concerns arise.

But it should not surprise us that faith is not valued by society. The world has a long history of rejecting that which it does not understand. And it has particular trouble understanding things it cannot see. But just because we cannot see something with our physical eyes does not mean it doesn’t exist. Indeed, “there are more things in heaven and earth . . . than are dreamt of” in our textbooks, scientific journals, and worldly philosophies.<sup>8</sup> The universe is filled with wonders profound and astonishing—things that can be comprehended only through spiritual eyes.

#### The Promise of Belief

When we choose to believe, exercise faith unto repentance, and follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, we open our spiritual eyes to splendors we can scarcely imagine. Thus our belief and faith will grow stronger, and we will see even more.<sup>9</sup>

Brethren, I testify that even in the toughest of times, the Savior will say

to you as He said to an anxious father on a crowded street in Galilee, “Be not afraid, only believe.”<sup>10</sup>

We can choose to believe.

For in belief, we discover the dawn of light.

We will discover truth.<sup>11</sup>

We will find peace.<sup>12</sup>

Because of our belief, we will never hunger, never thirst.<sup>13</sup> The gifts of God’s grace will enable us to be true to our faith and will fill our soul like “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”<sup>14</sup> We will experience true and lasting joy.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, my dear friends, my beloved brethren in the priesthood of God:

Have courage to believe.

Be not afraid, only believe.

Stand with Daniel.

I pray that each one of us—young and old—will find renewed strength, courage, and desire to believe. In the name of our Master, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, trans. George Rawlinson, 4 vols. (1875), 1:244.
2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were cast into a flaming furnace (see Daniel 3).
3. Daniel 2:19.
4. See Daniel 2.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
6. See Acts 10:34–35.
7. Alma 32:27.
8. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5, lines 167–68.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
10. Mark 5:36.
11. See Moroni 10:3–5.
12. See Isaiah 26:3.
13. See John 6:35.
14. John 4:14.
15. See 2 Nephi 2:25.



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By President Henry B. Eyring  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# You Are Not Alone in the Work

*As you move from one priesthood service to another, you will see the Lord is in the work with you.*

My beloved brethren, we are grateful that the Lord has called Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, and Elder Dale G. Renlund as Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hearts, our prayers, and our faith sustain them.

We know of their great capacity. Yet they will need reassurance in their calls, as we all do, that the Lord is with them in His work. The newest deacon needs that confidence, as does the most experienced high priest who receives a new call.

That confidence grows as you come to see that He called you through His servants. My encouragement is to help you know that when you do your part, the Lord adds His power to your efforts.

Any calling we receive in the Lord's kingdom requires more than our human judgment and our personal powers. Those calls require help from the Lord, which will come. Even the new deacon will learn that is true, and he will go on learning over the years.

One of my grandsons is here tonight in his first priesthood session. He was ordained a deacon six days ago. He may

expect that his first performance of a priesthood duty will be passing the sacrament next Sunday. My prayer is that he will see that moment as it really is.

He may think that his work for the Lord is to pass the sacrament tray to people seated in the sacrament meeting. But the Lord's purpose is not simply to have people partake of bread and water. It is to have them keep a covenant that will move them along the path to eternal life. And for that to happen, the Lord must give a spiritual experience to the person to whom the deacon offers the tray.



I have seen that happen once in a care center when a deacon leaned forward to pass the tray to a white-haired lady. She looked at the bread as if it were precious. I have never forgotten her smile as she partook and then reached up to pat the deacon's head, saying quite loudly, "Oh, thank you!"

That deacon was simply performing his priesthood duty. Yet the Lord then multiplied the deacon's act. It was evident that the sister remembered the Savior as she expressed sincere gratitude for a deacon's service. She was reassured as he served the sacrament to her that she would have the Spirit to be with her. She was not alone that day in the care center. Neither was the deacon alone in his modest service.

A young teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood may not sense, as he goes to teach a family, that he is a partner with the Lord in His work. I remember still the simple testimony of a young home-teaching companion who came into our home. The Spirit confirmed his words to me and to my family. He may not remember that day, but I do.

The Lord will magnify the efforts of a young man again when he is called to become a priest. The first baptism he performs, for instance, may be of a young person he does not know. He may be worried about whether he will say the right words and perform the ordinance correctly.

But the Lord, whose servant he is, will magnify his calling. The person he baptizes has chosen to move along the path to eternal life. The Lord will do His greater part. He did it for me once when the boy I baptized, tears streaming down his face, said in my ear, "I'm clean. I'm clean."

As you move from one priesthood service to another, you will see the Lord is in the work with you. I learned this



Oslo, Norway

from meeting an elders quorum president in a stake conference years ago. In the conference there were more than 40 names presented of men who were to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The stake president leaned over to me and whispered, “Those men were all less-active prospective elders.” In amazement, I asked the president what his program was to rescue these men.

He pointed to a young man in the back of the chapel. He said, “There he is. Most of these men have been brought back because of that elders quorum president.” He was on the back row, dressed casually, his legs stretched out with his battered boots crossed in front of him.

I asked the stake president to introduce me to him after the meeting. When we met, I told the young man I was surprised by what he had done and asked him how he did it. He shrugged his shoulders. He obviously didn’t think he deserved any credit.

Then he said softly, “I know every inactive guy in this town. Most of them have pickup trucks. I have a truck too. I wash my pickup where they wash theirs. In time, they become my friends.

“Then I wait until something goes wrong in their lives. It always does. They tell me about it. I listen and I don’t find fault. Then, when they say, ‘There is something wrong in my life. There just *has* to be something better than this,’ I tell them what is missing and where they can find it. Sometimes they believe me, and when they do, I take them with me.”



You can see why he was modest. It was because he knew he had done his small part and the Lord was doing the rest. It was the Lord who had touched the hearts of those men in their troubles. It was the Lord who had given them the feeling that there must be something better for them and a hope that they could find it.

The young man, who—like you—was a servant of the Lord, simply believed that if he did his small part, the Lord would help those men along the path to home and to the happiness only He could give them. This man also knew the Lord had called him as elders quorum president because he would do his part.

There will be times in your service when you won’t have the remarkable and visible success of that young elders quorum president. That is the time when you will need to be confident that the Lord, knowing you would do your part in the work, called you through His authorized servants. Having faith in the

call from the Lord’s servants was crucial in the missionary service of my great-grandfather Henry Eyring.

He was baptized on March 11, 1855, in St. Louis, Missouri. Erastus Snow ordained him to the office of a priest shortly thereafter. The president of the St. Louis Stake, John H. Hart, called him to serve a mission to the Cherokee Nation on October 6.<sup>1</sup> He was ordained an elder on October 11. He left on horseback for the Cherokee Mission on October 24. He was 20 years old and a convert of only seven months.

If any priesthood holder had a reason to feel unqualified or unprepared, it was Henry Eyring. The only reason he could have had the courage to go was that he knew in his heart that God had called him through His authorized servants. It was the source of his courage. That must be the source of our courage to persevere, whatever our callings in the priesthood.

After Elder Eyring had served for three difficult years and upon the death



and watching over him. He learned what is true for all of us—that the Lord’s servants are inspired to know the Lord’s will. And Henry Eyring had confirmed what I know as well: that the prophet, as the president of the priesthood, is inspired of God to watch over and care for the Lord’s servants and to call them.

Whatever your calling in the priesthood, you may have at times felt Heavenly Father was unaware of you. You can pray to know His will, and with the honest desire to do *whatever* He asks you to do, you will receive an answer.

Heavenly Father will allow you to feel that He knows you, that He appreciates your service, and that you are becoming worthy of the greeting from the Lord you want so much to hear: “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”<sup>7</sup>

It is my prayer that every priesthood holder will reach out in faith to rescue every soul for whom he is responsible. God will add His power to His servant’s efforts. Hearts of people will be touched to make the choices that will bring them



of the mission president, Henry was nominated and sustained as president of the mission in a meeting held on October 6, 1858. He was surprised and as shocked as a new deacon would be. He wrote, “It was quite unexpected to me to be called to that responsible office but as it was the will of the brethren I cheerfully accepted, feeling at the same time my great weakness and lack of experience.”<sup>2</sup>

The now-President Eyring traveled to the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw Nations in 1859. Through his efforts, the Lord “added,” as Henry recorded, “a number to the church.” He organized two branches but noted that “very few are alive in the cause.”<sup>3</sup>

A year later, Henry was faced with the difficult reality that the political leaders among the people he was serving no longer permitted the Latter-day Saint missionaries to do their work. As he pondered what he should do, he recalled the instruction from his previous mission president indicating that he should prolong his mission until 1859.<sup>4</sup>

In October of that year, Henry wrote to President Brigham Young for direction, but he did not receive a reply to his question. Henry recorded, “Not being able to hear anything from the Presidency of the Church, I called upon the Lord in prayer, asking him to reveal to me his mind and will in regard to my

remaining longer or going up to Zion.”

He continued: “The following dream was given to me in answer to my prayer. I dreamt I had arrived in [Salt Lake] City and immediately went to [President Brigham] Young’s office, where I found him. I said to him: ‘[President] Young I have left my mission, have come of my own accord, but if there is anything wrong in this, I am willing to return and finish my mission.’ [In the dream the prophet] replied: ‘You have stayed long enough, it is all right.’”

Henry wrote in his journal, “Having had dreams before which were literally fulfilled I had faith to believe, that this also would be and consequently commenced at once to prepare for a start.”

He arrived in Salt Lake City on August 29, 1860, having walked most of the way. Two days later, he walked into the office of President Brigham Young.<sup>5</sup>

Henry described the experience in these words: “[I] called upon [President] Young, who received [me] very kindly. I said to him, ‘[President] Young I have come without being sent for, if I have done wrong, I am willing to return and finish my mission.’ [Brigham Young] answered: ‘It is all right, we have been looking for you.’”

Henry described his joy, saying, “Thus my dream was literally fulfilled.”<sup>6</sup>

His joy came from a confirmation that the Lord had been working with

along the gospel path toward happiness and away from sorrow.

It is my prayer as well that every priesthood holder will feel the loving and watchful care of Heavenly Father, of the Savior, and of the prophet of God in his calling in the priesthood.

I bear you my special witness that we are in the service of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. I testify that He has called you and me into His service knowing our capacities and the help we will need. He will bless our efforts beyond our fondest expectations as we give our all in His service. I testify that God's prophet, who is the president of all the priesthood in the earth, is inspired of God.

I am grateful for the examples of faithful priesthood holders everywhere. Heavenly Father and the Savior are grateful that you do your part. They know you, They watch over you, and They love you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See "Minutes of the Conference," *St. Louis Luminary*, Oct. 13, 1855, 187.
2. Henry Eyring letter to Brigham Young, Oct. 7, 1858, Brigham Young Office Files, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
3. Henry Eyring report to Church Historian's Office, Aug. 1860, Missionary Reports, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
4. See Henry Eyring letter to Brigham Young, Oct. 9, 1859, Brigham Young Office Files, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
5. See President's Office Journals, Aug. 31, 1860, vol. D, 137, Brigham Young Office Files, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
6. Henry Eyring reminiscences, 1896, typescript, 27–28, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
7. Matthew 25:23.



By President Thomas S. Monson

# Keep the Commandments

*He who created us and who loves us perfectly knows just how we need to live our lives in order to obtain the greatest happiness possible.*

**M**y beloved brethren, how good it is to be with you once again. We have been inspired this evening by the words which we have heard. I pray that I too will be guided in what I say.

My message to you tonight is straightforward. It is this: *keep the commandments*.

God's commandments are not given to frustrate us or to become obstacles to our happiness. Just the opposite is true. He who created us and who loves us perfectly knows just how we need to live our lives in order to obtain the greatest happiness possible. He has provided us with guidelines which, if we follow them, will see us safely through this often treacherous mortal journey. We remember the words of the familiar hymn: "Keep the commandments! In this there is safety; in this there is peace."<sup>1</sup>

Our Heavenly Father loves us enough to say: *Thou shalt not lie; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; and so on.*<sup>2</sup> We know the commandments. He understands that when we keep the commandments, our lives

will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive His promised blessings. But while He gives us laws and commandments, He also allows us to choose whether to accept them or to reject them. Our decisions in this regard will determine our destiny.

I am confident that each of us has as his ultimate goal life everlasting in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. It is imperative,



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therefore, for us to make choices throughout our lives that will lead us to this great goal. We know, however, that the adversary is committed to our failure. He and his hosts are relentless in their efforts to thwart our righteous desires. They represent a grave and constant threat to our eternal salvation unless we are also relentless in our determination and efforts to achieve our goal. The Apostle Peter warns us, “Be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”<sup>3</sup>

Although there is no time in our lives when we are exempt from temptation, you young men are at an age when you may be particularly vulnerable. Teenage years are often years of insecurity, of feeling as though you don’t measure up, of trying to find your place with your peers, and of trying to fit in. You may be tempted to lower your standards and to follow the crowd in order to be accepted by those you desire to have as friends. Please be strong, and be alert to *anything* that would rob you of the blessings of eternity. The choices you make here and now are forever important.

We read in 1 Corinthians: “There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world.”<sup>4</sup> We are surrounded by persuasive voices, beguiling voices, belittling voices, sophisticated voices, and confusing voices. I might add that these are *loud* voices. I admonish you to turn

the volume down and to be influenced instead by that still, small voice which will guide you to safety. Remember that one with authority placed his hands on your head after you were baptized, confirming you a member of the Church and saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost.”<sup>5</sup> Open your hearts, even your very souls, to the sound of that special voice which testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, “Thine ears shall hear a word . . . , saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.”<sup>6</sup> May we ever be in tune, that we might hear this comforting, guiding voice which will keep us safe.

Disregard for the commandments has opened the way for what I consider to be the plagues of our day. They include the plague of permissiveness, the plague of pornography, the plague of drugs, the plague of immorality, and the plague of abortion, to name just a few. The scriptures tell us that the adversary is “the founder of all these things.”<sup>7</sup> We know that he is “the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men.”<sup>8</sup>

I plead with you to avoid anything that will deprive you of your happiness here in mortality and eternal life in the world to come. With his deceptions and lies, the adversary will lead you down a slippery slope to your destruction if you allow him to do so. You will likely be on that slippery slope before you even realize that there is no way

to stop. You have heard the messages of the adversary. He cunningly calls: *Just this once won’t matter; everyone is doing it; don’t be old-fashioned; times have changed; it can’t hurt anyone; your life is yours to live.* The adversary knows us, and he knows the temptations which will be difficult for us to ignore. How vital it is that we exercise constant vigilance in order to avoid giving in to such lies and temptations.

Great courage will be required as we remain faithful and true amid the ever-increasing pressures and insidious influences with which we are surrounded and which distort the truth, tear down the good and the decent, and attempt to substitute the man-made philosophies of the world. If the commandments had been written by man, then to change them by inclination or legislation or by any other means would be the prerogative of man. The commandments, however, were God-given. Using our agency, we can set them aside. We cannot, however, *change* them, just as we cannot change the consequences which come from disobeying and breaking them.

May we realize that our greatest happiness in this life will come as we follow God’s commandments and obey His laws! I love the words found in Isaiah chapter 32, verse 17: “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” Such peace, such assurance can come only through righteousness.

We cannot allow ourselves the slightest bit of leeway in dealing with sin. We cannot allow ourselves to believe that we can participate “just a little” in disobeying the commandments of God, for the sin can grab us with an iron hand from which it is excruciatingly painful to free ourselves. The

addictions which can come from drugs, alcohol, pornography, and immorality are real and are nearly impossible to break without great struggle and much help.

If any of you has stumbled in his journey, I assure you that there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Although the path is difficult, your eternal salvation depends on it. What could be more worthy of your efforts? I plead with you to determine right here and now to take the steps necessary to fully repent. The sooner you do so, the sooner you will be able to experience the peace and the quietness and the assurance spoken of by Isaiah.

A short while ago I heard the testimony of a woman who, with her husband, strayed from the path of safety, breaking commandments and, in the process, nearly destroying their family. When each of them could finally see through the thick haze of addiction

and recognize how unhappy their lives had become, as well as how much they were hurting their loved ones, they began to change. The repentance process felt slow and was, at times, painful, but with the help of priesthood leaders, along with help from family and loyal friends, they made their way back.

I share with you a portion of this sister's testimony of the healing power of repentance: "How does someone go from being one of the lost sheep and gripped by [sin], to this peace and happiness we now feel? How does that happen? The answer . . . is because of a perfect gospel, a perfect Son and His sacrifice for me. . . . Where there was darkness, there is now light. Where there was despair and pain, there is joy and hope. We have been infinitely blessed by the change that can only come through repentance made possible by the Atonement of Jesus Christ."

Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. Despite the fact that the path is difficult, the promise is real. Said the Lord to those who repent:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."<sup>9</sup>

"And I will remember [them] no more."<sup>10</sup>

Throughout our lives we will need to nurture strong testimonies by studying the scriptures and by praying and by pondering the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When firmly planted, our testimonies of the gospel, of the Savior, and of our Heavenly Father will influence all that we do.

I testify that all of us are beloved sons of our Father in Heaven, sent to earth at this day and time for a purpose, and given the priesthood of God so that we can serve others and perform God's work here upon the earth. We have been commanded to live our lives so that we remain worthy to possess that priesthood.

My brethren, may we keep the commandments! Wonderful and glorious are the rewards which are in store for us if we do. May this be our blessing, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. "Keep the Commandments," *Hymns*, no. 303.
2. See Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 22:39.
3. 1 Peter 5:8.
4. 1 Corinthians 14:10.
5. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.3.10.
6. Isaiah 30:21.
7. 2 Nephi 26:22.
8. Moses 4:4.
9. Isaiah 1:18.
10. Jeremiah 31:34.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

# Be an Example and a Light

*As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others.*

Brothers and sisters, how good it is to be with you once again. As you know, since we were together in April, we have been saddened by the loss of three of our beloved Apostles: President Boyd K. Packer, Elder L. Tom Perry, and Elder Richard G. Scott. They have returned to their heavenly home. We miss them. How grateful we are for their examples of Christlike love and for the inspired teachings they have left to all of us.

We extend a heartfelt welcome to our newest Apostles, Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, and Elder Dale G. Renlund. These are men dedicated to the work of the Lord. They are well qualified to fill the important positions to which they have been called.

Recently, as I have been reading and pondering the scriptures, two passages in particular have stayed with me. Both are familiar to us. The first is from the Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> The second scripture is one which came to my mind as I pondered

the meaning of the first. It is from the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>2</sup>

I believe the second scripture explains, in great part, how we can accomplish the first. We become examples of the believers by living the gospel of Jesus Christ in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. As we do so, our lights will shine for others to see.

Each of us came to earth having been given the Light of Christ. As we follow the example of the Savior and live as He lived and as He taught, that light will burn within us and will light the way for others.

The Apostle Paul lists six attributes of a believer, attributes that will allow our lights to shine. Let us look at each one.

I mention the first two attributes together—being an example in word and in conversation. The words we use can lift and inspire, or they can harm and demean. In the world today there is a profusion of profanity with which we seem to be surrounded at nearly every turn. It is difficult to avoid

hearing the names of Deity being used casually and thoughtlessly. Coarse comments seem to have become a staple of television, movies, books, and music. Bandied about are slanderous remarks and angry rhetoric. Let us speak to others with love and respect, ever keeping our language clean and avoiding words or comments that would wound or offend. May we follow the example of the Savior, who spoke with tolerance and kindness throughout His ministry.



Bermejillo, Durango, Mexico

The next attribute mentioned by Paul is charity, which has been defined as “the pure love of Christ.”<sup>3</sup> I am confident there are within our sphere of influence those who are lonely, those who are ill, and those who feel discouraged. Ours is the opportunity to help them and to lift their spirits. The Savior brought hope to the hopeless and strength to the weak. He healed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. Throughout His ministry He reached out in charity to any in need. As we emulate His example, we will bless lives, including our own.

Next, we are to be an example in spirit. To me that means we strive to



have in our lives kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and goodwill. These qualities will provide for us a spirit which will touch the lives of those around us. It has been my opportunity through the years to associate with countless individuals who possess such a spirit. We experience a special feeling when we are with them, a feeling that makes us want to associate with them and to follow their example. They radiate the Light of Christ and help us feel His love for us.

To illustrate that the light which comes from a pure and loving spirit is recognized by others, I share with you an experience of many years ago.

At that time, leaders of the Church met with officials in Jerusalem to work out a lease agreement for land on which the Church's Jerusalem Center would be built. In order to obtain the permissions needed, the Church had to agree that no proselyting would be undertaken by our members who would occupy the center. After that agreement had been made, one of the Israeli officials, who was well

acquainted with the Church and its members, remarked that he knew the Church would honor the no-proselyting agreement. "But," he said, referring to the students who would attend there, "what are we going to do about the light that is in their eyes?"<sup>4</sup> May that special light ever shine within us, that it might be recognized and appreciated by others.

To be an example of faith means that we trust in the Lord and in His word. It means that we possess and that we nourish the beliefs that will guide our thoughts and our actions. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in our Heavenly Father will influence all that we do. Amidst the confusion of our age, the conflicts of conscience, and the turmoil of daily living, an abiding faith becomes an anchor to our lives. Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. I reiterate what we have been told repeatedly—that in order to gain and to keep the faith we need, it is essential that we read and study and

ponder the scriptures. Communication with our Heavenly Father through prayer is vital. We cannot afford to neglect these things, for the adversary and his hosts are relentlessly seeking for a chink in our armor, a lapse in our faithfulness. Said the Lord, "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, we are to be pure, which means that we are clean in body, mind, and spirit. We know that our body is a temple, to be treated with reverence and respect. Our minds should be filled with uplifting and ennobling thoughts and kept free from those things which will pollute. In order to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we must be worthy. Brothers and sisters, purity will bring us peace of mind and will qualify us to receive the Savior's promises. Said He, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."<sup>6</sup>

As we prove to be examples in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity, we will qualify to be lights to the world.



May I say to all of you, and particularly to you young people, that as the world moves further and further away from the principles and guidelines given to us by a loving Heavenly Father, we will stand out from the crowd because we are different. We will stand out because we dress modestly. We will be different because we do not use profanity and because we do not partake of substances which are harmful to our bodies. We will be different because we avoid off-color humor and degrading remarks. We will be different as we decide not to fill our minds with media choices that are base and demeaning and that will remove the Spirit from our homes and our lives. We will certainly stand out as we make choices regarding morality—choices which adhere to gospel principles and standards. Those things which make us different from most of the world also provide us with that light and that spirit which will shine in an increasingly dark world.

It is often difficult to be different and to stand alone in a crowd. It is natural to fear what others might think or say. Comforting are the words of the psalm: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”<sup>7</sup> As we make Christ the center

of our lives, our fears will be replaced by the courage of our convictions.

Life is perfect for none of us, and at times the challenges and difficulties we face may become overwhelming, causing our light to dim. However, with help from our Heavenly Father, coupled with support from others, we can regain that light which will illuminate our own path once again and provide the light others may need.

To illustrate, I share with you the touching words of a favorite poem I first read many years ago:

*I met a stranger in the night  
Whose lamp had ceased to shine.  
I paused and let him light  
His lamp from mine.*

*A tempest sprang up later on  
And shook the world about.  
And when the wind was gone  
My lamp was out!*

*But back to me the stranger came—  
His lamp was glowing fine!  
He held the precious flame  
And lighted mine!<sup>8</sup>*

My brothers and sisters, our opportunities to shine surround us each day, in whatever circumstance we find

ourselves. As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others, whether they be our own family members and friends, our co-workers, mere acquaintances, or total strangers.

To each of you, I say that you are a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father. You have come from His presence to live on this earth for a season, to reflect the Savior’s love and teachings, and to bravely let your light shine for all to see. When that season on earth has ended, if you have done your part, yours will be the glorious blessing of returning to live with Him forever.

How reassuring are the Savior’s words: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”<sup>9</sup> Of Him I testify. He is our Savior and Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father. He is our Exemplar and our strength. He is “the light which shineth in darkness.”<sup>10</sup> That each of us within the sound of my voice may pledge to follow Him, thus becoming a shining light to the world, is my prayer in His holy name, even Jesus Christ the Lord, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 5:16.
2. 1 Timothy 4:12.
3. Moroni 7:47.
4. See James E. Faust, “The Light in Their Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 20.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
6. Matthew 5:8.
7. Psalm 27:1.
8. Lon Woodrum, “Lamps,” *The Lighted Pathway*, Oct. 1940, 17.
9. John 8:12.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 6:21.



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By Elder Ronald A. Rasband  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# I Stand All Amazed

*My testimony of Jesus Christ has been built from many special experiences in which I have come to know His great love for each one of us.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters throughout the world, I'm very grateful to the First Presidency for inviting me to share my humble testimony this Sabbath day. The words of a favorite Latter-day Saint hymn describe my current feelings:

*I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,  
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me. . . .  
I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine  
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,  
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,  
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify. . . .  
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!<sup>1</sup>*

A few days ago I had the great privilege to meet with the First Presidency and receive this call from our dear prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I want to witness to all of you of the strength and love President Monson had as he said to me, "This call comes from the Lord Jesus Christ."

I am overwhelmed and shaken to my very core to consider the import and significance of those words so

tenderly spoken by our loving prophet. President Monson, President Eyring, President Uchtdorf, I love you and will serve the Lord and you with all of my heart, might, mind, and strength.

Oh, how I have loved President Boyd K. Packer and Elders L. Tom Perry and Richard G. Scott. I dearly miss them. I am blessed to have been trained and taught at the feet of these dear Brethren. Not in the smallest part am I able to walk in their shoes, yet I am honored to stand tall on their shoulders and carry on in the Lord's ministry.

When I think of those who have helped make me who I am, I think first of my sweet and selfless eternal companion, Melanie. Through the years, she has helped mold me like potter's clay into a more polished disciple of Jesus Christ. Her love and support, and that of our 5 children, their spouses, and our 24 grandchildren, sustain me. To my dear family, I love you.

Like Nephi of old, I was born of goodly parents in the gospel and they of goodly parents back six generations. My earliest ancestors who joined the Church were from England and Denmark. These early pioneers gave their all to the gospel of Jesus Christ and leave a legacy for their posterity to follow. I am so grateful for a multigenerational Latter-day Saint family, and I know this is a worthy goal for all of us to strive for.

Many others have contributed to preparing my life for this new call. They include my childhood friends and family, early leaders, teachers, and lifelong mentors. I must include those from my early mission to the eastern states and our beloved missionaries from the New York New York North Mission. For the

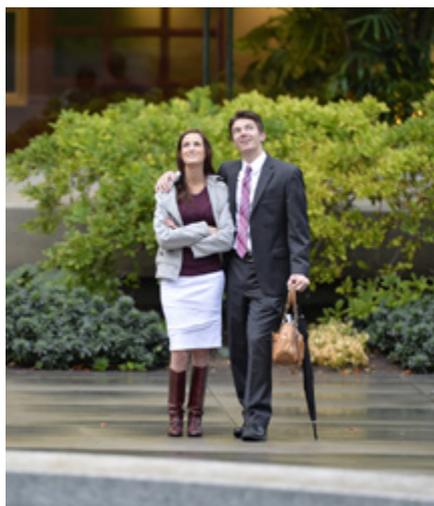




many who have influenced and shaped my life, I am most grateful.

I have cherished serving with my Brethren of the Seventy. For 15 years I have been in one of the greatest quorums and loving brotherhoods of the Church. Thank you, my dear fellow servants. Now I look forward to belonging to a new quorum. President Russell M. Nelson, my love is deep for you and each member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Sister Rasband and I have been blessed to visit members during many



assignments in congregations and missions around the world. We love the Latter-day Saints everywhere! Your faith has increased our faith; your testimonies have added to our testimony.

Now, if I could leave one small message with you today, it would be this: the Lord has said, “Love one another; as I have loved you.”<sup>2</sup> I’m confident that there is no choice, sin, or mistake that you or anyone else can make that will change His love for you or for them. That does not mean He excuses or condones sinful conduct—I’m sure He does not—but it does mean we are to reach out to our fellowman in love to invite, persuade, serve, and rescue. Jesus Christ looked past people’s ethnicity, rank, and circumstances in order to teach them this profound truth.

I have been asked many times when I received my testimony.

I can’t remember not believing in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. I have loved Them since I learned of Them at the knees of my angel mother, reading scripture and gospel stories. That early belief has now grown into a knowledge and a witness of a loving Heavenly Father, who hears and answers our

prayers. My testimony of Jesus Christ has been built from many special experiences in which I have come to know His great love for each one of us.

I’m grateful for our Savior’s Atonement and wish like Alma to shout it with the trump of God.<sup>3</sup> I know that Joseph Smith is God’s prophet of the Restoration and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. And I know that President Thomas S. Monson is God’s true servant and prophet on the earth today.

As we follow our prophet, I pray that we may have charity in our hearts toward others and that we will become a living witness and indeed “stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers [us].” Oh, may it be “wonderful, wonderful to [you and to] me.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
2. John 13:34.
3. See Alma 29:1.



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By Elder Gary E. Stevenson  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Plain and Precious Truths

*Heavenly Father's generous compensation for living in perilous times is that we also live in the fulness of times.*

Dear brothers and sisters, it has been many decades since a general conference has been convened that President Boyd K. Packer and Elders L. Tom Perry and Richard G. Scott were not seated immediately behind the podium and speaking at one of these sessions. Our memories of them are poignant, and I add my tribute to honor them, each so uniquely different yet so harmonized in their witness and testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

Furthermore, I, like you, find strength in and sustain President Thomas S. Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator, and I marvel at his faithful and dutiful apostolic service spanning over 50 remarkable years.

And so it was on Tuesday morning of this week, just after 9:00 a.m. as the Bishopric was beginning a meeting with the Asia Area Presidency, who are here for conference, that I was called to meet with President Monson, along with his counselors. Moments later, as I walked into the boardroom adjacent to his office, I must have looked nervous sitting across the table, as he kindly spoke to calm my nerves.

He commented, noting my age, that I seemed quite young and even looked younger than my age.

Then, within a few moments, President Monson described that acting on the will of the Lord, he was extending a call to the Quorum of the Twelve to me. He asked me if I would accept this call, to which, following what I am sure was a very undignified audible gasp, in complete shock, I responded

affirmatively. And then, before I could even verbalize a tsunami of indescribable emotion, most of which were feelings of inadequacy, President Monson kindly reached out to me, describing how he was called many years ago as an Apostle by President David O. McKay, at which time he too felt inadequate. He calmly instructed me, "Bishop Stevenson, the Lord will qualify those whom He calls." These soothing words of a prophet have been a source of peace, a calm in a storm of painful self-examination and tender feelings in the ensuing agonizing hours which have passed day and night since then.

I rehearsed what I have just described to you to my sweet companion, Lesa, later that day, seated in a quiet corner on Temple Square, with a serene view of the temple and the historic Tabernacle lying before us. As we tried to comprehend and process the events of the day, we found our anchor to be our faith in Jesus Christ and our knowledge of the great plan of happiness. This leads to an expression of my deepest love for Lesa. She





is the sunshine in and of my life and a remarkable daughter of God. Hers is a life punctuated by selfless service and unconditional love of all. I will strive to remain worthy of the blessing of our eternal union.

I express my deepest love to our four sons and their families, three of whom are here with their beautiful wives, the mothers of our six grandchildren; the fourth, a missionary, has special permission to stay up past missionary curfew and is viewing these proceedings live with his mission president and the mission president's wife from their mission home in Taiwan. I love each of them and love how they love the Savior and the gospel.

I express my love to each member of my family: to my dear mother and to my father, who passed away last year, who instilled in me a testimony which seemed to dwell in me from my earliest memories. I further extend this gratitude to my brother, sisters, and their faithful spouses, as well as Lesa's family, many of whom are actually here today. I cast this net of gratitude to numerous extended family, friends, missionaries, leaders, and teachers along the way.

I have been blessed with a close association with the members of the First Presidency, the Twelve, the Seventy, and the general auxiliary presidencies. I express my love and esteem to each of you sisters and brothers and will strive to be worthy of our continued association. The Presiding Bishopric enjoys an almost heavenly unity. I will miss my association each day with Bishop Gérald Caussé, Bishop Dean M. Davies, and the staff.

I stand before you as evidence of the words of the Lord recorded in the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "That the fulness of [the] gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the [earth], and before kings and rulers."<sup>1</sup> These words are preceded by the Lord's declaration which demonstrates the love of a Father for His children: "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments."<sup>2</sup>

Our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jehovah, with a knowledge of the end from the beginning,<sup>3</sup> opened

the heavens and a new dispensation to offset the calamities that They knew would come. The Apostle Paul described the forthcoming calamities as "perilous times."<sup>4</sup> For me, this suggests that Heavenly Father's generous compensation for living in perilous times is that we also live in the fulness of times.

As I agonized over my inadequacies this week, I received a distinct impression which both chastened and comforted me: to focus not on what I can't do but rather on what I can do. I can testify of the plain and precious truths of the gospel.

These are the words which I have shared hundreds of times with both those who belong to the Church and many who are not members: "God is our [loving] Heavenly Father. We are His children. . . . He weeps with us when we suffer and rejoices when we do what is right. He wants to communicate with us, and we can communicate with Him through sincere prayer. . . .

"Heavenly Father has provided us, His children, with a way to . . . return to live in His presence. . . . Central to our [Heavenly] Father's plan is Jesus Christ's Atonement."<sup>5</sup>

Heavenly Father sent His Son to the earth to atone for the sins of all mankind. Of these plain and precious truths I bear my testimony, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.
3. See Abraham 2:8.
4. 2 Timothy 3:1.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 31–32.



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By Elder Dale G. Renlund  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Through God's Eyes

*To effectively serve others, we must see them through a parent's eyes, through Heavenly Father's eyes.*

My dear brothers and sisters, thank you for sustaining me yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. It is hard to express how much that means to me. I was especially grateful for the sustaining vote of the two extraordinary women in my life: my wife, Ruth, and our dear, dear, dear daughter, Ashley.

My call gives ample evidence to the truthfulness of the Lord's statement early in this dispensation: "That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the

ends of the world."<sup>1</sup> I am one of those weak and simple. Decades ago, when I was called to be the bishop of a ward in the eastern United States, my brother, slightly older and much wiser than I, called me on the phone. He said, "You need to know that the Lord hasn't called you because of anything you have done. In your case, it is probably in spite of what you have done. The Lord has called you for what He needs to do through you, and that will happen only if you do it His way." I recognize that this wisdom from an older brother applies even more today.

Something wonderful happens in a missionary's service when he or she realizes that the calling is not about him or her; rather, it is about the Lord, His work, and Heavenly Father's children. I feel the same is true for an Apostle. This calling is not about me. It's about the Lord, His work, and Heavenly Father's children. No matter what the assignment or calling is in the Church, to serve capably, one must serve knowing that everyone we serve "is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, . . . has a divine nature and destiny."<sup>2</sup>

In my past profession, I was a cardiologist specializing in heart failure and transplantation, with many patients who were critically ill. My wife jokingly says that it was a bad prognostic sign to become one of my patients. All teasing aside, I saw many people die, and I developed a kind of emotional distance when things went poorly. That way, feelings of sadness and disappointment were tempered.

In 1986 a young man named Chad developed heart failure and received a heart transplant. He did very well for a decade and a half. Chad did all he could to stay healthy and live as normal a life as possible. He served a mission, worked, and was a devoted son to his parents. The last few years of his life, though, were challenging, and he was in and out of the hospital frequently.

One evening, he was brought to the hospital's emergency department in full cardiac arrest. My associates and I worked for a long time to restore his circulation. Finally, it became clear that Chad could not be revived. We stopped our futile efforts, and I declared him dead. Although sad and disappointed, I maintained a professional attitude. I thought to myself, "Chad has had good care. He has had many more years of



Busts of Presidents of the Church in the Conference Center



life than he otherwise would have had.” That emotional distance soon shattered as his parents came into the emergency room bay and saw their deceased son lying on a stretcher. In that moment, I saw Chad through his mother’s and father’s eyes. I saw the great hopes and expectations they had had for him, the desire they had had that he would live just a little bit longer and a little bit better. With this realization, I began to weep. In an ironic reversal of roles and in an act of kindness I will never forget, Chad’s parents comforted me.

I now realize that in the Church, to effectively serve others we must see them through a parent’s eyes, 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 of His children. Only then can we sense the Savior’s caring concern for them. We cannot completely fulfill our covenant obligation to mourn with those who mourn and comfort those who stand in need of comfort unless we see them through God’s eyes.<sup>3</sup> This

expanded perspective will open our hearts to the disappointments, fears, and heartaches of others. But Heavenly Father will aid and comfort us, just as Chad’s parents comforted me years ago. We need to have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that know and feel if we are to accomplish the rescue so frequently encouraged by President Thomas S. Monson.<sup>4</sup>

Only when we see through Heavenly Father’s eyes can we be filled with “the pure love of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Every day we should plead with God for this love. Mormon admonished, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

With all my heart I want to be a true follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> I love Him. I adore Him. I witness of His living reality. I witness that He is the Anointed One, the Messiah. I am a witness of His incomparable mercy, compassion, and love. I add my testimony to that of the Apostles who, in the year 2000,

stated “that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. . . . He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world.”<sup>8</sup>

I testify that on a day in 1820 in a grove in upstate New York, the risen Lord appeared, along with God, our Heavenly Father, to the Prophet Joseph Smith, just as Joseph Smith said They did. Priesthood keys are on earth today to enable saving and exalting ordinances. I know it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

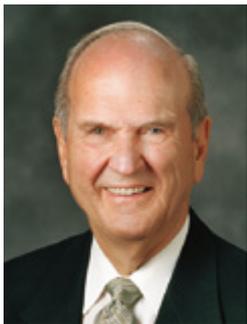
#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129; it was first read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the general Relief Society meeting held on September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.
3. See Mosiah 18:8–10.
4. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 48–50; *Liahona*, July 2001, 57–60; “Our Responsibility to Rescue,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2013, 4–5. President Monson reiterated these concepts in his message to General Authorities on September 30, 2015, reminding those assembled that he was reemphasizing the message he gave to General Authorities and Area Seventies in training meetings at the April 2009 general conference.
5. Moroni 7:47.
6. Moroni 7:48.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:27–28: “And the Twelve shall be my disciples, and they shall take upon them my name; and the Twelve are they who shall desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart. “And if they desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart, they are called to go into all the world to preach my gospel unto every creature.”
8. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 3. In citing this here, I figuratively add my signature to the document, witnessing to the selfsame testimony provided by those Apostles.



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By **President Russell M. Nelson**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# A Plea to My Sisters

*We need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices.*

**D**ear Elders Rasband, Stevenson, and Renlund, we, your Brethren, welcome you to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We thank God for the revelations that He gives to His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson.

Brothers and sisters, when we met in general conference six months ago, none of us anticipated the coming changes that would tug at the heart-strings of the entire Church. Elder L. Tom Perry delivered a powerful message about the irreplaceable role that marriage and family occupy in the Lord's plan. We were stunned when just a few days later, we learned of the cancer that would soon take him from us.

Though President Boyd K. Packer's health had been declining, he continued to "soldier on" in the work of the Lord. He was frail last April, yet he was determined to declare his witness as long as he had breath. Then, just 34 days after Elder Perry's passing, President Packer also stepped across the veil.

We missed Elder Richard G. Scott at our last general conference, but we've reflected upon the powerful witness of the Savior he had borne in many previous conferences. And just 12 days ago, Elder Scott was called home and reunited with his beloved Jeanene.

I had the privilege of being with all of these Brethren during their final days, including joining members of President Packer's and Elder Scott's immediate families just before their passing. It has been difficult for me to believe that these three treasured friends, these magnificent servants of the Lord, are gone. I miss them more than I can say.

As I've reflected on this unexpected turn of events, one of the impressions that has lingered with me is that which

I observed in these surviving wives. Etched in my mind are the serene images of Sister Donna Smith Packer and Sister Barbara Dayton Perry at their husbands' bedsides, both women filled with love, truth, and pure faith.

As Sister Packer sat next to her husband in his final hours, she radiated that peace that passes all understanding.<sup>1</sup> Though she realized that her beloved companion of almost 70 years would soon depart, she showed the tranquility of a faith-filled woman. She seemed angelic, just as she was in this photo of them at the dedication of the Brigham City Utah Temple.

I saw that same kind of love and faith emanating from Sister Perry. Her devotion to both her husband and the Lord was obvious, and it moved me deeply.

Through their husbands' final hours and continuing to the present day, these stalwart women have shown the strength and courage that covenant-keeping women always demonstrate.<sup>2</sup> It would be impossible to measure



the influence that such women have, not only on families but also on the Lord's Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith.<sup>3</sup>

This has been true in every gospel dispensation since the days of Adam and Eve. Yet the women of this dispensation are distinct from the women of any other because this dispensation is distinct from any other.<sup>4</sup> This distinction brings both privileges and responsibilities.

Thirty-six years ago, in 1979, President Spencer W. Kimball made a profound prophecy about the impact that covenant-keeping women would have on the future of the Lord's Church. He prophesied: "Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world . . . will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world."<sup>5</sup>

My dear sisters, you who are our vital associates during this winding-up scene, the day that President Kimball foresaw is today. You are the women he foresaw! Your virtue, light, love, knowledge, courage, character, faith, and righteous lives will draw good women of the world, along with their families, to the Church in unprecedented numbers!<sup>6</sup>

We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without

women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!<sup>7</sup>

President Packer declared:

"We need women who are organized and women who can organize. We need women with executive ability who can plan and direct and administer; women who can teach, women who can speak out. . . .

"We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or dangerous."<sup>8</sup>

Today, let me add that we need women who know how to make important things happen by their faith and who are courageous defenders of morality and families in a sin-sick world. We need women who are devoted to shepherding God's children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly.

Throughout my life, I have been blessed by such women. My departed wife, Dantzel, was such a woman. I will always be grateful for the life-changing influence she had on me in *all* aspects of my life, including my pioneering efforts in open-heart surgery.

Fifty-eight years ago I was asked to operate upon a little girl, gravely ill from congenital heart disease. Her older brother had previously died of a similar condition. Her parents pleaded for help. I was not optimistic about the outcome but vowed to do all in my power to save her life. Despite my best efforts, the child died. Later,

the same parents brought another daughter to me, then just 16 months old, also born with a malformed heart. Again, at their request, I performed an operation. This child also died. This third heartbreaking loss in one family literally undid me.



Sister Barbara Perry and Elder L. Tom Perry

I went home grief stricken. I threw myself upon our living room floor and cried all night long. Dantzel stayed by my side, listening as I repeatedly declared that I would never perform another heart operation. Then, around 5:00 in the morning, Dantzel looked at me and lovingly asked, "Are you finished crying? Then get dressed. Go back to the lab. Go to work! You need to learn more. If you quit now, others will have to painfully learn what you already know."

Oh, how I needed my wife's vision, grit, and love! I went back to work and learned more. If it weren't for Dantzel's inspired prodding, I would not have pursued open-heart surgery and would not have been prepared to do the operation in 1972 that saved the life of President Spencer W. Kimball.<sup>9</sup>

Sisters, do you realize the breadth and scope of your influence when you speak those things that come to your



President Boyd K. Packer and Sister Donna S. Packer

heart and mind as directed by the Spirit? A superb stake president told me of a stake council meeting in which they were wrestling with a difficult challenge. At one point, he realized that the stake Primary president had not spoken, so he asked if she had any impressions. “Well, actually I have,” she said and then proceeded to share a thought that changed the entire direction of the meeting. The stake president continued, “As she spoke, the Spirit testified to me that she had given voice to the revelation we had been seeking as a council.”

My dear sisters, whatever your calling, whatever your circumstances, we

need your impressions, your insights, and your inspiration. We need you to speak up and speak out in ward and stake councils. We need each married sister to speak as “a *contributing and full partner*”<sup>10</sup> as you unite with your husband in governing your family. Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God. We brethren cannot duplicate your unique influence.

We know that the culminating act of all creation was the creation of woman!<sup>11</sup> We need your strength!

Attacks against the Church, its doctrine, and our way of life are going to increase. Because of this, we need women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ and who will use that understanding to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation.<sup>12</sup> We need women who can detect deception in all of its forms. We need women who know how to access the power that God makes available to covenant keepers and who express their beliefs with confidence and charity. We need women who have the courage and vision of our Mother Eve.

My dear sisters, nothing is more crucial to your eternal life than your own

conversion. It is converted, covenant-keeping women—women like my dear wife Wendy—whose righteous lives will increasingly stand out in a deteriorating world and who will thus be seen as different and distinct in the *happiest* of ways.

So today I plead with my sisters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to step forward! Take your rightful and needful place in your home, in your community, and in the kingdom of God—more than you ever have before. I plead with you to fulfill President Kimball’s prophecy. And I promise you in the name of Jesus Christ that as you do so, the Holy Ghost will magnify your influence in an unprecedented way!

I bear witness of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His redeeming, atoning, and sanctifying power. And as one of His Apostles, I thank you, my dear sisters, and bless you to rise to your full stature, to fulfill the measure of your creation, as we walk arm in arm in this sacred work. Together we will help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. Of this I testify, as your brother, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Philippians 4:7.
2. This includes tears—in keeping the commandment to weep for those we love when they graduate from this life (see Doctrine and Covenants 42:45).
3. See Rebekah’s influence on Isaac and their son Jacob in Genesis 27:46; 28:1–4.
4. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. (1957–66), 4:166. Note: All previous dispensations were limited to a small segment of the world and were terminated by apostasy. In contrast, this dispensation will not be limited in location or time. It will fill the world and merge with the Second Coming of the Lord.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 222–23.
6. When I was born, there were fewer than 600,000 members of the Church. Today



By Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer  
Of the Seventy

there are more than 15 million. That number will continue to increase.

7. President Joseph Fielding Smith told sisters of the Relief Society, “You can speak with authority, because the Lord has placed authority upon you.” He also said that the Relief Society has “been given power and authority to do a great many things. The work which they do is done by divine authority” (“Relief Society—an Aid to the Priesthood,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1959, 4, 5). These quotations were also cited by Elder Dallin H. Oaks in a conference address, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 51.
8. Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 8; see also M. Russell Ballard, *Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family* (1997), 93.
9. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 146, 153–56. Note: In 1964 President Kimball set me apart as a stake president and blessed me that the mortality rates would decline in my pioneering efforts with operations on the aortic valve. Little did either of us then know that eight years later, I would be doing an operation on President Kimball that included replacement of his incompetent aortic valve.
10. “When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a *full* partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 106).
11. “All the purposes of the world and all that was in the world would be brought to naught without woman—a keystone in the priesthood arch of creation” (Russell M. Nelson, “Lessons from Eve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 87). “Eve became God’s final creation, the grand summation of all of the marvelous work that had gone before” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Women in Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 83).
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Children of the Covenant,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 33.

# Let the Clarion Trumpet Sound

*The world needs disciples of Christ who can communicate the gospel message with clarity and from the heart.*

This past summer my wife and I had two of our young grandsons staying with us while their parents participated in a pioneer trek activity in their stake. Our daughter wanted to be sure that the boys practiced the piano while away from home. She knew that a few days with the grandparents makes it a little easier to forget about practicing. One afternoon I decided to sit with my 13-year-old grandson, Andrew, and listen to him play.

This boy is full of energy and loves the outdoors. He could easily spend all of his time hunting and fishing. While he was practicing the piano, I could tell that he would rather be fishing on a nearby river. I listened as he pounded out each chord of a familiar song. Every note he played had the same emphasis and meter, making it difficult to clearly identify the melody. I sat beside him on the bench and explained the importance of applying just a little more pressure on the melody keys and a little less on those notes that accompany the melody. We talked about the piano being more than just a mechanical miracle. It can be an extension of his own voice and feelings

and become a wonderful instrument of communication. Just as a person talks and moves smoothly from one word to another, so should the melody flow as we move from one note to another.

We laughed together as he tried again and again. His dimpled-cheek smile increased as the familiar melody began to emerge from what was previously a wild set of sounds. The message became clear: “I am a child of God, and he has sent me here.”<sup>1</sup> I asked Andrew if he could



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feel the difference in the message. He responded, "Yes, Grandpa, I can feel it!"

The Apostle Paul taught us about comparing communication to musical instruments when he wrote to the Corinthians:

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"<sup>2</sup>

If ever there was a time when the world needs disciples of Christ who can communicate the message of the gospel with clarity and from the heart, it is now. We need the clarion call of the trumpet.

Christ was certainly our best example. He always demonstrated courage to stand up for what was right. His words echo through the centuries as He invites us to remember to love God and our fellowman, to keep all of God's commandments, and to live as lights to the world. He was not afraid to speak against the earthly powers or rulers of His day, even when such were opposing His mission given to Him by His Heavenly Father. His words were not designed to confuse but to move the hearts of men. He clearly knew His Father's will in all He said and did.

I also love the example of Peter, who confronted the men of the world with courage and clarity on the day of Pentecost. On that day people were assembled from many countries criticizing the early Saints because they heard them speak in tongues and thought they were drunken. Peter, having the Spirit rise in his soul, stood up to defend the Church and the members. He testified with these words: "Ye



men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words."<sup>3</sup>

He then quoted from the scriptures containing the prophecies of Christ and bore this straightforward testimony: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."<sup>4</sup>

Many heard his words and felt the Spirit, and 3,000 souls joined the ranks of the early Church. This is powerful evidence that one man or woman who is willing to testify when the world seems to be going in the opposite direction can make a difference.

When we as members make the decision to stand up and powerfully witness for God's doctrine and His Church, something changes within us. We take His countenance upon us. We become closer to His Spirit. He in turn will go before us and be on "[our] right hand and on [our] left, and [His] Spirit shall be in [our] hearts, and [His] angels round about [us], to bear [us] up."<sup>5</sup>

True disciples of Christ are not looking to make excuses for the doctrine when it doesn't fit the world's current concepts. Paul was another valiant disciple, boldly proclaiming that he was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."<sup>6</sup> True disciples represent the Lord when it may not be convenient to do so. True disciples desire to inspire the hearts of men, not just impress them.

Often it is not convenient or comfortable to stand up for Christ. I am sure that was the case with Paul when he was called before King Agrippa and was asked to justify himself and tell his story. Paul, without hesitating, proclaimed his belief with such power that this intimidating king admitted he was "almost" persuaded to be a Christian.

Paul's response witnessed of his desire for people to understand *absolutely* what he had to say. He told King Agrippa that it was his desire that all who heard him would not "almost" be Christians but rather would "altogether"



become disciples of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Those who speak with clarity can bring this to pass.

Over the many years that I have studied the story of Lehi's dream in the Book of Mormon,<sup>8</sup> I have always thought of the great and spacious building as a place where only the most rebellious reside. The building was filled with people mocking and pointing at the faithful who had held on to the iron rod, which represents the word of God, and had made their way to the tree of life, which represents the love of God. Some could not bear up under the pressure of the people mocking them and wandered off. Others decided to join the mockers in the building. Did they not have the courage to speak boldly against the criticisms or messages of the world?

As I watch the current world moving away from God, I think this building is growing in size. Many find themselves today wandering the halls of the great and spacious building, not realizing that they are actually becoming part

of its culture. They often succumb to the temptations and the messages. We eventually find them mocking or chiming in with those who criticize or mock.

For years I thought the mocking crowd was making fun of the way the faithful live their lives, but the voices from the building today have changed their tone and approach. Those who mock often try to drown out the simple message of the gospel by attacking some aspect of the Church's history or offering pointed criticism of a prophet or other leader. They are also attacking the very heart of our doctrine and the laws of God, given since the Creation of the earth. We, as disciples of Jesus Christ and members of His Church, must never let go of that iron rod. We must let the clarion trumpet sound from our own souls.

The simple message is that God is our loving Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is His Son. The gospel is restored in these latter days through living prophets, and the evidence is the

Book of Mormon. The path of happiness is through the basic family unit as originally organized and revealed by our Heavenly Father. This is the familiar melody of the message that many can recognize because they have heard it from their premortal life.

It is time for us, as Latter-day Saints, to stand up and testify. It is time for the notes of the melody of the gospel to rise above the noise of the world. I add my testimony to the message of the Savior and Redeemer of this world. He lives! His gospel is restored, and the blessings of happiness and peace can be secured in this life by living His commandments and walking in His path. This is my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. 1 Corinthians 14:7–8.
3. Acts 2:14.
4. Acts 2:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
6. Romans 1:16.
7. See Acts 26:26–30.
8. See 1 Nephi 8.



By Elder Claudio R. M. Costa  
Of the Seventy

# That They Do Always Remember Him

*I love to study and ponder the life of Him who gave everything for me and for all of us.*

I love the Primary song that says:

*Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,  
Things I would ask him to tell me if he  
were here.*

*Scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,  
Stories of Jesus, tell them to me.<sup>1</sup>*

I believe that starting a tradition of telling the stories of Jesus to our children and families is a very special way to keep the Sabbath day holy in our homes.

This will surely bring a special spirit to our home and provide our family with examples from the Savior Himself.

I love to study and ponder the life of Him who gave everything for me and for all of us.

I love to read scriptural passages about His sinless life, and after reading the scriptures which tell about the events experienced by Him, I close my eyes and try to visualize these sacred moments that teach me and strengthen me spiritually.

Moments such as:

- When He spat on the ground and, having made clay of the spittle,

anointed the eyes of the blind man and said unto him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” And the man obeyed, “and washed, and came seeing.”<sup>2</sup>

- When He healed the woman who had an issue of blood and had touched the border of His garment, believing that just by touching Him, she would be healed.<sup>3</sup>
- When He appeared to His disciples, walking upon the sea.<sup>4</sup>
- When He went with the disciples on the road to Emmaus and opened the scriptures to their understanding.<sup>5</sup>

- When He appeared to the people in the Americas and told them to come unto Him and thrust their hands into His side and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and His feet so they could know that He was “the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the world.”<sup>6</sup>

I rejoice in knowing there are parents who tell stories of Christ to their children. I notice this as I watch children in the Church in Primary programs and on other occasions.

I am grateful to my parents for having taught me about Christ. I continue to see how the Savior’s example helps my dear wife and me as we teach our own children.

My heart is filled with joy when I see my children tell stories of Christ to my grandchildren. It reminds me of one of my favorite scriptures, found in 3 John chapter 1, verse 4, which reads, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” And why not our grandchildren as well?

I am grateful for our leaders, who are constantly teaching us about Christ, about keeping the Sabbath day holy, and about partaking of the sacrament each Sunday in honor of the Savior.

The Sabbath and the sacrament become much more enjoyable as we study the stories of Christ. In so doing, we create traditions that build our faith and testimony and also protect our family.

A few weeks ago, while studying again the message President Russell M. Nelson delivered in the last general conference, and while pondering on the Sabbath day, I felt a deep gratitude for the blessing and privilege of being able to partake of the sacrament. For





me that is a very solemn, sacred, and spiritual moment. I greatly enjoy sacrament meeting.

While pondering, I carefully studied the blessings on the bread and the water. I read and deeply meditated on the prayers and the ordinance of the sacrament. I began to go over in my mind and in my heart the events that are connected to it.

In a spirit of meditation, I reflected upon that day, the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread, when Jesus, in response to His disciples' question about where to prepare for the Passover, answered them, saying, "Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."<sup>7</sup>

I tried to visualize in my mind the disciples buying food and carefully preparing the table to eat with Him on that special day: a table for 13 people, Him and His twelve disciples, whom He loved.

I cried as I visualized Christ eating with them and declaring, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."<sup>8</sup>

I thought about the saddened disciples asking Him, "Lord, is it I?"<sup>9</sup>

And when Judas asked Him the same question, He replied calmly, "Thou hast said."<sup>10</sup>

I could visualize hands that had healed, comforted, edified, and blessed, breaking the bread as Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is my body."<sup>11</sup>

Then He took a cup filled with wine and gave thanks and gave the cup to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."<sup>12</sup>

In my mind I looked at the disciples one by one and saw in their eyes their concern for the Master, whom they loved greatly. It was as if I were sitting there with them, watching everything. I felt an intense pain in my heart, full of grief and sorrow for what He was about to experience for me.

My soul was filled by an overwhelming desire to be a better person. In repentance and sorrow, I fervently wished to be able to dry and avoid the spilling of at least a few drops of His blood shed in Gethsemane.

I then pondered about the sacrament we partake of every week in remembrance of Him. While doing so, I meditated upon each word of the blessings on the bread and the water. I deeply reflected on the words "and always remember him" in the blessing on the bread and "that they do always remember him" in the blessing on the water.<sup>13</sup>

I meditated on what it means to always remember Him.

To me it means:

- To remember His premortal life, when this beautiful planet was made by Him.<sup>14</sup>
- To remember His humble birth in a manger in Bethlehem of Judea.<sup>15</sup>
- To remember when, even as a 12-year-old boy, He taught and preached to the doctors in the temple.<sup>16</sup>
- To remember when He went aside privately into a desert to prepare for His mortal ministry.<sup>17</sup>
- To remember when He was transfigured before His disciples.<sup>18</sup>
- To remember when He instituted the sacrament at the Last Supper with them.<sup>19</sup>

- To remember when He went to the Garden of Gethsemane and suffered so intensely for our sins, pains, disappointments, and illnesses that He bled from every pore.<sup>20</sup>
- To remember when, after so much suffering and severe pain, even yet in Gethsemane, He was betrayed with a kiss by one of the disciples whom He called a friend.<sup>21</sup>
- To remember when He was taken to Pilate and to Herod for trial.<sup>22</sup>
- To remember when He was humiliated, buffeted, spat upon, smitten, and scourged with a whip that tore His flesh.<sup>23</sup>
- To remember when a crown of thorns was brutally put upon His head.<sup>24</sup>
- To remember that He had to carry His own cross to Golgotha and that He was nailed to the cross there, suffering every physical and spiritual pain.<sup>25</sup>
- To remember that at the cross, with His bowels full of charity, He looked at those who crucified Him and raised His eyes to heaven, pleading, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>26</sup>
- To remember when He, knowing He had fulfilled His mission of saving all mankind, gave up His spirit into the hands of His Father, our Father.<sup>27</sup>
- To remember His Resurrection, which ensures our own resurrection and the possibility to live beside Him for all eternity, depending on our choices.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, meditating on the sacrament prayers and the very special and meaningful words of the prayers reminds me how wonderful it is to receive the promise, during the blessing of the sacrament, that as we always remember Him, we will always have His Spirit with us.<sup>29</sup>

I believe the Lord has His own timing as to when to give revelation unto us. I understood this very clearly while studying Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6, which reads:

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: . . .

“A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.”

The sacrament is also a time for Heavenly Father to teach us about the Atonement of His Beloved Son—our Savior, Jesus Christ—and for us to receive revelation about it. It is a time to “knock, and it shall be opened unto you,”<sup>30</sup> to request and to receive this knowledge. It is time for us to reverently ask God for this knowledge. And if we do, I have no doubt that we will receive this knowledge, which will bless our lives beyond measure.

I love the Sabbath, the sacrament, and what they mean. I love the Savior with all my soul. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 57.
2. John 9:7.
3. See Luke 8:43–48.
4. See Mark 6:45–52.
5. See Luke 24:13–35.
6. 3 Nephi 11:14.
7. Matthew 26:18.
8. Matthew 26:21.
9. Matthew 26:22.
10. Matthew 26:25.
11. Matthew 26:26.
12. Matthew 26:27–28.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
14. See John 1:1–3.
15. See Luke 2:1–7.
16. See Luke 2:41–52.
17. See Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13.
18. See Matthew 17:1–9.
19. See Matthew 26:26–28; Luke 22:14–20.
20. See Luke 22:39–46.
21. See Luke 22:47–48.
22. See Luke 23:1–12.
23. See Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 28, 30; Luke 22:63–65.
24. See Matthew 27:29.
25. See John 19:16–18.
26. Luke 23:34.
27. See Luke 23:46.
28. See Luke 24:5–8.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
30. Matthew 7:7.





By President Henry B. Eyring  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Holy Ghost as Your Companion

*We can, if we live worthy of it, have the blessing of the Spirit to be with us, not only now and then but always.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be with you on this Sabbath day in the general conference of the Lord's Church. I have felt, as you have, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, testifying to the words of truth we have heard spoken and sung.

My purpose today is to increase your desire and your determination to claim the gift promised to each of us after we were baptized. During our confirmation we heard these words: "Receive the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> From that moment, our lives changed forever.

We can, if we live worthy of it, have the blessing of the Spirit to be with us, not only now and then, as in such remarkable experiences as we've had today, but always. You know from the words of the sacrament prayer how that promise is fulfilled: "O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him

and keep his commandments which he has given them."

And then comes the glorious promise: "That they may *always* have his Spirit to be with them" (D&C 20:77; emphasis added).

To always have the Spirit with us is to have the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost in our daily lives. We can, for instance, be warned by the Spirit to resist the temptation to do evil.

For that reason alone, it is easy to see why the Lord's servants have tried to increase our desire to worship God in our sacrament meetings. If we partake of the sacrament in faith, the Holy Ghost will then be able to protect us and those we love from the temptations that come with increasing intensity and frequency.

The companionship of the Holy Ghost makes what is good more attractive and temptation less compelling. That alone should be enough to make us determined to qualify for the Spirit to be with us always.

Just as the Holy Ghost strengthens us against evil, He also gives us the power to discern truth from falsehood. The truth that matters most is verified only by revelation from God. Our human reason and the use of our physical senses will not be enough. We live in a time when even the wisest will be hard-pressed to distinguish truth from clever deception.

The Lord taught His Apostle Thomas, who wanted physical evidence of the Savior's Resurrection by



touching His wounds, that revelation is safer evidence: “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

The truths that mark the way home to God are verified by the Holy Ghost. We cannot go to the grove and see the Father and the Son speak to the young Joseph Smith. No physical evidence or any logical argument can establish that Elijah came as promised to confer the priesthood keys now held and exercised by a living prophet, Thomas S. Monson.

Confirmation of truth comes to a son or daughter of God who has claimed the right to receive the Holy Ghost. Since falsehoods and lies may be presented to us at any time, we need a constant influence of the Spirit of Truth to spare us moments of doubt.

While a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, George Q. Cannon urged that we make a constant quest for the Spirit to be with us. He promised, and I promise it as well, that if we pursue that course, we “will never lack for knowledge” of the truth, “never be in doubt or in darkness,” and our “faith will be strong, [our] joy . . . full.”<sup>2</sup>

We need that constant help from the companionship of the Holy Ghost for yet another reason. The death of a loved one may come unexpectedly. It is the witness from the Holy Ghost of the reality of a loving Heavenly Father and a resurrected Savior that gives us hope and comfort at the loss of a loved one. That testimony must be fresh when death occurs.

So, for many reasons, we need the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. We desire it, yet we know from experience that it is not easy to maintain. We each think, say, and do things in our daily lives that can offend the

Spirit. The Lord taught us that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion when our hearts are full of charity and when virtue garnishes our thoughts unceasingly (see D&C 121:45).

For those who are struggling with the high standard needed to qualify for the gift of the Spirit’s companionship, I offer this encouragement. You have had times when you have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost. It may have happened for you today.

You can treat those moments of inspiration like the seed of faith that Alma described (see Alma 32:28). Plant each one. You can do that by acting on the prompting you felt. The most valuable inspiration will be for you to know what God would have you do. If it is to pay tithing or to visit a grieving friend, you should do it. Whatever it is, do it. When you demonstrate your willingness to obey, the Spirit will send you more impressions of what God would have you do for Him.

As you obey, the impressions from the Spirit will come more frequently, becoming closer and closer to constant companionship. Your power to choose the right will increase.

You can know when these impressions to act for Him are from the Spirit rather than from your own desires. When the impressions square with what the Savior and His living prophets and apostles have said, you can choose to obey with confidence. Then the Lord will send His Spirit to attend you.

For example, if you receive a spiritual impression to honor the Sabbath day, especially when it seems difficult, God will send His Spirit to help.

That help came to my father years ago when his work took him to Australia. He was alone on a Sunday, and he wanted to take the sacrament. He could find no information about Latter-day Saint meetings. So he started walking. He prayed at each intersection to know which way to turn. After





walking and making turns for an hour, he stopped to pray again. He felt an impression to turn down a particular street. Soon he began to hear singing coming from the ground floor of an apartment building close by. He looked in at the window and saw a few people seated near a table covered with a white cloth and sacrament trays.

Now, that may not seem like much to you, but it was something wonderful to him. He knew the promise of the sacrament prayer had been fulfilled: “Always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (D&C 20:77).

That was only one example of a time when he prayed and then did what the Spirit told him God wanted him to do. He kept at it over the years, as you and I will. He never talked about his spirituality. He just kept on doing little things for the Lord that he was prompted to do.

Whenever some group of Latter-day Saints asked him to speak to them, he did it. It didn't matter if it was 10 people or 50 or how tired he was. He bore his testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and of the

prophets whenever the Spirit urged him to do it.

His highest callings in the Church were to the Bonneville Utah Stake high council, where he weeded on the stake farm, and he taught a Sunday School class. Over the years, when he needed it, the Holy Ghost was there as his companion.

I stood next to my father in a hospital room. My mother, his wife of 41 years, lay on the bed. We had watched her for hours. We began to see the lines of pain disappear from her face. The fingers of her hands, which had been clenched into fists, relaxed. Her arms came to rest at her sides.

The pains of decades of cancer were ending. I saw on her face a look of peace. She took a few short breaths, then a gasp, and then lay still. We stood there waiting to see if another breath would come.

Finally, Dad said quietly, “A little girl has gone home.”

He shed no tears. That was because the Holy Ghost had long before given him a clear picture of who she was, where she came from, what she had become, and where she was going. The Spirit had testified to him many times

of a loving Heavenly Father, of a Savior who had broken the power of death, and of the reality of the temple sealing he shared with his wife and family.

The Spirit had long before assured him that her goodness and faith had qualified her for the return to a heavenly home where she would be remembered as a wonderful child of promise and be welcomed home with honor.

For my dad, that was more than a hope. The Holy Ghost had made it a reality for him.

Now, some might say that his words and the pictures in his mind about a heavenly home were just a sweet sentiment, the clouded judgment of a husband at the moment of his loss. But he knew eternal truth the only way you can know it.

He was a scientist who searched for truth about the physical world throughout his entire adult life. He used the tools of science well enough to be honored by his peers across the world. Much of what he did in chemistry came from seeing in his mind's eye molecules moving about and then confirming his vision by experiments in a laboratory.

But he had followed a different course to discover the truths that mattered most to him and to each of us. Only through the Holy Ghost can we see people and events as God sees them.

That gift continued in the hospital after his wife died. We gathered up my mother's things to take home. Dad stopped to thank every nurse and doctor we met on the way out to the car. I remember I felt, with some irritation, that we should leave to be alone with our grief.

I realize now that he saw things only the Holy Ghost could have shown him. He saw those people as angels sent by God to watch over his sweet-heart. They may have seen themselves as health care professionals, but Dad was thanking them for their service on behalf of the Savior.

The influence of the Holy Ghost continued with him as we arrived at the home of my parents. We talked for a few minutes in the living room. Dad excused himself to go into his nearby bedroom.

After a few minutes, he walked back into the living room. He had a pleasant smile. He walked up to us and said quietly, "I was worried that Mildred would arrive in the spirit world alone. I thought she might feel lost in the crowd."

Then he said brightly, "I prayed just now. I know Mildred is all right. My mother was there to meet her."

I remember smiling as he said that, imagining my grandmother, her short legs pumping, rushing through a crowd to be sure she was there to meet and embrace her daughter-in-law as she arrived.

Now, one of the reasons my father asked for and received that comfort was because he had always prayed

in faith since his childhood. He was used to getting answers that came to his heart to give comfort and direction. In addition to having a habit of prayer, he knew the scriptures and the words of living prophets. So he recognized the familiar whisperings of the Spirit, which you may have felt today.

The companionship of the Spirit had more than comforted and guided him. It changed him through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. When we accept that promise of having the Spirit with us always, the Savior can grant us the purification required for eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 14:7).

You remember the Savior's words: "Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

Those commandments come with this promise from the Lord:

"And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy" (D&C 11:12–13).

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives, that the resurrected Jesus Christ leads His Church, that President Thomas S. Monson holds all the keys of the priesthood, and that revelation through the Holy Ghost guides and sustains The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its humble members.

I further testify to you that these wonderful men who have today been speaking to us as witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, are called of God. I know that the Spirit led President Monson to call them. And as you listened to them and their testimonies, the Holy Spirit confirmed to you what I now say to you. They are called of God. I sustain them and love them and know that the Lord loves them and will sustain them in their service. And I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 20.3.10.
2. See George Q. Cannon, in "Minutes of a Conference," *Millennial Star*, May 2, 1863, 275–76.



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

## Why the Church

*It is worth pausing to consider why Jesus Christ chooses to use a church, His Church, to carry out His and His Father's work.*

Throughout my life, general conferences of the Church have been exhilarating spiritual events, and the Church itself has been a place to come to know the Lord. I realize that there are those who consider themselves religious or spiritual and yet reject participation in a church or even the need for such an institution. Religious practice is for them purely personal. Yet the Church is the creation of Him in whom our spirituality is centered—Jesus Christ. It is worth pausing to consider why He chooses to use a church, His Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to carry out His and His Father's work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>1</sup>

Beginning with Adam, the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached, and the essential ordinances of salvation, such as baptism, were administered through a family-based priesthood order.<sup>2</sup> As societies grew more complex than simply extended families, God also called other prophets, messengers, and teachers. In Moses's time, we read of a more formal structure, including elders, priests, and judges. In Book of Mormon history, Alma established a church with priests and teachers.

Then, in the meridian of time, Jesus organized His work in such a way that the gospel could be established simultaneously in multiple nations and among diverse peoples. That organization, the Church of Jesus Christ, was founded on “apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”<sup>3</sup> It included additional officers, such as seventies, elders, bishops, priests, teachers, and deacons. Jesus similarly established the Church in the Western Hemisphere after His Resurrection.

Following the apostasy and disintegration of the Church He had organized while on the earth, the Lord reestablished the Church of Jesus Christ once again through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The ancient purpose remains: that is, to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and administer the ordinances of salvation—in other words, to bring people to Christ.<sup>4</sup> And now, through the instrumentality of this restored Church, the promise of redemption is placed within reach even of the spirits of the dead who in their mortal lifetime knew little or nothing of the Savior's grace.

How does His Church accomplish the Lord's purposes? It is important to recognize that God's ultimate purpose is our progress. His desire is that we

continue “from grace to grace, until [we receive] a fulness”<sup>5</sup> of all He can give. That requires more than simply being nice or feeling spiritual. It requires faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism of water and of the Spirit, and enduring in faith to the end.<sup>6</sup> One cannot fully achieve this in isolation, so a major reason the Lord has a church is to create a community of Saints that will sustain one another in the “strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life.”<sup>7</sup>

“And [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; . . . For the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus Christ is “the author and the finisher of [our] faith.”<sup>9</sup> Uniting ourselves to the body of Christ—the Church—is an important part of taking His name upon us.<sup>10</sup> We are told that the ancient Church “did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls”<sup>11</sup> “and to hear the word of the Lord.”<sup>12</sup> So it is in the Church today. Joined in faith, we teach and edify one another and strive to approach the full measure of discipleship, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” We strive to help one another come to “the knowledge of the Son of God,”<sup>13</sup> until that day when “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, . . . saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

In the Church we not only learn divine doctrine; we also experience its application. As the body of Christ, the

members of the Church minister to one another in the reality of day-to-day life. All of us are imperfect; we may offend and be offended. We often test one another with our personal idiosyncrasies. In the body of Christ, we have to go beyond concepts and exalted words and have a real “hands-on” experience as we learn to “live together in love.”<sup>15</sup>

This religion is not concerned only with self; rather, we are all called to serve. We are the eyes, hands, head, feet, and other members of the body of Christ, and even “those members . . . which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.”<sup>16</sup> We need these callings, and we need to serve.

One of the men in my ward grew up not only without parental support but with parental opposition to his activity in the Church. He made this observation in a sacrament meeting: “My father cannot understand why anyone would go to church when they could go skiing, but I really like going to church. In the Church, we are all on the same journey, and I am inspired in that journey by strong youth, pure children, and what I see and learn from other adults. I am strengthened by the association and excited with the joy of living the gospel.”



Mumbai, India



The wards and branches of the Church offer a weekly gathering of respite and renewal, a time and place to leave the world behind—the Sabbath. It is a day to “delight thyself in the Lord,”<sup>17</sup> to experience the spiritual healing that comes with the sacrament, and to receive the renewed promise of His Spirit to be with us.<sup>18</sup>

One of the greatest blessings of being part of the body of Christ, though it may not seem like a blessing in the moment, is being reprovved of sin and error. We are prone to excuse and rationalize our faults, and sometimes we simply do not know where we should improve or how to do it. Without those who can reprove us



“betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,”<sup>19</sup> we might lack the courage to change and more perfectly follow the Master. Repentance is individual, but fellowship on that sometimes painful path is in the Church.<sup>20</sup>

In this discussion of the Church as the body of Christ, we must always bear in mind two things. One, we do not strive for conversion to the Church but to Christ and His gospel, a conversion that is facilitated by the Church.<sup>21</sup> The Book of Mormon expresses it best when it says that the people “were *converted unto the Lord*, and were *united unto the church of Christ*.”<sup>22</sup> Two, we must remember that in the beginning, the Church was the family, and even today as separate institutions, the family and the Church serve and strengthen one another. Neither supplants the other, and certainly the Church, even at its best, cannot substitute for parents. The point of gospel teaching and priesthood ordinances administered by the Church is that families may qualify for eternal life.

There is a second major reason the Savior works through a church, His Church, and that is to achieve needful things that cannot be accomplished by individuals or smaller groups. One clear

example is dealing with poverty. It is true that as individuals and families we look after the physical needs of others, “imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants.”<sup>23</sup> But together in the Church, the ability to care for the poor and needy is multiplied to meet the broader need, and hoped-for self-reliance is made a reality for very many.<sup>24</sup> Further, the Church, its Relief Societies, and its priesthood quorums have the capacity to provide relief to many people in many places affected by natural disasters, war, and persecution.

Without the capabilities of His Church in place, the Savior’s commission to take the gospel to all the world could not be realized.<sup>25</sup> There would not be the apostolic keys, the structure, the financial means, and the devotion and sacrifice of thousands upon thousands of missionaries needed to carry out the work. Remember, “this Gospel of the Kingdom [must] be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.”<sup>26</sup>

The Church can build and operate temples, houses of the Lord, where vital ordinances and covenants may be administered. Joseph Smith stated that God’s objective in gathering His people in any age is “to build unto

the Lord a house whereby He [can] reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.”<sup>27</sup>

If one believes that all roads lead to heaven or that there are no particular requirements for salvation, he or she will see no need for proclaiming the gospel or for ordinances and covenants in redeeming either the living or the dead. But we speak not just of immortality but also of eternal life, and for that the gospel path and gospel covenants are essential. And the Savior needs a church to make them available to all of God’s children—both the living and the dead.

The final reason I will mention for the Lord to have established His Church is the most unique—the Church is, after all, the kingdom of God on the earth.

As The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was being established in the 1830s, the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Lift up your hearts and rejoice, for unto you the kingdom, or in other words, the keys of the church have been given.”<sup>28</sup> In the authority of these keys, the Church’s priesthood officers preserve the purity of the Savior’s doctrine and the integrity of His saving ordinances.<sup>29</sup> They help prepare those who wish to receive them, judge the qualification and worthiness of those who apply, and then perform them.

With the keys of the kingdom, the Lord’s servants can identify both truth and falsehood and once again authoritatively state, “Thus saith the Lord.” Regrettably, some resent the Church because they want to define their own

truth, but in reality it is a surpassing blessing to receive a “knowledge of things as they [truly] are, and as they were, and as they are to come”<sup>30</sup> insofar as the Lord wills to reveal it. The Church safeguards and publishes God’s revelations—the canon of scripture.

When Daniel interpreted the dream of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, making known to the king “what shall be in the latter days,”<sup>31</sup> he declared that “the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all [other] kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”<sup>32</sup> The Church is that prophesied latter-day kingdom, not created by man but set up by the God of heaven and rolling forth as a stone “cut out of the mountain without hands” to fill the earth.<sup>33</sup>

Its destiny is to establish Zion in preparation for the return and millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Before that day, it will not be a kingdom in any political sense—as the Savior said, “My kingdom

is not of *this* world.”<sup>34</sup> Rather, it is the repository of His authority in the earth, the administrator of His holy covenants, the custodian of His temples, the protector and proclaimer of His truth, the gathering place for scattered Israel, and “a defense, and . . . a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.”<sup>35</sup>

I end with the Prophet’s plea and prayer:

“Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.

“Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever.”<sup>36</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. “The Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. “And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance” (Moses 5:58–59; see also Moses 6:22–23).
3. Ephesians 2:20.
4. “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by God to assist in His work to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of His children. . . . “In fulfilling its purpose to help individuals and families qualify for exaltation, the Church focuses on divinely appointed responsibilities. These include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 2.2).

5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:13.
6. See 2 Nephi 31:17–20.
7. 2 Nephi 31:18.
8. Ephesians 4:11–13.
9. Moroni 6:4.
10. See 3 Nephi 27:5–7.
11. Moroni 6:5.
12. 4 Nephi 1:12.
13. Ephesians 4:13.
14. Jeremiah 31:34; see also Hebrews 8:11.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
16. 1 Corinthians 12:22. Paul also declared: “Now [we are] many members, yet but one body. . . . And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:20, 26; see also Mosiah 18:9).
17. Isaiah 58:14.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; 59:9–12.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
20. See 3 Nephi 18:21–23, 30–32.
21. See Donald L. Hallstrom, “Converted to His Gospel through His Church,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 13–15.
22. 3 Nephi 28:23; emphasis added.
23. Mosiah 18:29.
24. One example is what we call “the Lord’s storehouse”: “The Lord’s storehouse is not limited to a building used to distribute food and clothing to the poor. It also includes Church members’ offerings of time, talents, compassion, materials, and financial means that are made available to the bishop to help care for the poor and needy. The Lord’s storehouse, then, exists in each ward” (*Handbook 2*, 6.1.3).
25. See Matthew 28:19–20; Doctrine and Covenants 112:28–29.
26. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31.
27. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 42:69; see also Doctrine and Covenants 90:3.
29. See Articles of Faith 1:5.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 93:24.
31. Daniel 2:28.
32. Daniel 2:44.
33. Daniel 2:45; see also verse 35.
34. John 18:36; emphasis added.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 65:5–6.



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**By Devin G. Durrant**  
First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

# My Heart Pondereth Them Continually

*I sincerely pray you will choose to ponder God's words in an extended and deeper manner.*

**B**y profession, I am an investor. By faith, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> In my business practices, I embrace sound financial principles. As I live my faith, I strive to follow spiritual principles that will help me become more like the Savior.

## Invitations Bring Blessings

Many of the personal rewards I have received in life have come as a result of someone inviting me to do a difficult task. In that spirit, I would like to extend to each of you two invitations. The first has financial implications. With the second invitation, the implications are spiritual. Both invitations, if accepted, will require a disciplined effort over an extended period of time to reap the rewards.

## The First Invitation

The first invitation is simple: I invite you to save money each week. The amount you save is not particularly significant; that is up to you. As you develop a habit of saving, you will benefit personally. And you may also have opportunities to assist others financially

as a result of your diligence. Imagine the positive outcome of saving money weekly for six months, a year, 10 years, or more. Small efforts sustained over time can produce significant results.<sup>2</sup>

## The Second Invitation

My second invitation is quite different from and much more important than the first. It is this: I invite you to “ponderize”<sup>3</sup> one verse of scripture each week. The word *ponderize* is

not found in the dictionary, but it has found a place in my heart. So what does it mean to ponderize? I like to say it's a combination of 80 percent extended pondering and 20 percent memorization.

There are two simple steps:

First, choose a verse of scripture each week and place it where you will see it every day.

Second, read or think of the verse several times each day and ponder the meaning of its words and key phrases throughout the week.

Imagine the uplifting results of doing this weekly for six months, a year, 10 years, or more.

As you make this effort, you will feel an increase in spirituality. You will also be able to teach and lift those you love in more meaningful ways.

If you choose to ponderize weekly, you may feel a bit like a person who has enjoyed snorkeling in the past but has now decided to try scuba diving. With that decision, a deeper understanding of gospel principles will be yours and new spiritual perspectives will bless your life.





As you reflect on your selected verse each week, words and phrases will be written on your heart.<sup>4</sup> Words and phrases will also be written on your mind. In other words, memorization will take place easily and naturally. But the primary goal of ponderizing is to provide an uplifting place for your thoughts to go—a place that keeps you close to the Spirit of the Lord.

The Savior said, “Treasure up in your minds *continually* the words of life.”<sup>5</sup> Ponderizing is a simple and edifying way to do just that.

I believe Nephi was a ponderizer. He said, “My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them [*continually*], and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.”<sup>6</sup> He was mindful of his children as he pondered and wrote the scriptures. How might your family benefit as you *continually* strive to fill your mind with God’s words?

#### My Verse

Recently I ponderized Alma 5:16. It reads, “I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day:

Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?”

At the end of the week, this is what ended up being written on my mind: Imagine hearing the voice of the Lord saying, “Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness” (Alma 5:16).

As you can see, I didn’t memorize the entire verse word for word. However, I pondered time and time again the key elements of the verse and where to find it. But the best part of the process was I had a higher place for my thoughts to go. Throughout the week I pictured the Savior saying encouraging words to me. That image touched my heart and served to inspire me to want to do “works of righteousness.” That is what can happen when we “look unto [Christ] in every thought.”<sup>7</sup>

#### We Must Fight Back

You might ask, “Why should I do this?” I would answer that we are living in a time of ever-spreading evil. We cannot just accept the status quo and

be fed ugly words and sinful visuals almost everywhere we turn and do nothing in response. We must fight back. When our minds are filled with uplifting thoughts and images, when we “always remember him,”<sup>8</sup> there is no room left for filth and trash.

In the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ invites all to “ponder upon the things which [He has] said.”<sup>9</sup> Look at ponderizing as an add-on to your personal and family scripture study, but never let it be a replacement. Ponderizing is somewhat like adding a new time-release vitamin to your current spiritual diet.

#### It’s Too Hard

You might say, “Ponderizing sounds too hard for me.” Don’t be deterred. Hard can be good. Christ invites us to do many hard things because He knows we will be blessed as a result of our efforts.<sup>10</sup>

A young neighbor of ours found a simple way to ponderize. He puts his weekly scripture on the home screen of his phone. Another idea you might try is sharing your verse with a sibling, a child, or a friend. My wife, Julie, and I



help each other. We choose our verses each Sunday. She puts hers on our fridge. I place mine in my truck. We then share thoughts about our verses throughout the week. We also like to discuss our verses with our children. As we do, it seems to make it more comfortable for them to share their thoughts with us about the word of God.

Julie and I are also part of an online group in which family members, friends, and missionaries can share their scripture each week and occasionally include a related thought or testimony. Being part of a group makes it easier to be consistent. My high school daughter and a group of her friends use social media and text messaging to share scriptures with each other.

Please don't hesitate to include people of other faiths in your groups. They are also looking for ways to elevate their thoughts and to feel closer to God.

#### What Are the Benefits?

So, what are the benefits? Julie and I have been ponderizing a verse a week for more than three years now. Initially, we set a 20-year goal. She told me recently: "When you first invited me to ponderize a scripture every week for 20 years, I wondered if I could do it for a month. I don't have those doubts anymore. I can't believe how fun it has been to put a scripture on the fridge each week, and just by ponderizing it

each time I see it, it lifts my spirit."

After ponderizing for six weeks, a sister from Texas, USA, said: "My testimony has been strengthened, . . . and I have felt closer to my Heavenly Father. . . . I love how the word of God is changing me for the better."

A teenage friend wrote: "I've really enjoyed being able to [ponderize] because it has helped me to focus on things that are actually important."

One of our missionaries shared this: "I have been ponderizing a verse every week since June 2014, and I love it. . . . These scriptures have become like friends that I can rely on in times of need."

In my case, I feel the Spirit more fully as I ponderize weekly. My love of the scriptures has also increased as a result of striving to "let virtue garnish [my] thoughts *unceasingly*."<sup>11</sup>

Consider this invitation and supreme blessing shared by Nephi: "If ye shall press forward, *feasting* upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."<sup>12</sup> In the spirit of "feasting upon the word of Christ," ponderizing is like taking a bite of delicious food and then chewing very, very slowly in order to enjoy it to its fullest.

#### What's Your Verse?

Will you ponderize a verse of scripture each week for the rest of this month? for the rest of this year? Longer maybe? Julie and I invited all

our valiant Texas Dallas missionaries to ponderize with us for 20 years. We'll cross the finish line together in 17 short years. Then we'll set a new goal to elevate our thoughts and bring us closer to Christ.

You can check on us by asking, "What's your verse?" But if you do, be prepared to share your scripture in return. Each of us will be uplifted as a result of our exchange.

Can you imagine how your life and your family's life will be changed if you write a new verse of scripture on your heart and mind every week for the next few months or few years or longer?

#### Jesus Christ Is Our Example

Jesus Christ must have developed a love for the scriptures at an early age. He must have been reading and pondering the scriptures as a young child in order to have meaningful discussions with the wise doctors in the temple at age 12.<sup>13</sup> He began his mission at age 30,<sup>14</sup> and He referenced the scriptures early and often throughout His ministry.<sup>15</sup> Can we not safely say that Jesus spent at least 20 years studying and pondering the scriptures as part of His mission preparation? Is there something you need to be doing today to prepare yourself spiritually for future opportunities to teach and bless your family and others?

#### Exercise Your Faith and Do It

In review, I hope you will decide to save money each week. Exercise your faith, discipline yourself, and do it. I also sincerely pray you will choose to ponder God's words in an extended and deeper manner on a weekly basis. Exercise your faith, discipline yourself, and do it.

Unlike my first *money-saving* invitation, all the benefits of my second

*soul-saving* invitation will be yours to keep forever—free from the moths and rust of this world.<sup>16</sup>

Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered this clear counsel and promise: “Study the scriptures carefully, deliberately. Ponder and pray over them. Scriptures are revelation, and they will bring added revelation.”<sup>17</sup>

#### Conclusion

I promise you will not regret writing a verse of scripture on your mind and heart each week. You will experience a feeling of perpetual spiritual purpose, protection, and power.

Remember the words of Jesus Christ when He said, “Do the things which ye have seen me do.”<sup>18</sup> May we *fully* apply His words in our lives, I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 5:13.
2. See Alma 37:6; Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
3. I use *meditizar* in Spanish, which is a combination of *meditar* (to ponder) and *memorizar* (to memorize).
4. See 2 Corinthians 3:3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85; emphasis added.
6. 2 Nephi 4:15; see also Deuteronomy 6:7; 2 Nephi 4:16.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
9. 3 Nephi 17:3; see also Moroni 10:3.
10. See Matthew 16:25; 1 Nephi 2:20; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45; emphasis added.
12. 2 Nephi 31:20; emphasis added.
13. See Luke 2:42, 46–47.
14. See Luke 3:23.
15. See Matthew 4:3–4; see also Matthew 21:13. Several other verses use the phrase “It is written” and similar expressions demonstrating familiarity with the scriptures.
16. See Matthew 6:19–20.
17. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 35.
18. 2 Nephi 31:12; see also 3 Nephi 27:21.



By Elder Von G. Keetch  
Of the Seventy

# Blessed and Happy Are Those Who Keep the Commandments of God

*The barriers established by the Lord create for us a safe harbor from evil and destructive influences.*

Some time ago while visiting Australia, I traveled to a beautiful horseshoe bay renowned for its surfing. As I walked along the beach, I was enthralled by the magnificence of the large crashing waves breaking just outside the bay and the smaller waves rolling in closer to shore.

As I continued my stroll, I encountered a group of American surfers.

They were obviously upset about something, talking loudly and gesturing toward the sea. When I asked them what was wrong, they pointed to just outside the bay where the big waves were breaking.

“Look out there,” one of them angrily told me. “Can you see the barrier?” Looking more closely now, I could indeed see a barrier stretching





across the entire mouth of the bay, right where the large, enticing waves were breaking. The barrier appeared to be made of a heavy mesh and was supported by floats on top of the water. According to the surfers, it dropped all the way down to the ocean floor.

The American surfer continued, “We are here on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to surf these big waves. We can surf the smaller ones breaking within the bay itself, but the barrier makes it impossible for us to surf the big ones. We have no idea why the barrier is there. All we know is that it has totally spoiled our trip.”

As the American surfers became more animated, my attention was drawn to another nearby surfer—an older man and obviously a local. He seemed to be growing impatient as he listened to the ever-increasing complaints about the barrier.

Finally he rose and walked over to the group. Without saying anything, he pulled a pair of binoculars from his backpack and handed them to one of the surfers, pointing out toward

the barrier. Each of the surfers looked through the binoculars. When my turn came, with the help of magnification, I could see something that I had not been able to see before: dorsal fins—large sharks feeding near the reef on the other side of the barrier.

The group quickly became subdued. The old surfer retrieved his binoculars and turned to walk away. As he did, he said words I will never forget: “Don’t be too critical of the barrier,” he said. “It’s the only thing that’s keeping you from being devoured.”

As we stood on that beautiful beach, our perspective had suddenly changed. A barrier that had seemed rigid and restrictive—that seemed to curtail the fun and excitement of riding the really big waves—had become something very different. With our new understanding of the danger that lurked just below the surface, the barrier now offered protection, safety, and peace.

As you and I walk the paths of life and pursue our dreams, God’s commands and standards—like the barrier—can sometimes be difficult

to understand. They may appear rigid and unyielding, blocking a path that looks fun and exciting and that is being followed by so many others. As the Apostle Paul described, “We see through a glass, darkly,”<sup>1</sup> with such a limited perspective that we often cannot comprehend the great dangers hidden just below the surface.

But He who “comprehend[s] all things”<sup>2</sup> knows exactly where those dangers lie. He gives us divine direction, through His commands and loving guidance, so that we may avoid the dangers—so that we may set a course in our lives that is protected from spiritual predators and the gaping jaws of sin.<sup>3</sup>

We show our love for God—and our faith in Him—by doing our very best every day to follow the course that He has laid out for us and by keeping the commandments that He has given to us. We especially manifest that faith and love in situations where we don’t fully understand the reason for God’s commands or the particular path He is telling us to take. It is relatively easy to follow a course inside the barrier once we know there are sharp-toothed predators swarming just outside of it. It is more difficult to keep our course within the barrier when all we can see are thrilling and tantalizing waves on the other side. And yet it is in those times—times when we choose to exercise our faith, put our trust in God, and show our love to Him—that we grow and gain the most.

In the New Testament, Ananias could not comprehend the Lord’s command to seek out and bless Saul—a man who literally had a license to imprison the believers of Christ. Yet because he obeyed God’s command, Ananias was instrumental in the spiritual birth of the Apostle Paul.<sup>4</sup>

As we trust in the Lord, exercise our faith, obey His commandments, and follow the course He has charted for us, we become more the person the Lord wants us to become. It is this “becoming”—this conversion of the heart—that is all-important. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught us: “It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”<sup>5</sup>

True obedience, therefore, is giving ourselves entirely to Him and allowing Him to chart our course both in calm waters and in troubled ones, understanding that He can make more of us than we could ever make of ourselves.

As we submit ourselves to His will, we increase in peace and happiness. King Benjamin taught that those who keep the commands of God are

“blessed and happy . . . in all things, both temporal and spiritual.”<sup>6</sup> God wants us to have joy. He wants us to have peace. He wants us to succeed. He wants us to be safe and to be protected from the worldly influences all around us.

Put another way, the Lord’s commands do not constitute some grueling underwater maze of barriers that we must learn to grudgingly endure in this life so that we might be exalted in the next. Rather, the barriers established by the Lord create for us a safe harbor from the evil and destructive influences that would otherwise drag us down to the depths of despair. The Lord’s commandments are given out of love and caring; they are intended for our joy in this life<sup>7</sup> just as much as they are intended for our joy and exaltation in the next. They mark the way that we should act—and more importantly, they illuminate who we should become.

As in all things good and true, Jesus Christ stands as the best example. The

greatest act of obedience in all of eternity occurred when the Son submitted Himself to the will of the Father. Asking in deepest humility that the cup might be removed—that He might travel some other course than the one that had been marked for Him—Christ submitted Himself to the path that His Father wanted Him to take. It was a path that led through Gethsemane and Golgotha, where He endured unimaginable agony and suffering and where He was totally forsaken as His Father’s Spirit withdrew. But that same path culminated in an empty tomb on the third day, with cries of “He is risen!”<sup>8</sup> ringing in the ears and hearts of those who loved Him. It included unimaginable joy and comfort centered in His Atonement for all of God’s children throughout eternity. By allowing His will to be swallowed up by the Father’s, Christ gave us the prospect of eternal peace, eternal joy, and eternal life.

I testify that we are children of a loving God. I witness that He wants us to be happy and safe and blessed. To that end, He has charted for us a course leading back to Him, and He has established barriers that will protect us along the way. As we do our best to follow that course, we find true safety, happiness, and peace. And as we submit to His will, we become what He wants us to become. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 1 Corinthians 13:12.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6.
3. See Boyd K. Packer, “Spiritual Crocodiles,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 30–32.
4. See Acts 9:10–18.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40.
6. Mosiah 2:41.
7. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
8. See Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6.





**By Carole M. Stephens**  
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

## “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments”

*God’s commandments are a manifestation of His love for us, and obedience to His commandments is an expression of our love for Him.*

When our oldest daughter, Jen, brought her third daughter home from the hospital, I went to her home to help. After getting her oldest daughter off to school, we decided that what Jen needed most was rest. So the best help I could give was to take her daughter Chloe home with me so her mom and new baby sister could have some quiet time.

I buckled Chloe into her car seat, secured my own seat belt, and drove out of their driveway. However, before we reached the end of the street, Chloe had unbuckled her seat belt and was standing up, looking over my shoulder, and talking to me! I pulled the car over to the side of the road, got out, and buckled her back into her seat.

We started again but had gone only a short distance when she was out of her seat again. I repeated the same steps, but this time before I could even get back into the car and fasten my own seat belt, Chloe was already standing up!

I found myself sitting in a car, parked on the side of the road, having a power struggle with a three-year-old. And she was winning!

I used every idea I could think of to convince her that remaining fastened in her car seat was a good idea. She was not convinced! I finally decided to try the if/then approach.

I said, “Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your car seat, then as soon as we get to Grandma’s house, we can play with play dough.”

No response.

“Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your seat, then we can make bread when we get to Grandma’s house.”

No response.

I tried again. “Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your seat, then we can stop at the market for a treat!”

After three attempts, I realized this was a futile exercise. She was determined, and no amount of if/then was enough to convince her to remain fastened in her seat.

We couldn’t spend the day sitting on the edge of the road, but I wanted to be obedient to the law, and it wasn’t safe to drive with Chloe standing up. I offered a silent prayer and heard the Spirit whisper, “Teach her.”

I turned to face her and pulled my seat belt away from my body so she could see it. I said, “Chloe, I am wearing this seat belt because it will protect me. But you aren’t wearing your seat belt, and you won’t be safe. And I will be so sad if you get hurt.”

She looked at me; I could almost see the wheels turning in her little mind



as I waited anxiously for her response. Finally, her big blue eyes brightened, and she said, “Grandma, you want me to wear my seat belt because you love me!”

The Spirit filled the car as I expressed my love for this precious little girl. I didn’t want to lose that feeling, but I knew I had an opportunity, so I got out and secured her in her car seat. Then I asked, “Chloe, will you please stay in your car seat?” And she did—all the way to the market for a treat! And she stayed buckled all the way from the market to my home, where we made bread and played with play dough because Chloe did not forget!

As I drove back onto the road that day, a scripture filled my mind: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>1</sup> We have rules to teach, guide, and protect children. Why? Because of the great love we have for them. But until Chloe understood that my desire for her to remain securely fastened in her car seat was because of my love for her, she was unwilling to submit to what she considered a restriction. She felt her seat belt limited her freedom.

Like Chloe, we can choose to see commandments as limitations. We may feel at times that God’s laws restrict our personal freedom, take from us our agency, and limit our growth. But as we seek for greater understanding, as we allow our Father to teach us, we will begin to see that His laws are a manifestation of His love for us and obedience to His laws is an expression of our love for Him.

If you find yourself figuratively parked on the side of the road, can I suggest a few principles that, if followed, will help you get safely back on “the road of faith and obedience”?<sup>2</sup>

**First, trust God.** Trust in His eternal plan for you. Each of us is



“a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.” Their love for us is apparent in commandments. Commandments are vital instructions to teach, guide, and protect us as we “gain earthly experience.”<sup>3</sup>

In the “premortals realm” we used our agency to accept God’s plan,<sup>4</sup> and we learned that obedience to God’s eternal law was vital to our success in His plan. Scriptures teach, “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.”<sup>5</sup> If we obey the law, we receive the blessings.

Even with all of the mistakes, opposition, and learning that accompany our mortal experience, God never loses sight of our eternal potential, even when we do. We can trust Him “because God wants His children back.”<sup>6</sup> And He has provided a way through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Atonement “is the core of the plan of salvation.”<sup>7</sup>

**Second, trust Jesus.** The ultimate expression of obedience and love is the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Submitting Himself to the Father’s will, He gave His life for us. He said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus also taught:

“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>9</sup>

Each Sunday we have the opportunity to ponder and remember our Savior’s pure love as we partake of the emblems of His infinite Atonement. During the sacrament, I watch as hands and arms extend to pass the bread and the water. As I extend my arm and partake, I covenant that I am willing to take His name upon me, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. And He promises “that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>10</sup>

**Third, trust the whisperings of the Spirit.** Remember during my



experience with Chloe that the Spirit whispered a scripture to me? It is in John 14:15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” And these important verses follow:

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”<sup>11</sup>

Every worthy, confirmed member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Fasting, prayer, scripture study, and obedience greatly enhance our ability to hear and feel the promptings of the Spirit.

When your mind is filled with doubt and confusion, the Father and the Son will send the Holy Ghost to warn you and guide you safely through the dangers of this mortal journey. He will help you remember, comfort you, and fill you “with hope and perfect love.”<sup>12</sup>

**Fourth, trust the counsel of living prophets.** Our Father has provided a way for us to hear His word and know His law through His prophets. The Lord declared, “My word

shall . . . all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>13</sup>

Recently, living prophets have counseled us to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,”<sup>14</sup> and to live the law of the fast. Obedience to this prophetic counsel provides a way for us to be obedient to God’s commandment to love Him and our neighbor as we increase our faith in Jesus Christ and extend our hand to love and care for others.<sup>15</sup>

There is safety in following the word of the Lord through His prophets. God called President Thomas S. Monson, the counselors in the First Presidency, and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. In this world of increasing fear, distraction, adversity, and anger, we can look to them to see how disciples of Jesus Christ—filled with charity—look, sound, and react to issues that could be divisive. They testify of Jesus Christ and respond with charity, the pure love of Jesus Christ, whose witnesses they are.

After my experience with Chloe, I searched the scriptures for verses that mentioned commandments and love. I found many. Each of these verses reminds us that His commandments are

a manifestation of His love for us and obedience to His commandments is an expression of our love for Him.

I testify that as we trust God, our Eternal Father; trust His Son, Jesus Christ, and exercise faith in His Atonement; trust the whisperings of the Spirit; and trust the counsel of living prophets, we will find our way off the edge of the road and continue safely—not just enduring but finding joy in our journey home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 14:15.
2. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 14.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
5. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20.
6. Russell M. Nelson, in R. Scott Lloyd, “God Wants His Children to Return to Him, Elder Nelson Teaches,” Church News section of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org), Jan. 28, 2014.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2010, 49.
8. John 15:10.
9. Matthew 22:37–39.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
11. John 14:16–17.
12. Moroni 8:26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
14. Exodus 20:8.
15. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.2.



By Elder Allen D. Haynie  
Of the Seventy

# Remembering in Whom We Have Trusted

*Our hope to live again with the Father depends on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.*

When I was nine years old, my white-haired, four-foot-eleven-inch (1.5 m) maternal grandmother came to spend a few weeks with us at our home. One afternoon while she was there, my two older brothers and I decided to dig a hole in a field across the street from our house. I don't know why we did it; sometimes boys dig holes. We got a little dirty but nothing that would get us into too much trouble. Other boys in the neighborhood saw just how exciting it was to dig a hole and started to help. Then we all got dirtier together. The ground was hard, so we dragged a garden hose over and put a little water in the bottom of the hole to soften up the ground. We got some mud on us as we dug, but the hole did get deeper.

Someone in our group decided we should turn our hole into a swimming pool, so we filled it up with water. Being the youngest and wanting to fit in, I was persuaded to jump in and try it out. Now I was really dirty. I didn't start out planning to be covered in mud, but that's where I ended up.

When it started to get cold, I crossed the street, intending to walk into my

house. My grandmother met me at the front door and refused to let me in. She told me that if she let me in, I would track mud into the house that she had just cleaned. So I did what any nine-year-old would do under the circumstances and ran to the back door, but she was quicker than I thought. I got mad, stomped my feet, and demanded

to come into the house, but the door remained closed.

I was wet, muddy, cold, and, in my childhood imagination, thought I might die in my own backyard. Finally, I asked her what I had to do to come into the house. Before I knew it, I found myself standing in the backyard while my grandmother sprayed me off with a hose. After what seemed like an eternity, my grandmother pronounced me clean and let me come into the house. It was warm in the house, and I was able to put on dry, clean clothes.

With that real-life parable of sorts in mind, please consider the following words of Jesus Christ: "And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end."<sup>1</sup>

Standing outside of my house being sprayed off by my grandmother was





unpleasant and uncomfortable. Being denied the opportunity to return and be with our Father in Heaven because we chose to remain in or dirtied by a mud hole of sin would be eternally tragic. We should not deceive ourselves about what it takes to return and remain in the presence of our Father in Heaven. We have to be clean.

Before we came to this earth, we participated as spirit sons and daughters of God in a grand council.<sup>2</sup> Each of us was paying attention, and none of us fell asleep. In that council our Father in Heaven presented a plan. Because the plan preserved our agency and required that we learn from our own experience and not just from His, He knew we would commit sin. He also knew that sin would cause

us to become unclean and unable to return to His presence, because where He lives is even cleaner than a house cleaned by my grandmother.

Because our Father in Heaven loves us and has as His purpose “to bring to pass [our] immortality and eternal life,”<sup>3</sup> His plan included the role of a Savior—someone who could help us become clean no matter how dirty we have become. When our Father in Heaven announced the need for a Savior, I believe all of us turned and looked at Jesus Christ, the Firstborn in the Spirit, the one who had progressed to the point of becoming like the Father.<sup>4</sup> I believe all of us knew it had to be Him, that none of the rest of us could do it, but that He could and that He would.

In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Golgotha, Jesus Christ suffered both body and spirit, trembled because of pain, bled at every pore, pled with His Father to take away the bitter cup from Him,<sup>5</sup> and yet He still partook.<sup>6</sup> Why did He do it? In His words, He wanted to glorify His Father and finish His “preparations unto the children of men.”<sup>7</sup> He wanted to keep His covenant and make possible our return home. What does He ask us to do in return? He simply pleads with us to confess our sins and repent so that we will not have to suffer as He did.<sup>8</sup> He invites us to become clean so that we are not left outside of our Father in Heaven’s house.

Although avoidance of sin is the preferred pattern in life, as far as the efficacy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ is concerned, it matters not what sins we have committed or how deep we have sunk into that proverbial pit. It matters not that we are ashamed or embarrassed because of the sins that, as the prophet Nephi said, “so easily beset” us.<sup>9</sup> It matters not that once upon a time we traded our birthright for a mess of pottage.<sup>10</sup>

What does matter is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” so “that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people.”<sup>11</sup> What does matter is that He was willing to condescend,<sup>12</sup> to come to this earth and descend “below all things”<sup>13</sup> and suffer “more powerful contradictions than any man” ever could.<sup>14</sup> What does matter is that Christ is pleading our case before the Father, “saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; . . . wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name,

that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.”<sup>15</sup> That is what really matters and what should give all of us renewed hope and a determination to try one more time, because He has not forgotten us.<sup>16</sup>

I testify that the Savior will never turn away from us when we humbly seek Him in order to repent; will never consider us to be a lost cause; will never say, “Oh no, not you again”; will never reject us because of a failure to understand how hard it is to avoid sin. He understands it all perfectly, including the sense of sorrow, shame, and frustration that is the inevitable consequence of sin.

Repentance is real and it works. It is not a fictional experience or the product “of a frenzied mind.”<sup>17</sup> It has the power to lift burdens and replace them with hope. It can lead to a mighty change of heart that results in our having “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>18</sup> Repentance, of necessity, is not easy. Things of eternal significance rarely are. But the result is worth it. As President Boyd K. Packer testified in his last address to the Seventy of the Church: “The thought is this: the Atonement leaves no tracks, no traces. What it fixes is fixed. . . . The Atonement leaves no traces, no tracks. It just heals, and what it heals stays healed.”<sup>19</sup>

And so it is that our hope to live again with the Father depends on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, upon the willingness of the one sinless Being to take upon Himself, notwithstanding the fact that justice had no claim on Him, the collective weight of the transgressions of all mankind, including those sins that some sons and daughters of God unnecessarily choose to suffer for on their own.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we

attribute greater power to the Savior’s Atonement than most other people because we know that if we make covenants, continually repent, and endure to the end, He will make us joint heirs with Him<sup>20</sup> and, like Him, we will receive all that the Father hath.<sup>21</sup> That is an earth-shattering doctrine, and yet it is true. The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes the Savior’s invitation to “be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”<sup>22</sup> perfectly possible rather than frustratingly out of reach.

The scriptures teach that every individual must “be judged according to the holy judgment of God.”<sup>23</sup> On that day there will be no opportunity to hide among a larger group or point to others as an excuse for our being unclean. Gratefully, the scriptures also teach that Jesus Christ, He who suffered for our sins, who is our Advocate with the Father, who calls us



His friends, who loves us unto the end, He ultimately will be our judge. One of the often overlooked blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ is that “the Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”<sup>24</sup>

Brothers and sisters, if you feel discouraged or wonder if you can ever get out of the spiritual hole that you have dug, please remember who stands “betwixt [us] and justice,” who is “filled with compassion towards the children of men,” and who has taken upon Himself our iniquities and transgressions and “satisfied the demands of justice.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, as Nephi did in his moment of self-doubt, simply remember “in whom [you] have trusted,”<sup>26</sup> even Jesus Christ, and then repent and experience yet again “a perfect brightness of hope.”<sup>27</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 27:19.
2. See Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:22–28; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 209.
3. Moses 1:39.
4. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 59, 60.
5. See Mark 14:36.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16, 20.
9. 2 Nephi 4:18.
10. See Genesis 25:29–33.
11. Alma 7:11, 12.
12. See 1 Nephi 11:16, 26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 122:8.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 59.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 45:4–5.
16. See Isaiah 44:21.
17. Alma 30:16.
18. Mosiah 5:2.
19. Boyd K. Packer, general conference training meeting, Apr. 7, 2015.
20. See Romans 8:17.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
22. Matthew 5:48.
23. 2 Nephi 9:15.
24. John 5:22.
25. Mosiah 15:9.
26. 2 Nephi 4:19.
27. 2 Nephi 31:20.



By Elder Kim B. Clark  
Of the Seventy

# Eyes to See and Ears to Hear

*If we will look to Christ and open our eyes and our ears, the Holy Ghost will bless us to see the Lord Jesus Christ working in our lives.*

In His mortal ministry, Jesus worked such mighty miracles of healing and taught with such authority and power that the scripture says, “His fame went throughout all Syria . . . and there followed him great multitudes of people.”<sup>1</sup>

Some who saw Him heal and heard Him teach rejected Him. Others followed Him for a season but then walked with Him no more.<sup>2</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ was there in front of them, but they did not see who He really was. They were blind, and they chose to turn away. Of them, Jesus said:

“I came unto my own, and my own received me not.”<sup>3</sup>

“Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed.”<sup>4</sup>

However, there were many men and women, including His faithful Apostles, who centered their lives on Him. Though they struggled with worldly distractions, with confusion about what He taught, and even with fear, they believed in Him, loved Him, and followed Him.

Of them, Jesus said, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”<sup>5</sup>

Just before His suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary, Jesus made His disciples this remarkable promise: “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus fulfilled that promise: beginning with the day of Pentecost, the disciples were blessed with the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.<sup>7</sup> Through their faith in Christ, repentance, and obedience, the Holy Ghost became their companion, changed their hearts, and blessed them with an abiding witness of the truth.

These gifts and blessings strengthened the Lord’s disciples. Although the times they lived in were dangerous and confusing, they received the spiritual gift of eyes to see and ears to hear. By the power of the Holy Ghost, they began to see the truth of things as they really are, especially of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work among them.<sup>8</sup> The Holy Ghost enlightened their understanding, and they heard the voice of the Lord more clearly. The gospel of Jesus Christ sank deep into their hearts.<sup>9</sup> They were steadfast and

obedient.<sup>10</sup> They preached the gospel with boldness and power and built up the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> They had joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have much in common with those faithful men and women in the meridian of time. We too live in a time when the Lord Jesus Christ works miracles among us—including healing the sick, cleansing us from sin, changing our hearts, and opening salvation to God’s children on both sides of the veil. In our time we also have living prophets and apostles, priesthood power, spiritual gifts, and the supernal blessings of the ordinances of salvation.

Our time is a dangerous time—a time of great evil and temptation, a time of confusion and commotion. In these perilous times, the Lord’s prophet on the earth, President Thomas S. Monson, has called us to rescue the wounded in spirit,<sup>12</sup> to stand for truth with courage,<sup>13</sup> and to build the kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup> Whatever level of spirituality or faith or obedience we now



have, it will not be sufficient for the work that lies ahead. We need greater spiritual light and power. We need eyes to see more clearly the Savior working in our lives and ears to hear His voice more deeply in our hearts.

This marvelous blessing comes when we open our hearts and receive,<sup>15</sup> truly receive, the Lord Jesus Christ, His doctrine, and His Church into our lives. We do not have to be perfect, but we need to be good and getting better. We need to strive to live the plain and simple truths of the gospel. If we take upon us the name of Christ, act with faith in Him to repent of our sins, keep His commandments, and always remember Him, we will receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost through the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ.

Simple obedience brings the Spirit into our hearts. In our homes, we pray in faith, search the scriptures, and keep the Sabbath day holy. In our chapels, we partake of the sacrament and make sacred promises to our Heavenly Father in the name of Christ. In holy temples, we participate in sacred ordinances on behalf of our brothers and sisters on the other side of the veil. In our families and in our assignments from the Lord, we reach out to others, lifting their burdens and inviting them to come unto Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I know that if we will do these things, the Holy Ghost will come! We will grow spiritually and gain experience with the Holy Ghost, and He will be our companion. If we will look to Christ and open our eyes and our ears, the Holy Ghost will bless us to see the Lord Jesus Christ working in our lives, strengthening our faith in Him with assurance and evidence. We increasingly will see all of our brothers and sisters the way God sees them, with love and compassion. We will



hear the Savior's voice in the scriptures, in the whisperings of the Spirit, and in the words of the living prophets.<sup>16</sup> We will see the power of God resting upon His prophet and all the leaders of His true and living Church, and we will know with a surety that this is God's holy work.<sup>17</sup> We will see and understand ourselves and the world around us the way the Savior does. We will come to have what the Apostle Paul called "the mind of Christ."<sup>18</sup> We will have eyes to see and ears to hear, and we will build the kingdom of God.

Life may get hard, confusing, painful, and discouraging. I bear you my witness that through the companionship of the Holy Ghost, the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ will cut through the confusion, the pain, and the darkness. Whether it comes in a remarkable burst or in a gentle flow, that glorious spiritual power will infuse healing love and comfort into the repentant, wounded soul; dispel darkness with the light of truth; and cast out discouragement with hope in Christ. We will see these blessings come, and we will know by the witness of the Spirit that it is the Lord Jesus Christ working in our lives. Our burdens truly will be "swallowed up in the joy of [our Redeemer]."<sup>19</sup>

An experience my mother and father had many years ago illustrates the importance and power of eyes to see and ears to hear. In 1982 my parents were called to serve in the Philippines Davao Mission. When my mother opened the letter and saw where they were called, she exclaimed to my father, "No! You've got to call them and tell them we can't go to the Philippines. They know you have asthma." My father had suffered with asthma for many years, and my mother was very worried about him.

A few nights later my mother woke up my dad at about 2:30 a.m. She said, "Merlin, did you hear that voice?"

"No, I didn't hear any voice."

"Well, I have heard the same voice three times tonight, saying, 'Why are you worried? Don't you know that I know he has asthma? I will take care of him, and I will take care of you. Get yourself ready to serve in the Philippines.'"

My mother and father served in the Philippines and had a marvelous experience. The Holy Ghost was their companion, and they were blessed and protected. My father never had any problems with his asthma. He served as the first counselor in the mission presidency, and he and my mother trained

hundreds of missionaries and thousands of faithful Latter-day Saints in preparation for the coming of wards and stakes on the island of Mindanao. They were blessed with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Brothers and sisters, I bear witness of Jesus Christ. I know He lives. He is our Savior and Redeemer. I know that if we receive Him into our lives and live the plain and simple truths of His gospel, we will enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost. We will have the precious gift of eyes to see and ears to hear. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 4:24–25.
2. See John 6:66.
3. 3 Nephi 9:16.
4. Acts 28:27; see also Matthew 13:15.
5. Matthew 13:16.
6. John 14:12.
7. See Acts 2:1–4.
8. See, for example, Acts 10:9–15.
9. See Enos 1:3.
10. See Acts 2:42.
11. See Acts 4:8–12.
12. See Thomas S. Monson, “Looking Back and Moving Forward,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 90.
13. See Thomas S. Monson, “Be Strong and of a Good Courage,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 66–69.
14. See Thomas S. Monson, “Faith in the Work of Salvation,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 2013, [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts).
15. The word *receive* has several meanings that are important in this context: “to assimilate through the mind or senses,” “to permit to enter,” to accept as true, to believe, and to welcome (see *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “receive”).
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36; 68:3–4.
17. President Harold B. Lee taught that this witness was essential to becoming converted unto the Lord (see “Be Loyal to the Royal within You” [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 11, 1973], 4, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu)).
18. 1 Corinthians 2:16.
19. Alma 27:17; see also Alma 31:38.



By Elder Koichi Aoyagi  
Emeritus Member of the Seventy

## Hold on Thy Way

*Put God first, regardless of the trials you face. Love God. Have faith in Christ, and entrust yourself to Him in all things.*

On March 11, 2011, I was standing on a platform in the Tokyo Shinagawa train station to visit the Japan Kobe Mission. At approximately 2:46 p.m., a 9.0-magnitude massive earthquake struck. I was not able to stand because of the intense shaking, and I held tightly to a stair rail. Lights on nearby ceilings began falling to the floor. All of Tokyo was in a panic.

Fortunately, I was not injured, and four hours later, I was relieved to learn that my entire family was safe.

On television there was a stream of terrifying, shocking footage. A massive tsunami surged into the Sendai mission area—sweeping away everything in its

path: cars, houses, factories, and fields. I was stunned by the tragic images, and I wept. And I fervently prayed that our Heavenly Father’s protection and assistance would be upon all the people living in this region that I so dearly love.

Later, it was confirmed that all the missionaries and Church members were safe. However, many members were affected, losing their family members, homes, and household possessions. Nearly 20,000 people perished, communities were destroyed, and many people were forced to leave their homes as a result of a nuclear power plant accident.

Disasters such as this are wreaking havoc in many parts of the world



today, causing much loss of life. We are warned that disasters, wars, and countless difficulties in the world will occur.

When trials such as these suddenly come upon us, we may question, “Why do these things happen to me?” or “Why do I have to suffer?”

For a long period after I converted to the gospel, I didn’t have a clear answer to the question “Why am I given trials?” I understood the part of the plan of salvation that says we will be tested. However, in reality, when it came to this question, I did not have a conviction that was powerful enough to adequately answer it. But there came a time in my life when I too experienced a major trial.

When I was 30 years old, I was visiting the Nagoya mission as part of my work. After the meeting, the mission president kindly arranged for the elders to drive me to the airport. However, as we reached the intersection at the bottom of a long hill, a large truck came barreling down from behind us at great speed. It rammed into the rear of our car and propelled it forward more than 70 feet (20 m). The terrifying part of all of this was there was no driver. The rear of our car was compacted to half its original size. Fortunately, both the elders and I survived.

However, on the following day, I began experiencing pain in my neck and shoulders and developed a severe headache. From that day, I couldn’t sleep and I was forced to live each day with both physical and mental pain. I prayed to God to please heal my pain, but these symptoms lingered on for about 10 years.

At this time, feelings of doubt also began creeping into my mind, and I wondered, “Why do I have to suffer this much pain?” However, even though the kind of healing I sought was not



granted, I strove to be faithful in keeping God’s commandments. I continued to pray that I would be able to resolve the questions I had about my trials.

There came a time when I found myself struggling with a few additional personal issues, and I was agitated because I did not know how to cope with this new trial. I was praying for an answer. But I didn’t receive an answer right away. So I went and talked with a trusted Church leader.

As we were talking, with love in his voice, he said, “Brother Aoyagi, isn’t your purpose for being on this earth to experience this trial? Isn’t it to accept all the trials of this life for what they are and then leave the rest up to the Lord? Don’t you think that this problem will be resolved when we are resurrected?”

When I heard these words, I felt the Spirit of the Lord very strongly. I had heard this doctrine countless times, but the eyes of my understanding had never been opened to the extent they were at this time. I understood this was the answer that I had been seeking from the Lord in my prayers. I was able to clearly comprehend our Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation and understand anew this important principle.

In Abraham, the Lord God declared, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>1</sup>

The principle is that the God who created the heavens and the earth knows the grand design of this earth, that He has dominion over all things in the heavens and the earth, and that in order to bring to pass the plan of salvation, He provides us with many different experiences—including some trials—while we are on this earth.

And the Lord said the following to Joseph Smith:

“Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. . . .

“Therefore, *hold on thy way*. . . , for God shall be with you forever and ever.”<sup>2</sup>

The trials of this earth—including illness and death—are a part of the plan of salvation and are inevitable experiences. It is necessary for us to “hold on [our] way” and accept our trials with faith.

However, the purpose of our lives is not merely to endure trials. Heavenly Father sent His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Redeemer so we could overcome the trials we face on this earth; in other words, He makes our weak things become strong.<sup>3</sup> He atones for our sins and our imperfections, and He makes it possible for us to obtain immortality and eternal life.

President Henry B. Eyring stated: “The test a loving God has set before us is not to see if we can endure difficulty. It is to see if we can endure



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

it well. We pass the test by showing that we remembered Him and the commandments He gave us.”<sup>4</sup>

“Hold on thy way” is a key choice during times of trial. Turn your heart to God, especially when you face trials. Humbly obey the commandments of God. Show faith to reconcile your wishes with the will of God.

Let’s now consider that rear-end collision in Nagoya. I could have died in that accident. Nevertheless, through the Lord’s grace, I miraculously survived. And I know that my sufferings were for my learning and for my growth.<sup>5</sup> Heavenly Father schooled me to temper my impatience, to develop empathy, and to comfort those who are suffering. When I realized this, my heart was filled with feelings of thankfulness toward my Heavenly Father for this trial.

Put God first, regardless of the trials you face. Love God. Have faith in Christ, and entrust yourself to Him in all things. Moroni makes the following promise to such people: “And if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

I sincerely testify that God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, live and that God’s promises to those who “hold on [their] way” and love Him will be fulfilled even in the midst of trials, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. Abraham 3:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7, 9; emphasis added.
3. See Ether 12:27.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “In the Strength of the Lord,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 17.
5. See Hebrews 12:7–9.
6. Moroni 10:32.

# “Chosen to Bear Testimony of My Name”

*It is wonderful to have older men of great spiritual maturity and judgment serving in the senior leadership positions of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.*

In 1996 President Gordon B. Hinckley appeared on the national television news program *60 Minutes*. Mike Wallace, an experienced and tenacious journalist, interviewed President Hinckley about a number of important topics.

Near the end of their conversation, Mr. Wallace remarked, “There are those who say, ‘This is a gerontocracy. This is a church run by old men.’”

President Hinckley responded cheerfully and without hesitation, “Isn’t it wonderful to have a man of maturity at the head, a man of judgment who isn’t blown about by every wind of doctrine?” (broadcast on Apr. 7, 1996).

My purpose is to explain why indeed it is wonderful to have older men of great spiritual maturity and judgment serving in the senior leadership positions of the restored Church of Jesus Christ—and why we should “hear” and “hearken” (Mosiah 2:9) to the teachings of these men whom the Lord has “chosen to bear testimony of [His] name . . . among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (D&C 112:1).

I pray we may all be instructed by the Holy Ghost as we consider together this significant subject.

**A Lesson of a Lifetime**

I speak about this topic from a decidedly distinctive perspective. For the last 11 years, I have been the youngest member of the Twelve in terms of chronological age. During my years of service, the average age of the men serving in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has



been 77 years—the oldest average age of the Apostles over an 11-year interval in this dispensation.

I have been blessed by the collective apostolic, personal, and professional experience and insight of the quorum members with whom I serve. An example from my association with Elder Robert D. Hales highlights the remarkable opportunities I have to learn from and serve with these leaders.

Several years ago I spent a Sunday afternoon with Elder Hales in his home as he was recovering from a serious illness. We discussed our families, our quorum responsibilities, and important experiences.

At one point I asked Elder Hales, “You have been a successful husband, father, athlete, pilot, business executive, and Church leader. What lessons have you learned as you have grown older and been constrained by decreased physical capacity?”

Elder Hales paused for a moment and responded, “When you cannot do what you have always done, then you only do what matters most.”

I was struck by the simplicity and comprehensiveness of his answer. My beloved apostolic associate shared with me a lesson of a lifetime—a lesson learned through the crucible of physical suffering and spiritual searching.

#### **Human Limitations and Frailties**

The limitations that are the natural consequence of advancing age can in fact become remarkable sources of spiritual learning and insight. The very factors many may believe limit the effectiveness of these servants can become some of their greatest strengths. Physical restrictions can expand vision. Limited stamina can clarify priorities. Inability to do many things can direct focus to a few things of greatest importance.



Some people have suggested younger, more vigorous leaders are needed in the Church to address effectively the serious challenges of our modern world. But the Lord does not use contemporary philosophies and practices of leadership to accomplish His purposes (see Isaiah 55:8–9). We can expect the President and other senior leaders of the Church will be older and spiritually seasoned men.

The Lord’s revealed pattern of governance by councils in His Church provides for and attenuates the impact of human frailties. Interestingly, the mortal limitations of these men actually affirm the divine source of the revelations that come to and through them. Truly, these men are called of God by prophecy (see Articles of Faith 1:5).

#### **A Pattern of Preparation**

I have observed in my Brethren at least a part of the Lord’s purpose for having older men of maturity and judgment serve in senior leadership positions of the Church. These men have had a sustained season of tutoring by the Lord, whom they represent, serve, and love. They have learned to understand the divine language of the

Holy Spirit and the Lord’s patterns for receiving revelation. These ordinary men have undergone a most extraordinary developmental process that has sharpened their vision, informed their insight, engendered love for people from all nations and circumstances, and affirmed the reality of the Restoration.

I have witnessed repeatedly my Brethren striving diligently to fulfill and magnify their responsibilities while struggling with serious physical problems. These men are not spared from affliction. Rather, they are blessed and strengthened to press forward valiantly while suffering in and with affliction.

Serving with these representatives of the Lord, I have come to know their greatest desire is to discern and do the will of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. As we counsel together, inspiration has been received and decisions have been made that reflect a degree of light and truth far beyond human intelligence, reasoning, and experience. As we work together in unity on perplexing problems, our collective understanding of an issue has been enlarged in marvelous ways by the power of the Holy Ghost.



Clockwise from top left: portraits of President James E. Faust, President Gordon B. Hinckley, Elder Richard G. Scott, and Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin; above: portraits of President Boyd K. Packer and Elder L. Tom Perry.

I am blessed to observe on a daily basis the individual personalities, capacities, and noble characters of these leaders. Some people find the human shortcomings of the Brethren troubling and faith diminishing. For me those imperfections are encouraging and faith promoting.

#### An Additional Lesson

I have now witnessed six of my Brethren receive a transfer through physical death to new responsibilities in the spirit world: President James E. Faust, President Gordon B. Hinckley, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, Elder L. Tom Perry, President Boyd K. Packer, and Elder Richard G. Scott.

These valiant Brethren devoted their “whole souls” (Omni 1:26) to testifying of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world. The totality of their teachings is priceless.

These servants shared with us in the concluding years of their mortal ministries powerful spiritual summaries of lessons learned through decades of consecrated service. These leaders imparted truths of great worth at a time

when some may believe they had the least to give.

Consider the final teachings of great prophets in the scriptures. For example, Nephi concluded his record with these words: “For thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey” (2 Nephi 33:15).

Near the end of his life, Jacob admonished:

“Repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life.

“O be wise; what can I say more?” (Jacob 6:11–12).

Moroni completed his work of preparing the plates with a hopeful anticipation of the Resurrection: “I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead” (Moroni 10:34).

You and I are blessed to learn from the benedictory teachings and testimonies of latter-day prophets and apostles. The names today are

not Nephi, Jacob, and Moroni—but President Faust, President Hinckley, Elder Wirthlin, Elder Perry, President Packer, and Elder Scott.

I am not suggesting the final messages of these beloved men necessarily were the most noteworthy or important of their ministries. However, the sum of their spiritual learning and life experiences enabled these leaders to emphasize eternal truths with absolute authenticity and great, penetrating power.

In his last general conference address, in April of 2007, President Faust declared:

“The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge. . . .

“Let us remember that we need to forgive to be forgiven. . . . With all my heart and soul, I believe in the healing power that can come to us as we follow the counsel of the Savior ‘to forgive all men’ [D&C 64:10]” (“The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 69).

President Faust's message is a powerful lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and one of the most forgiving men I have ever known.

President Hinckley testified in his last general conference in October of 2007: "I affirm my witness of the calling of the Prophet Joseph, of his works, of the sealing of his testimony with his blood as a martyr to the eternal truth. . . . You and I are faced with the stark question of accepting the truth of the First Vision and that which followed it. On the question of its reality lies the very validity of this Church. If it is the truth, and I testify that it is, then the work in which we are engaged is the most important work on the earth" ("The Stone Cut Out of the Mountain," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 86).

President Hinckley's witness affirms a powerful lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and know was a prophet of God.

Elder Wirthlin delivered his final general conference message in October of 2008.

"I still remember [my mother's] advice to me given on that day long ago when my team lost a football game: 'Come what may, and love it.'"

". . . Adversity, if handled correctly, can be a blessing in our lives. . . .

"As we look for humor, seek for the eternal perspective, understand the principle of compensation, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, we can endure hardship and trial. We can say, as did my mother, 'Come what may, and love it'" ("Come What May, and Love It," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 28).

Elder Wirthlin's message is a powerful lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and who was a living sermon of overcoming difficulties through faith in the Savior.

Elder Perry stood at this pulpit just six months ago. At that time we could

not have imagined his testimony would be his last in a general conference.

"Let me close by bearing witness (and my nine decades on this earth fully qualify me to say this) that the older I get, the more I realize that family is the center of life and is the key to eternal happiness.

"I give thanks for my wife, for my children, for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, and for . . . extended family who make my own life so rich and, yes, even eternal. Of this eternal truth I bear my strongest and most sacred witness" ("Why Marriage and Family Matter—Everywhere in the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 42).

Elder Perry's message is a powerful lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and who understood through vast experience the essential relationship between family and eternal happiness.

President Packer emphasized in general conference six months ago the Father's plan of happiness, the Savior's Atonement, and eternal families:

"I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God. He stands at the head of the Church. Through His Atonement and the power of the priesthood, families which are begun in mortality can be together through the eternities. . . .

"I am so grateful for . . . the Atonement which can wash clean every stain no matter how difficult or how long or how many times repeated. The Atonement can put you free again to move forward, cleanly and worthily" ("The Plan of Happiness," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 28).

President Packer's final message is a lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and who emphatically and repeatedly declared that the purpose "of all activity in the Church is to see that a man and

a woman with their children are happy at home, sealed together for time and for all eternity" (*Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 26).

Elder Scott proclaimed in his last general conference talk, in October 2014: "We came to mortal life precisely to grow from trials and testing. Challenges help us become more like our Father in Heaven, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible to endure those challenges. I testify that as we actively come unto Him, we can endure every temptation, every heartache, every challenge we face" ("Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 94).

Elder Scott's message is a powerful lesson of a lifetime from a man I love and a beloved special witness of the name of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23).

#### Promise and Testimony

The Savior declared, "Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). May we hear and heed the eternal truths taught by the Lord's authorized representatives. As we do so, I promise our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will be fortified, and we will receive spiritual guidance and protection for our specific circumstances and needs.

With all the energy of my soul, I witness the resurrected and living Christ directs the affairs of His restored and living Church through His servants who have been chosen to bear testimony of His name. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



#### Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit [lds.org/go/Oct15Conf19](https://lds.org/go/Oct15Conf19) to watch this talk or to find media to share.



- Page 121: Elder Allen D. Haynie of the Seventy told about a time when he and his two older brothers dug a big hole that they turned into a swimming pool. The boys got very muddy playing in it. Elder Haynie's grandmother wouldn't let him inside the house until he was washed off and clean. What does his story teach about the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Why is it important to be clean before God?

*Note: Child-friendly conference coverage can be found in this month's Friend magazine.*

## Making Conference Part of Our Lives

*Consider using some of these activities and questions as a starting point for family discussion or personal pondering.*

### For Children

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson asked us to be good examples by following Jesus Christ. When we follow Him, we can be lights to the world. How can you be an example to your family and friends? You could start by setting a goal to do one thing to be more like Jesus.
- Page 104: President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, told a story about his father searching for church one Sunday while he was visiting Australia. As he searched, he prayed at each street intersection to know which direction he should walk. Soon he heard singing and knew that the Holy Ghost had helped him find his way. Think of a time when you felt the Holy Ghost. How did it make you feel?
- Page 6: Sister Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, shared a story about a girl named Amy. Amy



prayed to know if God really loved her and was there for her. Read or retell this story as a family and talk about a time when you felt God's love. How does it make you feel to know you are a child of God? How can you help others know they are children of God?

### For Youth

- Page 83: President Thomas S. Monson said that God's commandments are not obstacles but rather guidelines for happiness. "He who created us and who loves us perfectly," he said, "knows just how we need to live our lives in order to obtain the greatest happiness possible." Put President Monson's words to the test, and keep the Lord's commandments. Don't be surprised if you receive divine help and protection.
- Page 6: When we look to others for our self-worth, we are often disappointed. Sister Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, said, "We are able to take our validation vertically from [the Lord], not horizontally from the world around us or from those on Facebook or Instagram." Write in your journal this week about your divine nature and the blessings that come from that knowledge.
- Page 20: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "If you ever think that the gospel isn't working so well for you, I invite you to step back, look at your life from a higher plane, and simplify your approach

to discipleship. Focus on the basic doctrines, principles, and applications of the gospel.” If you’re feeling stressed and overwhelmed, consider ways you can simplify your life and gospel worship.

- Page 65: Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told a story about a young man who had hoped to serve a mission but learned he would have to take care of his family instead. Through powerful faith and blessings from the Lord, the young man was able to serve a mission after all. How can we be like him and move forward with faith despite the obstacles in our path?
- Page 33: Elder Larry R. Lawrence of the Seventy told the story of a returned missionary who struggled with his many obligations until he decided to dedicate Sunday to God’s service and to gospel study. “This small adjustment brought the peace and balance that he was seeking,” Elder Lawrence said. What can you do to better dedicate Sunday to the Lord?

*Note: Youth-friendly conference coverage can be found in this month’s New Era magazine.*

#### For Adults

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson reminded us to be an example and a light to the world. “As we follow the example of the Savior and live as He lived and as He taught,” President Monson said, “that light will burn within us and will light the way for others.” What things can you do to be a greater light that “will shine in an increasingly dark world”?
- President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles addressed the importance of women and motherhood. Elder Holland taught, “No love in mortality comes closer to approximating the pure love of Jesus Christ than the selfless love a devoted mother has for her child” (page 47). President Nelson taught that converted women who keep

the Seventy (page 126); and Neill F. Marriott, second counselor in the Young Women general presidency (page 30). Consider ways you can strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and how He can help you through adversity.

- Page 33: In his address, Elder Larry R. Lawrence of the Seventy



their covenants “will increasingly stand out in a deteriorating world” (page 95). Prayerfully ponder these addresses and discuss how family members can support women in their important God-given roles.

- Several speakers addressed strength through adversity. Elder Hugo Montoya of the Seventy taught that trials and temptations come to all, “but they also give us strength and growth as we successfully overcome them” (page 53). Read his talk and the talks by Elders James B. Martino of the Seventy (page 58); Elder Koichi Aoyagi, emeritus member of

taught: “The Spirit continually challenges us to be better and to climb higher. . . . If we are humble and teachable, He will take us by the hand and lead us home.” After you read his talk, seek the Spirit’s guidance for ways you can improve and change.

- Page 104: President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, taught that “to always have the Spirit with us is to have the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost in our daily lives.” Consider things you can do or stop doing to always have the Spirit with you. ■

## Conference Story Index

The following list of selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

Speaker	Story
<b>Neil L. Andersen</b>	(65) Following the death of their mother, a young man and his siblings are blessed with financial means after the young man accepts a call to serve a full-time mission. Through faith in Jesus Christ, three brothers find strength to carry on after their parents and two siblings die in a plane crash.
<b>Koichi Aoyagi</b>	(126) While talking with a Church leader, Koichi Aoyagi gains a clearer understanding through the Holy Ghost of the role of adversity in the plan of salvation.
<b>David A. Bednar</b>	(128) David A. Bednar learns from Elder Robert D. Hales that when you cannot do what you have always done, you do only what matters most.
<b>Randall K. Bennett</b>	(69) Randall K. Bennett's youngest grandson stumbles while learning to walk but tries again with his parents' encouragement. Two Russian Latter-day Saints who feel prompted to share the gospel with each other eventually marry in the temple.
<b>Kim B. Clark</b>	(124) Encouraged by the voice of the Spirit, the parents of Kim B. Clark accept a mission call to the Philippines.
<b>Quentin L. Cook</b>	(39) As a young missionary, Quentin L. Cook learns what it means to be "shipshape and Bristol fashion." Quentin L. Cook participates in a Jewish Shabbat.
<b>Henry B. Eyring</b>	(80) An elderly sister thanks a deacon for passing her the sacrament. Through the efforts of an elders quorum president, the Lord touches the hearts of several less-active prospective elders. Henry B. Eyring's great-grandfather rejoices that the Lord watched over and inspired him during a difficult mission. (104) The Holy Ghost leads Henry B. Eyring's father to a sacrament meeting in Australia. After his wife dies, Henry B. Eyring's father is comforted by the Holy Ghost.
<b>Bradley D. Foster</b>	(50) Anne Sullivan helps deaf and blind Helen Keller learn to read. Bradley D. Foster feels an urgency to help his children and grandchildren understand gospel truths after he interviews a worthy prospective missionary.
<b>Allen D. Haynie</b>	(121) After playing in a mud hole as a boy, Allen D. Haynie is not allowed into the house until after his grandmother sprays him clean with a hose.
<b>Jeffrey R. Holland</b>	(47) A dying less-active member of the Church fears to stand before his mother in the next life. A devoted mother helps her son return to the Church. Lisa Tuttle Pieper helps her daughter participate in the Hosanna Shout.
<b>Von G. Keetch</b>	(115) Surfers unhappy about a barrier built across the mouth of an Australian bay learn that the barrier protects them from sharks.
<b>Larry R. Lawrence</b>	(33) Larry R. Lawrence gives several examples of how the Holy Ghost gives "customized counsel" to help people improve.
<b>Neill F. Marriott</b>	(30) After praying and searching 10 years for God, Neill F. Marriott finds and embraces the Church. Sister Marriott's family exercises faith that they will live eternally with a daughter who dies following a bike accident.
<b>James B. Martino</b>	(58) James B. Martino decides to be baptized after sincerely studying and praying about the Book of Mormon.
<b>Richard J. Maynes</b>	(27) Elder Taiichi Aoba teaches youth to center their clay on a potter's wheel. Nancy Maynes discovers real joy upon finding and living the gospel of Jesus Christ.
<b>Carol F. McConkie</b>	(12) A 102-year-old sister says she earned her Young Womanhood Recognition by repenting every day.
<b>Thomas S. Monson</b>	(83) After repenting and returning to the Church, a woman and her husband find peace and hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ. (86) An Israeli official wonders what to do about the light in the eyes of Latter-day Saints attending the BYU Jerusalem Center.
<b>Hugo Montoya</b>	(53) A smile from President Russell M. Nelson brings peace to Hugo Montoya after his call to the Seventy.
<b>Russell M. Nelson</b>	(95) As a young, discouraged open-heart surgeon, Russell M. Nelson returns to work thanks to his wife's vision, love, and encouragement. A stake Primary president's inspired comment changes the direction of a stake council meeting.
<b>Linda S. Reeves</b>	(9) After hearing a friend recount some of her challenges, Linda S. Reeves aches for those who have been harmed by others.
<b>Dale G. Renlund</b>	(93) After Dale G. Renlund is called as a bishop, his brother tells him that the Lord called him for what He needs to do through him. The parents of a young man who dies of heart failure comfort Dale G. Renlund.
<b>Gregory A. Schwitzer</b>	(98) Gregory A. Schwitzer helps his grandson feel the melody and message of a hymn he is practicing on the piano.
<b>Vern P. Stanfill</b>	(55) By relying on the collective light of a group of cyclists traveling together through a dark tunnel, Vern P. Stanfill overcomes his anxiety.
<b>Carole M. Stephens</b>	(118) Carole M. Stephens uses love to persuade her granddaughter to stay in her car seat.
<b>Gary E. Stevenson</b>	(91) Following his call as an Apostle, Gary E. Stevenson and his wife, Lesa, find their anchor to be faith in Jesus Christ and knowledge of the plan of salvation.
<b>Dieter F. Uchtdorf</b>	(15) An 11-year-old girl learns from her great-aunt that loving God and His children is the key to happiness. (20) A Relief Society instructor stays up all night to make a quilt for a lesson on simplification. (76) Dieter F. Uchtdorf is surprised and sad to hear that an Aaronic Priesthood bearer had distanced himself from God.
<b>Rosemary M. Wixom</b>	(6) Heavenly Father answers a young woman's prayer to know that He loves her. A starving man in Ethiopia is concerned for the welfare of an orphaned baby.



## Elder Ronald A. Rasband

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

After Elder Ronald A. Rasband received his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he read John 15:16: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.”

Elder Rasband said, “I had a spiritual impression that there’s nothing about this [call] that was . . . my desire. It was the Lord’s decision.”

At age 19 Elder Rasband had already learned a similar lesson about submitting to the Lord’s decisions. He had hoped to serve a mission in Germany, as had his father and older brother, but instead was called to the Eastern States Mission (USA). He turned to his scriptures and read in the 100th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Therefore, follow me, and listen to the counsel which I shall give unto you.

“ . . . An effectual door shall be opened up in the regions round about in this eastern land. . . .

“Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people” (verses 2, 3, 5).

He had a witness that the Lord wanted him to serve in the Eastern States Mission.

Elder Rasband, born on February 6, 1951, comes from humble circumstances. “I was born of a [bread] truck driver and a dear [stay-at-home] mother,” he said. He comes from a multi-generational Latter-day Saint family, a heritage he treasures.

In 1973 Elder Rasband married Melanie Twitchell. They have 5 children and 24 grandchildren. Elder Rasband credits his wife of 42 years for helping him become who he is today. “My wife has taken me like potter’s clay and molded me into something that really matters. . . . It’s her spiritual influence that has led not only to this beautiful and special calling but also to everything that I’ve done spiritually.”

In 1987 Elder Rasband became president and chief operating officer of a worldwide chemical corporation. He learned from his leaders how to be more effective in Church service. “I learned in my profession . . . that people are more important than anything else that we

can do.” He also “learned many, many leadership skills . . . that have served me well as a General Authority.”

Elder Rasband has had plenty of opportunities to use those skills. He has served as bishop; mission president; General Authority Seventy since April 2000; supervisor of the North America West, Northwest, and three Utah Areas; counselor in the Europe Central Area Presidency; Executive Director of the Temple Department; member of the Presidency of the Seventy since 2005; and Senior President of the Seventy since April 2009.

His Church assignments have given him a love for Latter-day Saints everywhere. He tells members, “Your faith has increased our faith; your testimonies have added to our testimony” (page 90).

Elder Rasband is humbled to serve as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. “I’ve always had a desire to serve Him,” he said. “I will devote my time, my talents, and everything I have now for the rest of my life. I’m committed to do it. I’m honored to do it.” ■





## Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As he reflected on his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gary E. Stevenson concluded that his service in the Lord's kingdom and particularly as an Apostle will be more about *leading by serving* than about serving by leading.

"Jesus Christ considered Himself a servant," Elder Stevenson said during a press conference after he was sustained. "We too consider ourselves servants" (see Mark 10:44).

Elder Stevenson's call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came unexpectedly. He feels, however, that his service in the Church—especially as a General Authority Seventy from 2008 to 2012 and as Presiding Bishop since March 2012—has helped prepare him for his new responsibilities.

One of the most important things he has learned in the Lord's service is the great worth of Heavenly Father's children. Elder Stevenson looks forward to the increased opportunities he will have as an Apostle to associate with and testify to God's children throughout the world.

He also looks forward to continued association with those who lead the Lord's Church. "To think of sitting in council and being able to learn from [them], to be tutored by [them], and to feel of their strength and their testimonies of Jesus Christ and His Atonement," he said, "is something that I believe will be a beautiful experience."

Gary E. Stevenson was born on August 6, 1955, to Evan N. and Vera Jean Stevenson. He traces his family roots to Utah's early Latter-day Saint pioneers. He grew up in northern Utah's Cache Valley in a gospel-centered home where he learned the value of hard work and the importance of service. His father, "the bishop of my youth," often invited him along on visits to the many widows living in their ward. Lessons young Gary learned from his father about Christlike care and service left an indelible impression on him that would serve him well as Presiding Bishop.

"The bishops of the Church," he said, "really are my heroes."

Elder Stevenson's service in the Church began in earnest when he was called as a full-time missionary to the Japan Fukuoka Mission, where he developed a lasting love for the Japanese people and their language, which he still speaks fluently. Following his mission he attended Utah State University,

where he met Lesa Jean Higley. They married in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple in 1979 and are the parents of four sons. Elder Stevenson earned a degree in business administration, with an emphasis in marketing. He later cofounded and served as president and chief operating officer of one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers of exercise equipment.

The Stevenson family lived in Japan for several years. In 2004 Elder Stevenson was called as president of the Japan Nagoya Mission. Following his call to the Seventy in 2008, he served as a counselor and president in the Asia North Area. He was serving as Area President in 2011 when a major earthquake struck off the coast of northern Japan, triggering a massive tsunami that killed thousands. That experience proved to be a defining moment in his life.

Elder Stevenson helped shape the response of the Church, which provided food, supplies, support, and longer-term assistance.

"That was a manifestation of the Church of Jesus Christ filling one of its divinely appointed responsibilities of caring for the poor and needy," he recalls. He said it was a sacred privilege to "minister, and bless, and organize assistance."

Elder Stevenson said the Lord has counseled Latter-day Saints to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). "In that," he said at the press conference, "comes the charge that we feel as members of the Quorum of the Twelve and as Apostles in providing Christlike service." ■





## Elder Dale G. Renlund

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

After the initial surprise of being called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Dale G.

Renlund knelt in prayer with his wife, Ruth, seeking the witness that “God directed this course.”

Elder Renlund has sought that direction many times—as a General Authority Seventy, as a cardiologist, and as a husband and father. While he worked as a medical resident in training in Maryland, USA, for example, his wife developed ovarian cancer. Their daughter, Ashley, was just 16 months old. During those difficult days, Elder Renlund’s feeling of closeness to the Lord was restored when Ruth thanked the Lord in prayer for their temple sealing.

Elder Renlund spent his career as a cardiologist, treating patients with heart failure. He saw many patients die. But after a patient named Chad died, the emotional distance he maintained in times of crisis as a physician shattered when Chad’s parents joined him in the emergency room. In that moment he saw Chad through their eyes.

Of this experience, Elder Renlund said, “I now realize that in the Church, to effectively serve others we must see them through a parent’s eyes, through Heavenly Father’s eyes. Only then can we begin to comprehend the true worth of a soul” (page 94).

Elder Renlund’s childhood and Church service have also helped prepare him to see others through the Lord’s eyes and understand the Church’s diverse membership.

Dale Renlund was born on November 13, 1952, to Swedish immigrants who came to Utah to be sealed in the temple. When Dale was a boy, the family moved to Finland and then back to Sweden. He returned to Utah with his family three years later. At age 19 he was called to serve a full-time mission in Sweden.

In 2009 Elder Renlund was called to serve as a General Authority Seventy. His first assignment was in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency. Elder Renlund ended his career as a physician and professor, but his wife, he says, “made the greater sacrifice.” Ruth was the president of her law

firm when Elder Renlund was called and left her work as well. But ever since they married in 1977, he says, she has always been “all in” and a source of great strength to him.

While in Africa, Elder and Sister Renlund were “tutored by the Saints about what really matters.” Once, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Elder Renlund asked the members what their challenges were. He recalls that after some prodding, “an older gentleman stood up and said, ‘Elder Renlund, how can we have challenges? We have the gospel of Jesus Christ.’” Elder Renlund reflects: “My wife and I want to be like those Kananga Saints. . . . They look like they have nothing, but they have everything.”

In closing his first talk as an Apostle, Elder Renlund testified: “With all my heart I want to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. I love Him. I adore Him. I witness of His living reality. I witness that He is the Anointed One, the Messiah” (page 94). ■





## Elder L. Whitney Clayton

*Senior President of the Seventy*

At a young age, Elder L. Whitney Clayton learned to love work and family. Early every Saturday, his father, a physician, would leave to attend to medical duties. Before he left, he would write on a chalkboard a list of all the chores to be done that day. When he returned he would join his sons and work side by side with them. From his father, Elder Clayton learned a work ethic that has blessed his life.

Elder Clayton's family also knew that dinner meant family time. "We talked about politics, what was happening at school, the neighborhood, the gospel, and the Church. . . . It was a wonderful ingredient of growing up." Having mealtime discussions is a practice he and his wife have followed with their own children.

Elder Clayton was named Senior President of the Seventy on October 6, 2015. He replaces Elder Ronald A. Rasband, who was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Clayton was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on March 31, 2001. He has served as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy since 2008 and had supervisory responsibility for areas in Utah. He assisted Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in supervising the Africa Southeast and Africa West Areas. He also serves as a member of the Public Affairs Committee. He served as a counselor in the South America South Area Presidency in 2002–2003 and as president during 2003–2006.

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, in 1950, he married Kathy Ann Kipp in 1973, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of 7 children and the grandparents of 20 grandchildren.

Elder Clayton earned a bachelor's degree in finance at the University of Utah and a law degree at the University of the Pacific. He was an attorney in California, USA, from 1981 to 2001.

He has served as an Area Seventy, regional representative, mission president's counselor, high councilor, bishop, stake mission president, and Gospel Doctrine teacher. He served as a full-time missionary in Peru from 1970 to 1971. ■



## Elder Gerrit W. Gong

*Presidency of the Seventy*

Elder Gerrit W. Gong, recently called to serve in the Presidency of the Seventy, remembers a prompting that came to him while he was serving as a missionary in Taiwan.

An investigator came into sacrament meeting. "I felt inspired to write him a short note in Morse code which said something like, 'Welcome to sacrament meeting. Happy to see you here!'"

The investigator happened to be a radio operator and was delighted to receive the message. "I was amazed that something I had learned years earlier could help me . . . to reach a certain individual in a particular way," says Elder Gong.

Learning and reaching out to others have been the course of Elder Gong's life since childhood, when he learned Morse code as a Boy Scout. In 1977 he received a bachelor of arts degree in Asian Studies and in University Studies from Brigham Young University, in 1979 he received a master of philosophy degree, and in 1981 he received a PhD in international relations from Oxford University.

Elder Gong has served in numerous Church callings, including high councilor, high priests group leader, stake Sunday School president, seminary teacher, bishop, stake mission president, stake president, and Area Seventy. At the time of his call as a General Authority Seventy in 2010, he had been serving as a member of the Fifth Quorum of the Seventy in the Utah South Area.

In 1985 Elder Gong served as special assistant to the undersecretary of state at the U.S. State Department, and in 1987 he worked as special assistant to the U.S. ambassador in Beijing, China. From 1989 to 2001 he served in several positions at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

Gerrit W. Gong was born in Redwood City, California, USA, in 1953. He and his wife, Susan Lindsay Gong, are the parents of four children and have three grandchildren. Elder Gong's grandparents immigrated to the United States from China. He has traced his ancestry back 33 generations to First Dragon Gong, born A.D. 837 in southern China during the late Tang dynasty. ■



## Bishop Gérald Caussé

*Presiding Bishop*

Gérald Caussé was still establishing his career in the food-distribution industry in France at age 33 when the president of his company called him aside. He had noticed Gérald's spiritual convictions and his ability to make sound judgments and unify employees—traits developed through activity, service, and leadership in the Church. The president concluded that Gérald was a man he could trust.

To his surprise, Gérald was soon given the responsibility of managing 1,800 employees. By the time he was called to serve as a General Authority Seventy a decade later, in April 2008, he was managing several food-distribution companies.

Bishop Caussé's business and management skills, coupled with his ecclesiastical service and leadership experience, will serve him well as the Church's new Presiding Bishop. Bishop Caussé, who had been serving as First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric since March 2012, received his new calling just days after the October general conference. He replaces Elder Gary E. Stevenson, who was sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 3, 2015.

Bishop Gérald Jean Caussé, the Church's 15th Presiding Bishop, was born in Bordeaux, France, in 1963. He married Valérie Babin in 1986, in the Bern Switzerland Temple. They have five children and five grandchildren.

In addition to his experience in the Presiding Bishopric and as a member of the Seventy, he has served as a counselor in the Europe Area Presidency and as an Area Seventy, stake president, stake president's counselor, bishop's counselor, high priests group leader, and elders quorum president.

As a young man, Bishop Caussé found happiness as well as faith through his service in the Church. He served as Primary pianist at age 12 and as Sunday School president at age 16. He also stayed busy with Aaronic Priesthood duties.

"Serving in the Church," including joining his father in his duties as a bishop and branch president, "helped me get my testimony," he says.

Bishop Caussé earned a master's degree in business from the ESSEC Business School in France in 1987. Before beginning his career, he served in the French Air Force, where he was assigned to a NATO agency. ■



## Bishop Dean M. Davies

*First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

"As a teenager," says Bishop Dean M. Davies, "having the best-cut lawn in our neighborhood brought joy to me, and I learned an important lesson: that a little extra effort can make a real difference in almost everything we do." Giving a little extra has become a standard that will continue to serve him well as the new First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

Bishop Davies had been serving as Second Counselor to Bishop Gary E. Stevenson, who was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on October 3, 2015.

Dean Myron Davies was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, in 1951. He grew up as one of eight children. He expresses gratitude for parents who not only loved and nurtured their children but also helped them appreciate the blessings of work. He married Darla James in 1973, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have 5 children and 14 grandchildren.

Bishop Davies also learned an important lesson while living in San Francisco, California, USA, in 1989. During an earthquake, he witnessed the severe damage to apartments built without a sure foundation. "Pondering the events of that day reaffirms in my mind and heart that in order to successfully withstand the tempests, earthquakes, and calamities of life, we must build upon a sure foundation . . . the foundation of Jesus Christ" ("A Sure Foundation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 9).

Bishop Davies has been employed by the Church since July 1995. Most recently he was managing director of the Special Projects Department, with responsibility for special-purpose real estate, temple design, and temple construction.

Previous to Church employment, Bishop Davies worked for High Industries, Inc., of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Bechtel Investments, Inc., of San Francisco, California. He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics at Brigham Young University and completed advanced executive programs at Stanford and Northwestern Universities.

Bishop Davies has served as president of the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission, mission president's counselor, stake president, stake president's counselor, stake executive secretary, high councilor, in several bishoprics, and as a full-time missionary in the Uruguay/Paraguay Mission. ■



## Bishop W. Christopher Waddell

*Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

As a college athlete, Christopher Waddell received a volleyball scholarship at San Diego State University in California, USA. But he learned to be grateful for a bishop who asked him about other things when he was at home during breaks.

“He didn’t say, ‘How’s volleyball going?’ but ‘How are you doing? Are you saying your prayers, staying strong, staying active in the Church?’ I really appreciated those questions [about] . . . the things that were most important,” Bishop Waddell recalls.

Focusing on what’s most important has helped Bishop Waddell to live up to two family mottos, “Return with honor” and “Trust in the Lord.” That trust enabled him to put volleyball on hold to serve a mission. After he returned from his mission, it enabled him to continue a long-distance romance with a young woman at another university. Later, after they were married, trusting the Lord enabled them to listen to the Spirit when making decisions about moving.

“You do things the Lord’s way,” he says, “and things will work out fine.”

Trust in the Lord will continue to bless Bishop Waddell, who has served as a General Authority Seventy since April 2011, as he now becomes the Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

Wayne Christopher Waddell was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1959. He married Carol Stansel in July 1984 in the Los Angeles California Temple. They are the parents of four children and have three grandchildren. He has been a counselor in the South America Northwest Area Presidency and will stay in Peru for a short time.

Bishop Waddell received a bachelor’s degree in 1984 from San Diego State University. He also did postgraduate work in the Executive MBA program at BYU. Beginning in 1984 he worked with Merrill Lynch, where he became first vice president of investments.

Bishop Waddell has served as an Area Seventy, president of the Spain Barcelona Mission (where he previously served as a young full-time missionary), stake president, counselor in a mission presidency, bishop, and as counselor in a bishopric. ■



## Brian K. Ashton

*Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency*

Brother Brian K. Ashton was called to serve in the Sunday School general presidency just as he was completing his service as president of the Texas Houston South Mission. The calling was announced in June, and he was sustained during the October 2015 general conference.

Brother Tad R. Callister continues as general president, and Brother Devin G. Durrant, who had served as second counselor since April 2014, became the first counselor.

The vacancy in the presidency was occasioned by John S. Tanner’s appointment to serve as president of Brigham Young University–Hawaii.

Brian Kent Ashton was born in Provo, Utah, USA, in 1969 to Kent and Vicki Brown Ashton. He is the oldest of nine children. He remembers his parents as being consistent teachers of the gospel at home.

Brother Ashton served a full-time mission in the Peru Lima South Mission. His decision to serve was influenced by a good friend who felt prompted to tell him he needed to serve a mission. As his friend expressed his feelings, Brian felt the Spirit’s confirmation. On his mission he was struggling with some significant health challenges when he was called to serve as president of a large branch. During this time, he prayed fervently and continually to Heavenly Father for help. “I learned to rely on Him, and He came through for me,” he said. “Learning to trust Him has made all the difference.”

After his mission he attended Brigham Young University, where he met his future wife, Melinda Earl. Before they were married, however, she served in the Spain Malaga Mission while Brother Ashton worked in the midwestern United States. After her mission they were married in the St. George Utah Temple. They have seven children.

Brother Ashton received a master of business administration degree from Harvard University, while Sister Ashton attended medical school. Brother Ashton is an entrepreneur and has started several companies.

Brother Ashton has previously served as a bishop, high counselor, elders quorum president, and Gospel Doctrine teacher. ■

## Women Leaders Join Church Councils

The Church has invited women to serve on three major leadership councils.

Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, will serve on the Priesthood and Family Executive Council (formerly the Priesthood Executive Council). Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, will serve on the Missionary

Executive Council. And Sister Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, will serve on the Temple and Family History Executive Council.

Although women in Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies have regularly contributed to and advised these councils for decades, this invitation provides for a continual role in the councils. ■

## LDS Edition of Bible in Portuguese

An LDS edition of the Holy Bible in Portuguese became available online in September at [AsEscrituras.lds.org](http://AsEscrituras.lds.org) as well as on the Gospel Library mobile application. Other formats, such as ePub and PDF versions, are also available. The print version will be available in March 2016, with audio and Braille editions also coming in 2016.

The new edition, titled *Bíblia Sagrada, Almeida 2015*, is based on the 1914 edition of the João Ferreira Annes de Almeida translation of the Bible, which was selected because of the high quality of its translation. Under the direction of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a team of General Authorities, Area Seventies, professional linguists, and Church members labored five years to review and prepare the LDS edition. Nearly 1.4 million members of the Church speak Portuguese. ■



From left: Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president; Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president; Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president.

## Providing Refugee Relief

LDS Charities, the humanitarian arm of the Church, continues to provide relief in areas where various crises have left many in desperate circumstances. Here are three examples:

- Conflict in Ukraine has displaced a million people since 2014. Sixty percent of the displaced are elderly. LDS Charities reached out to the United Nations Development Program to join a coordinated effort with local non-governmental organizations caring for the displaced poor and elderly. LDS Charities provided hygiene supplies, sanitation kits, and 3 months' worth of food to 37 facilities that will serve 13,000 people.
- Since January, more than 350,000 refugees fleeing civil war in Syria have sought asylum in Europe, a number expected to double by

year-end. LDS Charities is partnering with international non-governmental organizations, local municipalities, and national government agencies to meet needs of refugees and is providing resources for local Church congregations to use in their response efforts.

- To help provide better shelter in refugee camps throughout the world, LDS Charities is participating in a United Nations High Commission for Refugees project. An international furniture retailer has designed a structure that has advantages compared to tents. The structure includes doors and windows for increased security and a more solid roof covering to protect occupants from the elements. Assembly is under way for 333 housing units that LDS Charities has provided to a refugee camp in Iraqi Kurdistan. ■



## Christmas Media Initiative

During the 2015 Christmas season, the Church will release a multimedia initiative titled “A Savior Is Born.” The initiative focuses on finding, knowing, and following Jesus Christ and receiving the blessings made possible by His birth, teachings, and Atonement. The centerpiece of this initiative is a new video featuring children from around the world sharing their testimonies of the Savior and celebrating His birth in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago. See the video and learn more about the importance of Jesus Christ by visiting [christmas.mormon.org](http://christmas.mormon.org). ■





## Children Say, “We Are His Hands”

Children around the world enthusiastically responded to a service campaign launched by Church magazines. The magazines invited children to find ways to serve, then trace their hand on a piece of paper, write their act of service on the handprint, and send it to the *Liahona* or *Friend*.

The magazines received more than 30,000 handprints from children who reached out to share the love of the Savior, blessing families and neighborhoods throughout the world.

The inspiration for the campaign came from an April 2010 general conference address by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, titled “You Are My Hands.” President Uchtdorf told the story of a statue of Jesus Christ

damaged in World War II. Unable to replace the statue’s hands when restoring it, townsfolk added these words to the base: “You are my hands.”

Children’s acts of service have been as unique as the handprints they’ve submitted. For example:

Natalie S., age 5, from Hong Kong sent two handprints. One said, “I helped my mom around the house,” and the other, “I helped push someone in a wheelchair.”

Erik S., age 11, from Russia explained, “In the city where I live, there are cold winters.” A family moved to his town, and they did not have warm clothing. “I was able to give



my coat to Artur,” Erik said, “and he became my friend.”

Ten-year-old Gabriela P. from Venezuela printed on her handprint: “At my school, my friends and I were in chess class. I was looking for a partner to play with when I saw a new boy who seemed sad. I wanted to help but did not know how. Then a voice told me I just needed to be his friend. I went over and talked to him. Now we are best friends.”

The handprints were displayed at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, for two weeks in September and October. ■



## Priesthood Restoration Site Dedicated

On September 19, 2015, President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, presided at the dedication of the site in Pennsylvania, USA, where Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist. In the 1820s the area was known as Harmony, Pennsylvania, and many events in the early history of the restored Church occurred there:

- The meeting of Joseph Smith and Emma Hale, their courtship, and their early married life.
- The arrival of Oliver Cowdery to assist as a scribe in the translation of the Book of Mormon.
- The translation of most of the Book of Mormon.
- The restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and (although the exact location is not known) the Melchizedek Priesthood.

- The first baptisms performed by priesthood authority in modern times.
- Revelations received that became 15 sections in the Doctrine and Covenants and a portion of the Pearl of Great Price.

The newly renovated site includes a visitors' center, which doubles as a meetinghouse for a local branch; the reconstructed homes of Joseph and Emma and of Emma's parents, Isaac and Elizabeth Hale; and access to the location on the Susquehanna River where it is believed the baptisms of Joseph and Oliver occurred.

"Harmony provided Joseph with spiritual solitude and protection, allowing him to focus on the translation of the Book of Mormon," President Nelson said. "Through this period, the Lord tutored Joseph in his divine role as prophet, seer, and revelator." ■



## Seminary Students Elevating Their Learning

Seminary students are responding well to elevated graduation requirements implemented last year. Recently released figures show that 81 percent of enrolled students passed the end-of-semester assessment, attendance increased from 71 to 77 percent, and nearly 80 percent of students met reading requirements.

The new requirements allow teachers to emphasize key doctrines in their teaching, while allowing students to focus on those same doctrines.

Approximately 400,000 young men and young women are enrolled in seminary around the world. ■

*President Russell M. Nelson and his wife, Wendy, tour the replica of Joseph and Emma Smith's home, where much of the Book of Mormon was translated.*





Presidency of the Seventy

Seated, from left: Elder L. Whitney Clayton, Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, Elder Richard J. Maynes, Elder Craig C. Christensen.  
Standing, from left: Elder Ulisses Soares, Elder Lynn G. Robbins, Elder Gerrit W. Gong.



“My brothers and sisters, our opportunities to shine surround us each day, in whatever circumstance we find ourselves,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the 185th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. “As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others, whether they be our own family members and friends, our co-workers, mere acquaintances, or total strangers.”

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS