

By Elder
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Of the Seventy



Becoming

CHILDREN OF CHRIST

Two elders had worked all day in the heat of the Brazilian summer. As night descended, they paused under a streetlamp. From the deepening shadows, a man shuffled up to them. The smell of liquor surrounded him like fog. He laid a heavily callused hand on each of their shoulders.

“Missionaries,” he said, “*I need what you have.*”

They took his address and set a time. The following day, as promised—and unsure what to expect—they searched for the man. Winding their way along cobble paths amid houses loosely assembled from discarded materials, they finally arrived at one of the humblest homes on the street. As was the custom, they clapped their hands at the front door. It opened wide as a woman with neatly braided hair welcomed them in. There in the one room was a single furnishing—a couch that had been borrowed just for this occasion.

The missionaries hardly recognized the man, Marcos, from the previous evening. He warmly greeted them. He introduced his wife, Maria, and their four little daughters, then invited the missionaries to sit on the couch. The family sat on the floor and the elders began their lesson. The Holy Ghost filled every heart.

*As we strive to follow
the Savior, covenants
transform and enable
us to become the
children of Christ.*

The missionaries returned regularly and taught often. Marcos stopped drinking. He was soon baptized, and he in turn baptized his wife and children. Their baptismal service was a spiritual feast.

Marcos was soon blessed with a full-time job. Where at first there were no furnishings in their home, soon they had an oven in the kitchen, then

Covenants transform us, just as they transformed people in ancient times. They enable us to see more clearly who we are, why we are here, and how to follow the Savior.



a table, then chairs. They added a room for the children and, finally, two couches of their own. Their home was filled with peace and happiness.

The Next Covenant

Shortly before missionary transfers, the departing elder returned to say good-bye. He presented Marcos and his family with a postcard of the São Paulo Brazil Temple. He turned the card over and wrote two dates on the back: the date of their baptisms and the date, one year later, when they could be sealed as an eternal family. He encouraged them to be ready, in one year, to travel to the faraway house of the Lord.

Almost a year later, by chance while on exchanges, this elder was fortunate to visit that humble home again. Maria opened the door and beamed. The children wrapped their arms around him. “Don’t leave,” they pleaded. “Daddy will be back soon.”

As the elder and his companion waited, he noticed that the table, chairs, and

couches were gone. “Oh no,” he wondered silently, “is Marcos drinking again?”

When Marcos returned, he immediately grasped the elder’s hand in his familiar, callused grip. As they chatted, sitting on boxes, he shared that he was still working, still enjoying church every week.

“But where are all your things?” the missionary asked.

Marcos proudly gestured to the one remaining wall decoration—a picture frame holding both the photo of the family on the day of their baptisms and the postcard of the temple given to them a year before.

“The temple,” he beamed. “We are going!”

What great faith! Three days by bus each way. Sacrificing all their earthly belongings to be sealed together forever. Tears filled the elder’s eyes. Faith and repentance had dramatically altered Marcos’s life. And, as he and his family continued faithful and true to their covenants with the Lord, they had become children of Christ.

That night, still on the exchange, the elders were under a streetlamp when amazingly, another man stumbled out of the shadows in his own alcohol fog. In slurred speech, he said, “I know Marcos. *I need what he has*. Will you give me what you gave him?”

Conversion and Rebirth

We *all* need, and we all have access to, what Marcos received: the ability, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, to be reborn. Spiritual rebirth is attended by the Holy Ghost and awakens a power within us to discover our divine nature, identity, and purpose. The Book of Mormon provides a road map for this remarkable spiritual regeneration in the book of Mosiah.

The elderly King Benjamin asked his son, Mosiah, to gather the people so he could share one final, important message. The site? The temple, the most sacred and significant symbol on earth of eternal covenants between God and man.

In spiritual anticipation, the people prepared themselves by bringing a sacrifice to “give thanks to the Lord their God, . . . who had delivered them . . . and had appointed just men to be their teachers, . . . who had taught them to keep the commandments of God, that they might rejoice and be filled with love towards God and all men” (see Mosiah 2:3–4).

In one of the greatest recorded sermons ever given, King Benjamin taught them about the plan of salvation, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the agency of man and that our service to others is the same as service to God. “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

He emphasized that we can be saved “only in and through the name of Christ” and that we must “become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17, 18).

Children of Christ

As King Benjamin spoke, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon [the people], and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:3). Asked if they believed his words, the people cried with one voice, saying that the Spirit of the Lord had “wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Both individually and collectively, they covenanted to do the will of God and to obey His commandments in all things (see Mosiah 5:5).

King Benjamin then declared:

“Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

“. . . There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

“And . . . whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ” (Mosiah 5:7–9).

Enabling Power of Covenants

Covenants are sacred promises. “In these divine agreements, God binds himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments,” said Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹

Covenants transform us. In sacred covenants, we hear the Lord’s voice and feel His love. They enable us to more fully understand *who* we are, *why* we are here, and *how* to follow

Taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ affirms our commitment to continue to follow His light as it becomes “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).



the Savior in our lives, continually growing “in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you” (Mosiah 4:12).

The covenant to become children of Christ is not passive, nor can it ever be. In the process of becoming, we embrace the Messiah through complete obedience and develop deep and abiding faith in Him. We repent as we approach the Father daily in prayer. Children of Christ read and ponder the scriptures. We proclaim His gospel with courage, standing “as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9).

The same verse shares the blessings of the covenant: “that [we] may be redeemed

of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that [we] may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:9) Indeed, God has made a mighty promise to those who would become children of Christ.

Going Forward

So often pride, procrastination, inconvenience, and even distraction delay our happiness and joy in Christ. We all face the fundamental, strategic question: “What will I be willing to do, to give, to become like the Savior?”

Let us live our lives moving forward, focusing upon things that matter most. Allow repentance to empower you to partake of the sacrament worthily each week so that you may renew your commitment to take the Savior’s name upon you, always remember Him, and keep

His commandments (see D&C 20:77).

Like Marcos and King Benjamin’s people, we need the enabling power of gospel covenants. We need to become and remain children of Christ. I invite all to be “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal [us] his, that [we] may be brought to heaven, that [we] may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all” (Mosiah 5:15). ■

NOTES

1. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 20.