



Cultivating Righteousness

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Of the Seventy

We are commanded to “seek . . . first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (3 Nephi 13:33). Nephi saw our day and prophesied that the covenant people of the Lord would prevail because “they were armed with righteousness

and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14; see also 1 Nephi 22:17–28). This description of our day indicates a connection between righteousness and the manifestation of God’s power in our lives. Because the righteous are favored of God (see 1 Nephi 17:35) and are nourished, strengthened, and given means by Him to accomplish His will



As we live righteously and walk humbly, the love of God will refresh our souls and increase our ability to endure to the end.

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LEHIS VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE, BY ROBIN LUCH

(see 1 Nephi 17:3), we should earnestly strive to cultivate righteousness.

Alma, chapter 60, recounts a period of war, trial, and iniquity not unlike our day. Captain Moroni and his armies, weakened by the iniquity of their nation, had suffered great loss. Knowing that they would not triumph—or even survive—without the Lord’s sustaining power, Moroni wrote Pahoran, the chief judge, and urged him to do what was necessary for the Nephites to be sustained by the Lord.

Moroni reminded Pahoran that “the inward vessel shall be cleansed first, and then shall the outer vessel be cleansed also” (v. 23) and urged him to “make use of the means which the Lord has provided for us . . . to be up and doing” (vv. 21, 24). When Pahoran requested assistance to accomplish these tasks, Moroni quickly came to his aid.

In order to succeed in any meaningful endeavor, we too must (1) cleanse the inner vessels of our homes and lives and (2) “be up and doing” in making use of the means provided to us by the Lord. As we do so, we will be armed with righteousness and with the power of God.

Cleanse the Inner Vessel

The process of cleansing ourselves includes being careful (1) to “touch not . . . the unclean thing” (Moroni 10:30), which suggests that we avoid any contact with filth and sin, including that in music, in the media, and on the Internet and (2) to “strip [ourselves] of all uncleanness” (Mormon 9:28), which means we must repent of any sins we have committed. These phrases are instructive: it is preferable and easier to “touch not” the filth, and it is much more painful and difficult to “strip” it from us once we have touched it. Regardless, we must be clean, and as we repent of all our sins and live the gospel, we will be cleansed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

We learn that praying, tasting the fruit of God’s love, seeking to unite our family in gospel living, and holding to the word of God are important priorities in living the gospel and cultivating righteousness.

Be Up and Doing

The means the Lord has given us to address today’s challenges is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and only through the Atonement of Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel can we be saved. The Lord’s teachings when he visited the Nephites suggest five basic elements of these laws and ordinances (see 3 Nephi 27:13–22).

First, we understand that we are children of God and will one day, through the Resurrection of Christ, stand before the Savior to be judged of our works, whether they be good or evil. This sobering truth should lend perspective to our daily decisions.

Second, we exercise faith in Christ unto the repentance of all our sins. We must believe and trust in His atoning sacrifice sufficiently to forsake our sins, changing our thoughts, feelings, and conduct to conform to His standards. We will do so when we have a witness through the Spirit that living the standards of the gospel will bring us the happiness we desire and that not living them will bring us misery.¹

Third, we receive all the ordinances of the gospel, beginning with baptism and continuing through the temple ordinances. Each gospel ordinance is connected to covenants that put our lives in order so the power of godliness may



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Consider having each family member draw an outline of your home. Read the section “The Basis of a Righteous Life”; then draw pictures inside the home portraying the activities described. Discuss how these activities increase our capacity to more completely live the gospel.

2. For families with young children, put a wrapped piece of candy just beyond the reach of each child. Have them use their resources to try to get it. Share the story of Captain Moroni asking for help from Pahoran. Discuss how to “make use of the means which the Lord has provided for us . . . to be up and doing” (Alma 60: 21, 24). Conclude by reading the last paragraph of the article.

vessel of society and of the Lord’s church] *is the basis of a righteous life*, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward [parents’] God-given responsibility” to teach children the gospel. In this letter, parents and children are instructed “to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities.”² Faithful adherence to these priorities will increase the capacity of parents and children to more completely live the gospel.

be manifest (see D&C 84:20–21). As we endure in keeping these covenants and obeying God’s commandments, He fulfills His promises and fills us with His Spirit.

Fourth, from the time of our confirmation following baptism, we receive the Holy Ghost. Speaking to our mind and heart, the Holy Ghost testifies of truth (see D&C 50:14; John 16:13); guides us in wisdom’s paths that we may be blessed, prospered, and preserved (see Mosiah 2:36); and brings the cleansing, healing, and sanctifying power of the Atonement into our lives. Hence, the companionship of the Holy Ghost is integral to our being strengthened by the Lord.

Fifth, we strive to remember the Savior always and follow His example in all things. As we do these things, we become guiltless and spotless.

The power of the gospel is available to the righteous, those who in their albeit imperfect way are nevertheless “up and doing” in living the gospel. Lehi is a good example. When he walked in vision through a dark and dreary waste, he prayed unto the Lord. He then saw “a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy” (1 Nephi 8:10). When he partook of the fruit, he found it to be “most sweet” (1 Nephi 8:11); indeed, it filled his soul with joy. With the taste fresh on his lips, he desired that his family join him in partaking of the fruit. Then he noted a rod of iron that, if grasped continually, would lead those seeking the fruit to the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:12–19). Thus we learn that praying, tasting the fruit of God’s love, seeking to unite our family in gospel living, and holding to the word of God are important priorities in living the gospel and cultivating righteousness (see 1 Nephi 11:21–25).

The Basis of a Righteous Life

In 1999 Church members received a letter from the First Presidency outlining similar priorities: “The home [this inner

Tasting the Pure Love of Christ

Finally, a key principle: the power to endure in living righteously comes as we receive the love of God, which is “most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:22–23). We experience His love as we yield our hearts to Him (see Helaman 3:35), place the affection of our hearts on Him forever (see Alma 37:36), and love Him with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength (see Moroni 10:32). This love—charity—will be bestowed upon all who are “true followers” of Jesus Christ (Moroni 7:48; see also vv. 45–47). As we live righteously and walk humbly, the love of God will refresh our souls as living water in a parched desert and fuel our ability to endure to the end.

Because Captain Moroni and Pahoran cleansed “the inner vessel” and were “up and doing” in using the means provided by the Lord, they and their people were armed with righteousness and the Spirit and power of God. As a result, they triumphed and established peace in the land. The Lord invites each of us to follow this pattern of righteousness so that we may likewise be blessed, preserved, and strengthened by a loving, merciful Father in Heaven. ■

NOTES

1. See Henry B. Eyring, “Standards of Worthiness,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 12; see also Alma 5:35–36.
2. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; emphasis added; see *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.