



GOLDEN HARVEST, BY DAVID MERRILL. COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

Faith in Jesus Christ
and His Atonement is
the faith to reap.
It is faith in His power,
not yours.





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DEVELOPING THE

Faith to Reap

Lehi and his family had been in the wilderness for only a matter of days when the Lord told him to send his sons back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates from Laban. We don't often compliment Lehi's two rebellious sons, Laman and Lemuel, but at least they were willing to go. They had enough faith to give it a try.

Laman, and later Lemuel with his brothers, asked Laban for the plates. The brothers lost their family fortune and almost their lives in the attempt. At that point, Laman's and Lemuel's faith failed them, and they were ready to quit. Nephi, on the other hand, rose above the danger and discouragement:

"As the Lord liveth, and as we live," he said, "we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us.

"Wherefore, let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (1 Nephi 3:15–16).

Nephi then exercised great faith, obtained the plates of Laban, and returned with his brothers to their father in the wilderness.

There seem to be two distinct levels of faith. The first level is the faith to try, the faith to thrust in our sickles. The second level is the faith to do. It is more than the faith to thrust in our sickles—it is the faith to reap.

Laman and Lemuel had the faith to try, but Nephi had the faith to do. Laman and Lemuel had enough faith to thrust in their sickles, but Nephi had enough faith to reap.

That subtle distinction between the faith to thrust in our sickles and the faith to reap will make all the difference in our lives. To live again with our Heavenly Father and to live productive and joyful lives on earth, we need to develop the faith to reap.



Pray each day that Heavenly Father will bless you with righteous desires to conform your will to His.

We have received marvelous promises from the Lord—promises of happiness and joy in this life and exaltation in the next. But the challenges and problems of our daily lives tend to diminish our hope. Our land of promise seems so far away, so improbable, that we begin to doubt.

“It isn’t possible for me to reach that goal or to receive that blessing,” we think. “Surely, the Lord was thinking about someone else when He made those promises.”

No, He *was* thinking of you and of me. We only need sufficient faith to receive our blessings—a faith so strong that it can convert our future promises into present realities. We need the faith to reap.

What exactly is the faith to reap, and how can we develop it?

Have Faith in Jesus Christ

First, unlike the faith to thrust in our sickles, the faith to reap is not faith in ourselves. It is not the same as self-confidence or positive mental attitude. It is not even faith in our families or friends—all of which are good. The faith to reap is faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. It is faith in His power, not ours.

When I was called as the stake president of the Mesa Arizona Maricopa Stake, Elder W. Mack Lawrence, at the time a General Authority Seventy, invited my wife and me into the stake president’s office and extended the calling. I dutifully accepted. Then he invited us to enter the high council room and prayerfully consider men to recommend as my counselors. As I entered the room, I saw pictures of all the

stake presidents who had previously served in the stake since it was organized, and my heart sank. They were great leaders both in the Church and in the community.

I looked at my wife and said, “Kathleen, I don’t think I can do this. I’m not in their league.”

She said, “Don’t talk to me about it. You had better talk to Elder Lawrence.”

To my surprise, when I told him that I didn’t think I could fulfill the calling, Elder Lawrence responded, “Well, I suppose you’re right.”

But then he said, “You can’t do it, Brother Andersen, but the Lord can. He has the power to do His work, and if you will be worthy and work hard, He will do it. You will see.”

And He did.

The faith to thrust in our sickles is the faith to try. It is faith in oneself, and it evaporates as soon as the going gets tough. And then we start to doubt. But the faith to reap is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It never yields.

Align Your Will with God’s Will

Second, to exercise the faith to reap, we must be certain that our desires and objectives are consistent with the will of God. We can never exercise faith to reap if God does not agree with the harvest. To have His help, we must align our will with His.

Because the prophet Nephi, the son of Helaman, was a righteous and faithful man, the Lord told him, “I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be

done unto thee according to thy word.” That is a wonderful promise. But then the Lord adds, “For thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will” (Helaman 10:5).

Moroni taught, “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do *whatsoever thing is expedient in me*” (Moroni 7:33; emphasis added).

Conforming our desires to God’s will is a prerequisite to the faith to reap.

When my sons were younger, they played on the high school basketball teams. Back then they used to have a team prayer prior to beginning each game. As I watched from the stands, I would wonder what they were praying for. If they were praying to win the game, their prayers lacked the faith to reap. This was clearly evidenced by the number of games they lost! The Lord apparently did not share their desire that they necessarily win every game.

In other words, God will help us to achieve only the goals that are good for us. That is because He loves us, and He knows better than we do what will be for our good. We should pray each day that Heavenly Father will bless us with righteous desires to conform our will to His. We must learn to pray as the Lord did in the Garden of Gethsemane that God’s will, not ours, be done (see Luke 22:42). Only then can we exercise the faith to reap.

Go to Work

The third prerequisite of faith to reap is work. The Apostle James makes it clear that faith without works is dead. The faith to thrust in our sickles requires belief, but the faith to reap requires more than belief. “The devils believe,” writes James, “and tremble” (see James 2:17, 19).

I heard a story about a father who noticed his young daughter kneeling beside her bed, praying that Heavenly Father would protect little birds from entering a bird trap her brother had built and placed in the backyard. Later that day, the father grew concerned. He knew the trap was a good one. He had helped his son build it.

“I heard you praying this morning that Heavenly Father would protect the little birds from your brother’s trap,” he said to his daughter. “But sometimes sad things happen even when we pray that they won’t.”

She responded, “I just know he won’t catch any birds, Daddy.” “I admire your faith, sweetheart,” the father said. “But if he does catch some birds, I hope that won’t hurt your faith.” “He won’t, Daddy,” she said. “I know he won’t.” The father asked, “How can you have such great faith?” “Because after I said my prayers,” his daughter replied, “I went out back and kicked his bird trap all to pieces.”

It is good to pray for Heavenly Father’s blessings. But after we say amen, we have to go to work. We cannot expect the Lord to guide our footsteps if we’re not willing to move our feet. Nor should we ask Him to do for us that which we can and should do for ourselves.

We must work at reaching our righteous goals. We must work at keeping the commandments. The real power in our covenants and the real power in the faith to reap is realized not when we conclude with certainty that God keeps His promises but rather when we conclude with certainty that we keep ours. That great truth is what converts future promises into present realities. We must work.

Don’t be discouraged with your failures or mistakes, but be constant in your efforts, and be determined. The faith to reap does not require perfection, but it does require persistence.

I invite you to develop the faith to reap. Place your faith firmly in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and in His Atonement. Make sure that your desires align with and conform to His will. Then go to work with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, with unflinching determination and persistence. There is no challenge, no problem, no barrier that will not yield to the faith to reap. ■

From a devotional address, “The Faith to Reap,” delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on March 17, 2015.



SHOW YOUR FAITH

“There is only One in whom your faith is always safe, and that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you need to let your faith show!”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Let Your Faith Show,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 29.