



By Elder Richard J.
Maynes
Of the Seventy

Honesty

The Eternal Importance of

There is nothing more important than being true to the covenants we make with the Lord. Our eternal life depends on the principle of honesty.

In today's culture the principle of honesty at times seems to be seldom talked about and often abused. Although there are many honest people in the world, dishonesty and corruption exist in many facets of society, like, government, politics, business, and athletics. Honesty often takes a back seat to the worldly aspiration of getting ahead at any cost.

We may wonder whether it is possible to succeed in such an environment and at the same time be true to our covenants. The big questions for each Latter-day Saint are these:

- Will I be true to the covenants I have made with the Lord in the waters of baptism and in the holy temple?
- Will I be totally honest with the Lord?

Keeping Our Word

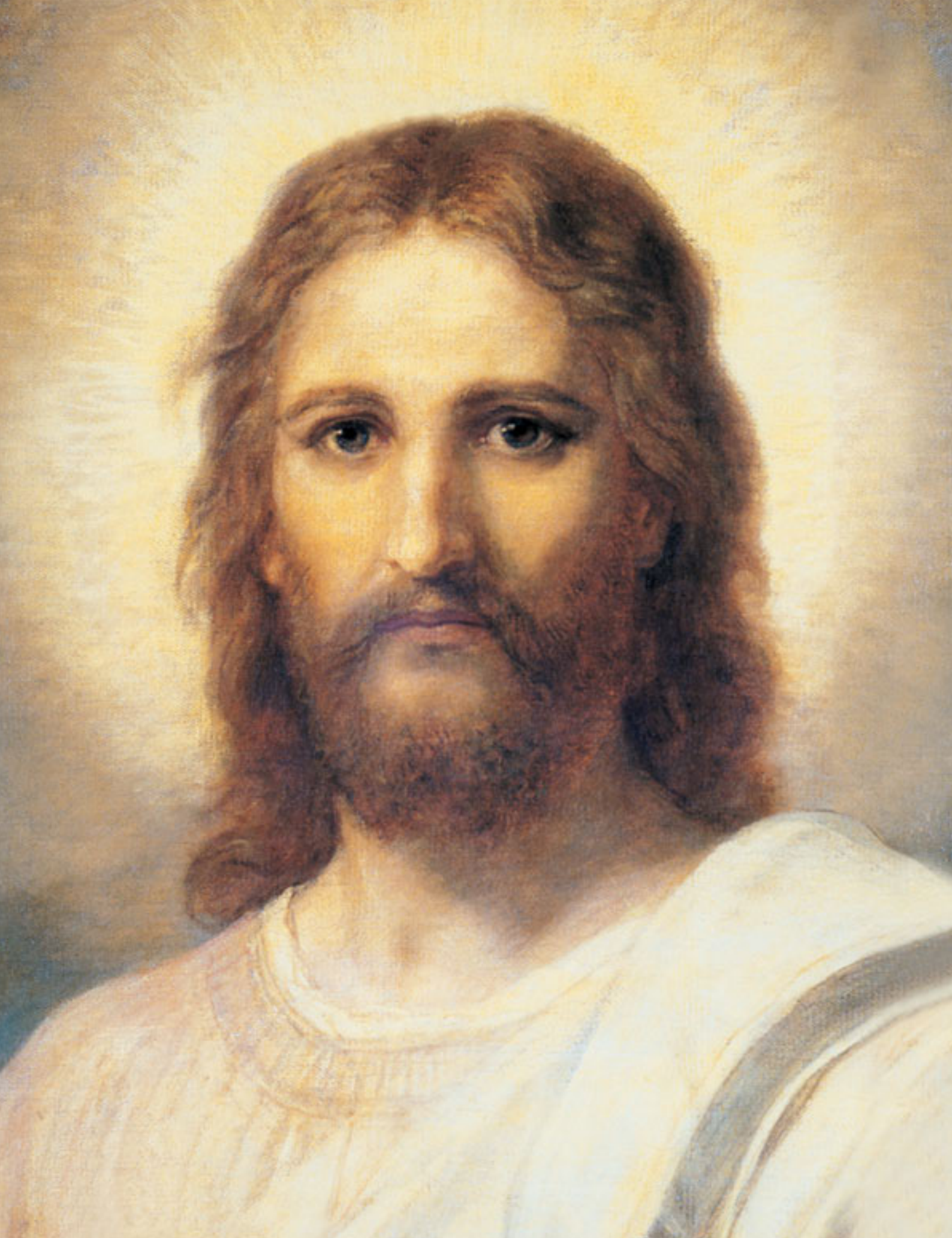
Many years ago when I was president of a company that specialized in factory automation, I was confronted with a situation that taught me the importance of keeping promises no matter the cost. Our company was going through a phase of rapid growth. We were engineering, fabricating, and installing automated production lines in factories around the world. We were hiring

personnel and building increased factory capacity as fast as we could.

We had accepted an equipment order on a large project in northern England for a multinational corporation and had agreed to a specific delivery date on the project. As the promised day approached, it became obvious that we would miss the scheduled date by approximately three weeks.

While studying the detailed schedule of the project, we realized that we had a shipment window of approximately three weeks. The production-line equipment would be shipped from our California factory over land to New Orleans, transported via cargo ship to Liverpool, and then moved across land to northern England.

We quickly realized that the only way we would be able to keep our word and make the delivery date would be a very expensive option. We decided to lease wide-bodied jets and ship all the equipment for the English factory via airfreight. This option cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and eliminated our anticipated profit. The financial cost of keeping our word was high; but you can't put a dollar figure on a good night's sleep.





PHOTOGRAPH BY HYUNGYU LEE

Honesty is the trait that connects the promises we have made to the Lord to our everyday actions. If we are honest we will keep the covenants we have made in the waters of baptism.

Several months later I was in Malaysia negotiating a similar project with a different company. We had reviewed with the customer all of the engineering drawings, design concepts, and financial aspects of the project. We were coming to the conclusion of our negotiation session when the highest-ranking executive representing the customer asked, “Will you be able to honor the delivery date?” Our team huddled for a moment to review the time constraints, and then we stated that yes, we could make the date.

Much to my surprise the executive responded by saying, “We know you will. We have heard all about what you did in England to keep your word. The project is yours.” A week later the purchase order arrived.

Our company could never have spent enough money on advertising in the trade magazines to develop the

goodwill we had created throughout the world because of one simple act of being honest and keeping our word.

Being Honest with the Lord

Being honest with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ binds our basic gospel knowledge *with* our willingness to apply that knowledge in our lives. In other words, when we are honest, we act upon our knowledge by obeying the commandments.

Showing our love to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by being honest with Them means we are true to the covenants we have made with Them (see Deuteronomy 6:2–5; 8:11). We make promises to the Lord when we are baptized, and we make additional promises to Him as we participate in temple ordinances.

There is nothing more important than being true to the covenants we have made with the Lord. Our eternal life depends on the principle of honesty.

The Lord reminds us each week how important these covenants are by allowing us the privilege of renewing them as we partake of the sacrament. When we honestly take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments, we will be worthy of His Spirit. This great blessing and gift of the Holy Ghost will guide, direct, and influence us for good throughout our lives.

On the other hand, when we break a commandment, we are actually breaking our word, our promises, and our covenants. We are also being dishonest with the Lord and, as a result, are subverting His work.

When we are honest with others, we are keeping our covenants. When we keep our covenants, we are being honest with the Lord. We cannot separate the two. Sometimes even members of the Church try to live in both worlds—the world of truth and the world of false traditions. The following example from Benjamin and Meredith Martinez, authors of *The Primacy of Principles*, illustrates this dichotomy:

“Of all the kinds and colors of marble, the milky white Carrara is the rarest and most costly. Sculptors who lived during the Golden Age of Tuscan Sculpture claimed that it

was the purest substance God ever created, and they longed for the feel of it beneath their hands. Any sculptor who was commissioned by a wealthy patron of the arts to create a statue of Carrara marble felt himself to be highly favored.

“Sculpting in marble was neither fast nor easy. In addition to innate talent, it required both careful analysis and tedious, backbreaking work. The artist would have to study the block of marble to determine its essential nature. He would then need to discover the direction of the grain and ascertain the presence of any flaws. He had to make careful and precise plans and drawings which were in accord with the structure of the marble itself. Then, with consummate care, he would begin to chip off the superfluous marble, layer by layer, until he revealed the form he had envisioned.

“Any mistake could be disastrous. If the sculptor went against the grain he could crack the marble; if he struck a blow with too much force he could mash the crystals beneath the surface, creating holes and ruining the sculpture. This seldom happened with the greatest of sculptors, who labored with infinite care and supreme sensitivity. Those with lesser talent and little patience, however, would occasionally be confronted with such a disaster. Rather than admit their blunder and lose their commission, some would resort to subterfuge.

“Soft, white wax, skillfully applied, could usually disguise the damage. In outward appearance the sculpture appeared to be flawless and the defect was seldom discovered until well after the work had been accepted and the commission paid. As the practice became more common, patrons of the arts became more discerning. They refused to accept a piece of marble statuary until after a careful examination had been



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

made to ensure that it was undamaged and contained no wax-covered flaws. The highest standard of excellence for works of white Carrara marble came to include the distinction, ‘sine cere,’ meaning ‘without wax.’

“Eventually these two words merged to become a single word, ‘sincere,’ meaning ‘pure, unadulterated, whole, intact, uninjured.’ When the word was used to refer to marble works of art, the emphasis was on the fundamental wholeness of the statue, not just on its superficial or outward appearance.

“The statue was expected to be good, not just to look good.”¹

Honesty and Integrity

In a gospel context we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are expected to be righteous, not just appear to be righteous. What we believe, what we say, and what we do should all be the same thing. This is the definition of integrity. A person of integrity does not cover sins in order to look

When we are honest with others, we are keeping our covenants. When we keep our covenants, we are being honest with the Lord. We cannot separate the two.

good to the outside world. A person of integrity repents of behavior unbecoming of a member of the Church, embraces new habits and lifestyles, and tries to eliminate personal flaws.

One of the great blessings I enjoyed while serving as a mission president in Mexico many years ago was the privilege of interviewing full-time missionaries. I interviewed missionaries when they arrived in the mission field, I interviewed missionaries monthly during their mission, and I interviewed missionaries at the end of their mission just before their departure.

On many occasions before their final interview concluded, sister missionaries would ask me this question: “How will I know when I meet the man I should marry?”

I wanted to give counsel on the subject, but I knew I needed to be careful. After much thought and prayer, the following answer came to me:

“Sister, the decision regarding whom you will ultimately marry will be one of the most important decisions of your entire life. It is personal, and you will need to make it with the help of the Lord. You will need to make it a matter of earnest prayer. There is one additional idea I might share with you that could be of some help. When you start to date a young man, you might consider observing his attitude regarding the principle of tithing. If he doesn’t pay an honest tithe, run the other way. If he pays his tithing but complains about doing it, run the other way. However, if he pays an honest and full tithe and he does it with a smile, knowing he is being faithful to his covenants and helping to build the kingdom, you might consider giving him a fair chance.

“I’m not saying you should marry him. I’m just saying this: If he is willing to be honest with the Lord and sacrifice for Him, there is the probability he will ultimately be honest with his future wife and be willing to sacrifice for her and his future family.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY



Remember, the Lord expects us as members of His Church not only to appear to be good but also to actually be good.

Paying a full tithe is a matter of honesty to the Lord. “Will a man rob God?” (Malachi 3:8).

Honesty and Gospel Principles

The doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and revealed to prophets throughout the ages is true and needs to be understood and applied if we want to return to live with Him and His Father. Basic principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are not negotiable. They represent the foundation upon which life is lived in the celestial kingdom.

It is true that we can exercise our agency and choose not to live celestial law, but it is also true that we will ultimately be compelled to accept the result of that decision when our inheritance is justifiably celestial or terrestrial.

Honesty is the trait that connects the promises we have made to the Lord to our everyday actions. If we are honest we will keep the covenants we have made in the waters of baptism and that we reaffirm each week as we take the sacrament and we will keep the covenants we have made in the holy temples of the Lord. If we are honest, He will help us succeed through the power of the Spirit. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord emphasizes this doctrine:

“If you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you” (D&C 78:7).

Remember, the Lord expects us as members of His Church not only to appear to be good but also to actually be good. We are ultimately responsible to learn gospel principles *and* apply them in our lives. ■

Adapted from a devotional address delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on November 11, 2008.

NOTES

1. Benjamin Martinez and Meredith Martinez, “The Primacy of Principles,” in *10 Principles of Leadership Power* (1992), 1.

For the full text in English, see web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches