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Seeing Yourself in the

GREAT PLAN of HAPPINESS



We see God's eternal vision unfold for us as we come to understand our true identity, purpose, and destiny.

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Legend says that when some of his contemporaries were invited to peer through Galileo's new invention—the telescope—they would not so much as take a look. Because they would not look, they missed seeing the remarkable vistas he had discovered in our solar system.

If you were offered the chance to peer through a heavenly telescope and see God's eternal vision for you,¹ including your vital role in the great plan of happiness, wouldn't you be excited? Or would you, like Galileo's colleagues, decline the opportunity?

Two Ways of Seeing

Those who refuse to look through an eternal lens may instead see the world as the 17th-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal describes: "When I survey the whole universe . . . and man left to himself with no light, as though lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him when he dies, incapable of knowing anything, I am moved to terror, like a man transported in his sleep to some terrifying desert island, who wakes up quite lost and with no means of escape."²

In contrast, those who seek to understand God's eternal perspective are like the third President of the Church, John Taylor (1808–87), who could see and describe our destiny in the great plan of happiness: "When the saint of God considers, and the visions of eternity are open to his view . . . he soars above the things of time and sense and bursts the cords that bind him to earthly objects. He contemplates God and his own destiny in the economy of heaven and rejoices in a blooming hope of an immortal glory."³

Such opposite outlooks can have staggeringly different effects on the way we conduct our lives, both day to day and in the long term.

In the Book of Mormon, we see Lehi's sons adopt very different outlooks while traveling together across the same rugged terrain

and vast ocean. Their opposite responses to events could make us wonder if they were actually on the same journey! Devoid of vision and filled with rebellion, Laman and Lemuel constantly doubt and murmur, while Nephi and Sam move forward with faith, empowered by “views” that are “glorious” (2 Nephi 1:24).

Perish or Flourish

The scriptures teach us that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). The converse is equally true: Where there *is* vision, the people *flourish*. The Lord’s eternal perspective helps us to flourish because it provides us with eternal understanding and clear vision of three interrelated, divine truths: (1) our identity, (2) our purpose, and (3) our destiny.

Imagine these truths as three precisely aligned lenses that are part of a carefully crafted heavenly telescope. Individually, each component—identity, purpose, and destiny—possesses power to illuminate spectacular new vistas in our lives. Yet when positioned in perfect alignment, their combined magnifying power pierces the veils of eternity and simultaneously focuses on our noble past, our purposeful present, and our glorious future.



Three Great Questions

Let’s take a look at how the Lord’s eternal telescope creates crystal-clear understanding that answers three great questions of the soul.

The identity lens parts the premortal veil, revealing our true, eternal identity as valiant spirit children of God. It answers the question, “Where did I come from?”

The purpose lens helps us to see our earthly mission, which includes following Jesus Christ, faithfully walking the covenant path, and gathering Israel. It answers the question, “Why am I here on earth?”

The destiny lens defines our eternal possibilities, enabling visions of our joyful, eternal family bonds in the presence of God forever. This third lens answers the ultimate question, “Where will I go after death?”

Our life’s journey is greatly blessed by these expansive views, which illuminate our important role within the overarching framework of God’s great plan of salvation.

Now, let’s discover the eternal importance of each lens individually.

The Lens of Identity

While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Douglas L. Callister shared a story originally told by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): A young woman in Australia was employed at a shop serving ice cream. Approached by missionaries, “she seemed inattentive to [their] message . . . until one of them said, ‘Do you know that you are a child of God?’ She replied, ‘Nobody has ever said that to me before. I had no idea that I might be a child of God.’ Thereafter she went to her room, got down on her knees, and



THE LENS OF PURPOSE

THE LENS OF DESTINY

inquired: ‘Are you there? Am I your child? Please let me know.’ Then she said, ‘There came into me a surge of feeling that brought me the conviction that was the case.’ She joined the Church.

“Two weeks later she was asked to give a talk in a Church meeting. Her first impulse was to run from it. Then she thought, ‘If I am a child of God, I can do anything.’”

Elder Callister then commented, “Our entire perspective of ourselves, our worth, and what we can make of our lives is altered for good when we come to understand that we are God’s children and that we can become like Him.”⁴

Living prophets affirm: “Each [of us] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”⁵

The God-given lens of identity resolves personal confusion and despair. It prepares us to see more through the purpose and destiny lenses.

The Lens of Purpose

In the Book of Mormon, Alma reprimands his son Corianton, telling him he

must “refrain from [his] iniquities” and “turn to the Lord” (Alma 39:12–13). Alma then bears testimony of the coming of Christ and reminds Corianton that he was called as a minister “to declare these glad tidings unto this people” (Alma 39:16). Given a fresh reminder of his sacred purpose (see Alma 42:31), Corianton repents and returns to help establish “continual peace . . . and exceedingly great prosperity in the church” (Alma 49:30; see also Bible Dictionary, “Repentance”).

Moses was also shown his divine purpose. In a face-to-face conversation, Heavenly Father told him, “I have a work for thee, Moses, my son” (Moses 1:6). And Joseph Smith was similarly told by the angel Moroni “that God had a work for me to do” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

President Russell M. Nelson said that whether we are “diligently moving along the covenant path” (like Moses and Joseph Smith) or “have slipped or stepped from the covenant path” (like Corianton), we all need to “experience the strengthening power of daily repentance” and thus qualify ourselves to fulfill significant purposes in life.⁶

Speaking to the youth of the Church, President Nelson emphasized: “You were sent to earth at this precise time, the most crucial time in the history of the world, to help gather Israel. . . .

“This gathering should mean *everything* to you. This *is* the mission for which you were sent to earth.”⁷

The lens of purpose provides inspiring insights and much-needed direction in our lives.



The Lens of Destiny

I remember my vision being enlarged one day as I read the following words from the Book of Mormon: “When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48). In that moment I was able to see further and understand more—that, grace for grace, my Heavenly Father and my Savior would bless me to become even as They are—holy and full of joy forever!

This lens of destiny expands our vision, providing “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20). Its lengthened views promise “never-ending happiness” in heaven (Mosiah 2:41) as we strive to “progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”⁸

Christ’s Invitations

We thrill with those of you who can clearly see your divine role in the great plan of happiness. And our hearts sorrow for those who are struggling mightily, who silently cry out, “I cannot see it” or “I don’t believe this can happen to me” or “I just can’t do it.” To each of you, I bear witness of our living and compassionate Savior, Jesus Christ. I know He can heal and cleanse you, for He has healed and cleansed me. “Be not afraid, only believe” (Mark 5:36).

With Him, I earnestly invite you to “lift up your eyes” (Isaiah 40:26) and peer deeply and patiently into the Lord’s heavenly telescope. We can do this daily through fervent prayer, through searching the holy scriptures and words of the living prophets, and, imperfect as we are, through striving to obey His commandments and keep our covenants.

Beautiful, hope-filled vistas await your faithful response to Jesus’s loving invitation to “come and see” (John 1:39). And, unlike Galileo’s foolish peers, who missed out, your diligence in looking will open to you God’s supernal vision of your divine identity, purpose, and destiny.

How reassuring is the powerful and precious voice of our dear President Nelson, who said, “I promise you that when you begin to catch even a glimpse of how your Heavenly Father sees you and *what He is counting on you to do for Him*, your life will never be the same!”⁹ ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “My 2020 Invitation to You: Share the Message of the Restoration of the Savior’s Gospel,” blog post, Jan. 1, 2020, ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
2. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (1995), 59.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 1–2.
4. Douglas L. Callister, “Our God Truly Is God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2008, 67–68.
5. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, May 2017, 145.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 67–69.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 145.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “Stand as True Millennials,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2016, 27; emphasis added.