

TWO GUIDING



“Love the Lord” and “love thy neighbor”—these guiding lights will shine ever in the darkness and provide guidance during the storms of life.

BY ELDER JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

In the past century mankind has taken many great journeys. We have mapped the human genome, made amazing advances in medicine, and reached into the heavens and pulled back answers to riddles that have puzzled mankind for centuries.

We are ever on the threshold of new journeys and new discoveries. Can you imagine the excitement of the Wright brothers on the morning of that first flight? The anticipation of Jonas Salk as he analyzed the data that demonstrated a way to prevent polio?

Today I look at the youth of our Church and see nearly limitless anticipation. They stand at the very threshold of life! Who is to say what their lives will hold, what discoveries they will make, what remarkable events they will witness?

Lately I have been thinking of a man who lived long ago—a man who also stood on the threshold of his own great adventure. This man lived in an ancient time—during the confounding of languages at Babel. We know him by the unusual name of the brother of Jared.

This righteous man obeyed the command of the Lord and built eight barges for the purpose of crossing a vast ocean. You will remember that the barges were watertight. They would not so much sail above the ocean as through it, “as a whale

in the midst of the sea” (Ether 2:24).

But as the boats were sealed from water, so too were they sealed from air and light. The Lord instructed the brother of Jared how to provide air for them, but as for light, he merely asked, “What will ye that I should prepare for you?” (Ether 2:25).

The brother of Jared thought about the problem and then went to work. He prepared 16 stones—2 for each of the vessels—white and clear and transparent as glass, and he carried them up to the top of a mountain and asked the Lord to touch the stones and make them shine.

The Lord touched the stones, and they produced light! Throughout the voyage to the promised land, the stones gave “light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness” (Ether 6:3).

Like the brother of Jared, you stand at the threshold of your own exciting journey; you stand at the shores of an ocean you are about to cross. And perhaps you are wondering as did he, “How will I ever get across?”

It’s only natural to feel apprehensive about the voyage you are about to undertake. You probably know that there will be tempests along the way. Furious winds may crack and blow. Mountainous waves may crash against you. Monsters of the sea may try to destroy you. Sometimes it may seem as though you are surrounded by darkness without even a glimmer of light.

LIGHTS

Just as the brother of Jared was provided light for his journey by placing two stones in each barge, two beacons of light will provide direction during your journey.



The first light, then, that I would urge you to carry with you during your journey through life is love of the Lord.

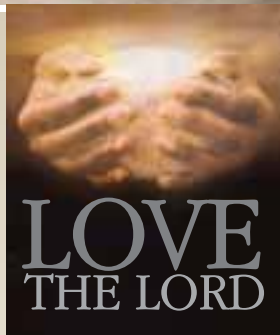
Just as the brother of Jared was provided light for his journey by placing two stones in each barge, I offer you words of counsel about two beacons of light that will provide direction during your journey.

The Two Great Commandments

The scriptures tell us that after Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees decided to try their hand with a question they were sure would be impossible for Him to answer: “Master,” they asked, “which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matthew 22:36).

Expecting that it would be impossible for this young man from Galilee to answer the question, the Pharisees were disappointed, for the Messiah turned and answered their question directly: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” He said. “This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

With a few short sentences, the Savior had silenced the Pharisees and provided



mankind with two great guiding commandments—commandments that belong at the center of and provide the foundation for all we think, feel, and do.

“Love the Lord” and “love thy neighbor”—these are the two guiding lights I wish to impress upon your hearts. These lights will shine ever in the darkness and provide guidance during the storms of life.

The First Light

When we love our Heavenly Father with all our heart, might, mind, and strength, we follow Him joyfully. When we love our Heavenly Father, we leave behind the begrudging “have to” attitude and embrace the enthusiastic “can’t wait to” attitude. In thanksgiving, we joyfully walk the path of the Lord—the path of discipleship—that leads to Him.

Why must we love the Lord? Because as we do so, we become refined, pure, and holy. When we love the Lord, the benefits of the Atonement can wash away our earthly stain. Though our sins be as scarlet, they can become white as snow (see Isaiah 1:18), and we can become new creatures, filled with new life, new thoughts, and a renewed desire to do good continually.

When we love the Lord, we hunger and thirst for knowledge of Him. When we love the Lord, we cherish the scriptures. We hold the truths therein precious, as gems of great worth. In our day we eagerly wait upon the words of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. General conference becomes a time of feasting and rejoicing, a time of gratitude for the great blessing we have that in our day God once again speaks to man.

It is easy to say we love the Lord, but true devotion means more than mouthing syllables. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), the Savior taught His disciples, and so He urges us today.

As members of the Church keep the commandments, they will feel the influence and guidance of the Spirit in

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their lives. Gradually, through a process of spiritual refinement, they will become sanctified and filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost. Their prayers will become more effectual, their faith more certain.

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you,” the Lord has spoken in these latter days. “Seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63).

The first light, then, that I would urge you to carry with you during your journey through life is *love of the Lord*.

The Second Light

The second light I urge you to take with you is *love for your fellow man*. Loving our neighbor is not just a good idea; it is the identifying characteristic of what has distin-

guished the followers of Christ in every age since the beginning of time. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,” the Savior taught, “if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Look at every Zion society from ancient times to present, and you find at its center love for others.

The great Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin counseled that caring for others is linked to the power of the Atonement. “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God,” he taught his people, “I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26).

The scriptures caution us that even our power of prayer is dependent upon our compassion for others, for, “if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need . . . behold, your prayer

is vain, and availeth you nothing” (Alma 34:28).

Disciples of the living Christ have always known that as we bear one another’s burdens, we “fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

The irony of this is that, although we may make a difference in the lives of those we help, we who give charitable service are often the ones who benefit the most. When we sacrifice our time, talents, and resources for the sake of others, we refine our character and thereby become more fit for the kingdom. The Savior said the poor would always be with us (see John 12:8). And it is a good thing too because we cannot become exalted without them. We need the poor as much as the poor need us.

As we open our hearts to those in need—whether they be poor or discouraged or grieved or in distress—and as we give of ourselves to lift their burdens, our problems seem a little smaller. We grow in spirit. We grow in peace. We grow in joy.

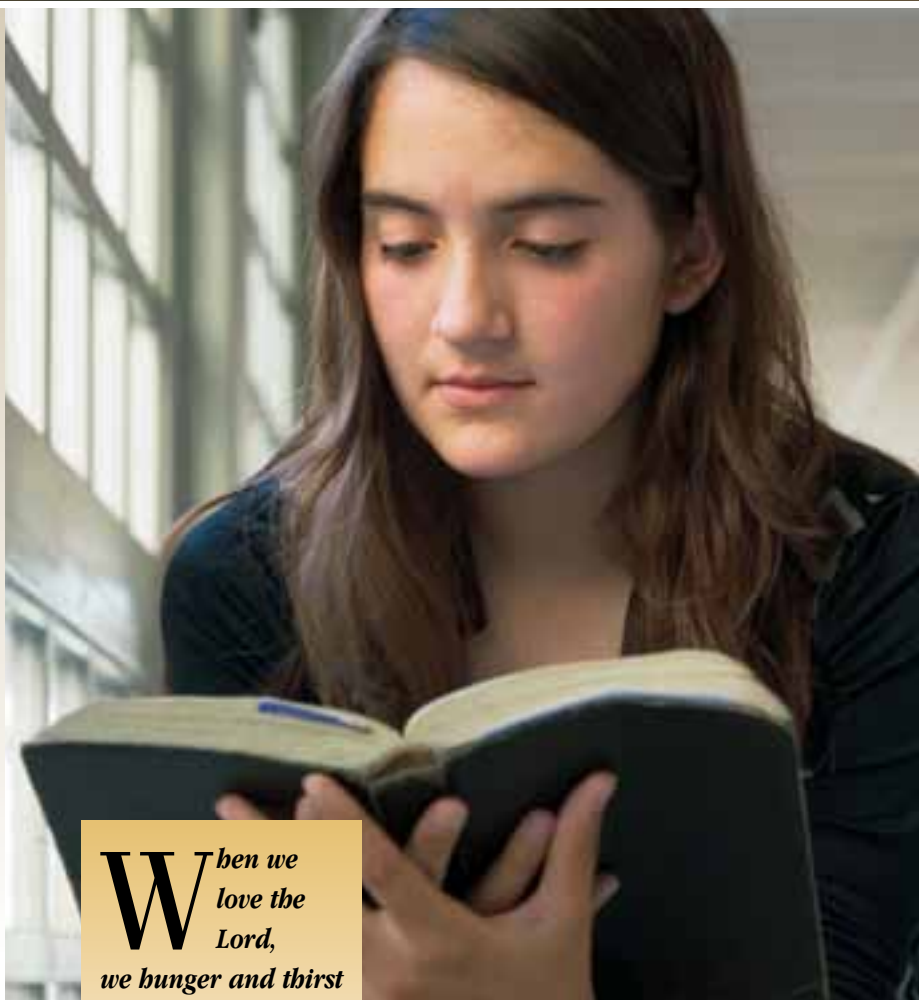
As we “lift up the hands which hang down” (D&C 81:5), the light within us grows a little brighter and illuminates the way before us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that a member of the Church “is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them.”¹

In our day President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, “Where there is stark hunger, regardless of the cause, I will not let political considerations dull my sense of mercy or thwart my responsibility to the sons and daughters of God, wherever they may be or whatever their circumstances.”²

We manifest our love for others by our kindness. Like the people in Alma’s day, we too are desirous to “bear one

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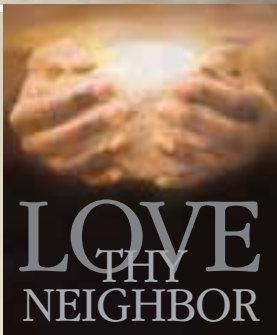
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another’s burdens, that they may be light” and “mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

We also manifest our love for others by standing “as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

The great missionary work of the Church is a testimony to our love of our fellow man. The gospel of Jesus Christ restored to the earth in these latter days is the great hope for individuals, families, communities, and the world itself. We say to our friends: “Come unto Christ. Enter the purifying waters of baptism. Receive the Holy Ghost. And your lives will be transformed in the light and life of the Spirit.”

Because of love of our fellow man, we enter holy temples to perform vicarious ordinances for those who have departed from this mortality without the blessings of the everlasting gospel. This act of compassion is selfless. It is an act of love for those who wait upon us, praying continually for our assistance.



Love is the great commandment. “Love your enemies,” the Savior proclaimed. “Do good to them which hate you” (Luke 6:27).

Imagine for a moment how lives would be transformed if everyone in the world had as a central motivation love and compassion for all of God’s children. What do you suppose families, wards, communities, and nations would be like if their central focus were less upon themselves and more on what they could do to serve others?

To Build a House in Ecuador

The *Church News* published a story about a small ward in Ecuador that did just that. For three decades the Church had thrived in the small town of Otavalo, and many had entered the waters of baptism. However, not everyone in the village shared warm feelings toward the Church. One man in particular hated the Church and everything about it. He spoke out in opposition whenever members of the Church wanted to build a new meetinghouse.

In the summer of 2000, an earthquake struck the Otavalo area, destroying the man’s house. He asked for assistance from the city and from local churches, but few people and organizations had the resources to help. As a result, he did something he thought he would never do—call upon the Church for help.

“My house fell down,” he told Rafael Campo, high priests group leader of the ward where the man lived, “and I don’t have the money to fix it. I know we haven’t seen eye to eye in the past and that I have no right to ask anything of you, but the fact remains, I have no house for my family and I wondered if . . . your Church could help?”

Brother Campo, one of the first to be baptized in the area, had been a member of the Church for 30 years. He knew that the man had been vindictive toward the Church, but as he thought about his plea, the words of the Savior struck him with great power: “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39).

T*he second light I urge you to take with you is love for your fellow man. Loving our neighbor is the identifying characteristic of what has distinguished the followers of Christ in every age since the beginning of time.*

Brother Campo told himself, “We have been teaching this for 30 years. Perhaps it is time to practice what we have been taught.”

He explained the situation to the bishop. The following Sunday during a combined meeting of elders and high priests, the bishop said: “We all know this man. We all know what has happened in the past. But the man does not have a home and he has come to us seeking help.”

The bishop then passed around a list, asking those who wished to help what they could donate toward the project. Of the 23 priesthood holders who attended the meeting that day, all signed the list, offering to bring nails, framing wood,

cement blocks, and sand. Those who had nothing to donate offered their labor.

The following day, the quorum assembled at 7:00 a.m. and “built a modest but sturdy home for a man who only a few days before had been their greatest enemy.”³

The Essence of Light

Brothers and sisters, if only we could develop that same spirit of compassion, our lives would be filled with great meaning and abundant joy.

We live in an age of industry. Our lives are filled to capacity with a list of tasks we need to accomplish. If you are like many, you place on your list things such as praying, reading the scriptures, visiting the sick, and helping those in need.

These two lights I have spoken of—loving the Lord and loving our neighbor—are not merely things we should include on our list. They are the very essence of the list.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40). How much more meaningful would our lives be if our thoughts, hearts, and actions were guided by these two great lights? How much more vibrant and filled with love would our families, quorums, Relief Societies, wards, and stakes be if we kept



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Jesus the Christ lives today. He has told us, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

these two great lights ever at the forefront of our agendas, our discussions, our plans, and our lives?

Standing at the Threshold

My dear brothers and sisters, you stand at the threshold of an amazing and wonderful journey. As one who has gone before you, I offer these words of counsel—these two sources of light that will guide you throughout your life’s journey: love the Lord with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. This is the essence of who we are as disciples of Jesus Christ.

As a special witness of our Lord and Savior, I testify with all the love in my heart that the gospel of Jesus Christ is restored to earth. I testify that a young boy retired to a grove of trees and sought the answers to the questions of his heart. God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith, and so began the great work of Restoration that unveiled the gospel in all its fulness.

Jesus the Christ lives. He loved us so much that He paid the ultimate price to save us from our sins.

Jesus the Christ lives today. He is not aloof or uninterested in our lives. He has told us, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The heavens are not closed. The master of ocean, earth, and skies speaks to prophets and apostles today. All who approach Him with humility and real intent, seeking to know of Him surely shall find Him.

It is my testimony to you today that as we make our lives living monuments that proclaim our love for God and for our fellow man, we walk in the path that leads to life eternal. ■

Adapted from a fireside address given at Brigham Young University on February 1, 2004.

NOTES

1. *Times and Seasons*, Nov. 15, 1841, 732.
2. “The Victory over Death,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 54.
3. See Neil Newell, “To Build a House in Ecuador,” *Church News*, Jan. 20, 2001, 11.