



By Elder
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HONORING GOD

BY HONORING OUR COVENANTS

The greatest blessings of our faith in God are found in honoring Him by keeping our covenants.

In 1985 Sister Sitati and I met a man named Roger Howard in Nairobi, Kenya. He and his wife, Eileen, were serving as a senior missionary couple. They invited us to join a small congregation that met in their home. It was the first time we had attended a meeting of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We felt the Spirit at that first meeting, and since then we have attended church every Sunday.

A few months later, Roger baptized us, together with our nine-year-old son. Soon afterward, Roger and Eileen returned home at the end of their mission. We continued to hear from them every few years.

Early in 2010, Sister Sitati and I finally saw Roger again. He was now approaching 90 years old. Worn with old age and poor health, he leaned heavily on his walker. As we stood facing each other for the first time in so many years, we felt a mutual joy beyond description. Tears rolled freely as we tenderly embraced. We felt a deep gratitude for each other and for the marvelous gift of the gospel. We were united in faith as fellow citizens in the kingdom of God.

As I savored that moment, a scripture came to mind: “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; . . .

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be

one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” (D&C 18:10, 15).

Some of God’s greatest blessings are promised to those who bring souls to His kingdom. The Savior confided: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

Roger passed on later that year. I had the distinct feeling that he was a man at peace with God. He had profoundly touched our lives by sharing the gospel. His example of consecrated service to his fellowmen, along with that of the great army of young and senior missionaries serving in the Church, demonstrates one way we honor God.

Our Covenant Relationship with God

Thanks to our membership in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, we each have a binding personal relationship with Heavenly Father through covenants. Each covenant is confirmed by an ordinance, by which we willingly accept and commit to keep the covenant. Jesus Christ, through His Atonement, enables us to fulfill our obligations in each covenant as we exercise faith in Him.

We honor Heavenly Father as we deepen our relationship with Him by making and keeping all the saving



covenants and ordinances. He blesses those who keep their covenants with His Spirit to guide and strengthen them. Following are the most important covenant relationships we can establish with Heavenly Father.

The Baptismal Covenant

Baptism brings us into the first covenant relationship with God. We qualify for the ordinance when we “humble [ourselves] before God, . . . come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that [we] have truly repented of all [our] sins, . . . and truly manifest by [our] works that [we] have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of [our] sins” (D&C 20:37).

As we show by our actions that we do “take upon [us] the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end” (D&C 20:37), “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; . . . mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:8–9), we keep the covenant.

In turn, God honors us with the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which we receive the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, who provides guidance and direction in all our affairs, leading us to eternal life (see Mosiah 18:9–10).

I felt a sense of great joy and of being filled with the Spirit after my baptism, which I have continued to experience whenever I feel especially close to God.

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

Men who keep the covenant of baptism qualify to enter into the oath and covenant of the priesthood. We receive it through the ordinance of laying on of hands. The covenant of the priesthood is a covenant of service for the salvation of God’s children. We honor God as we magnify our callings (see D&C 84:33) and “serve him with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2) and with “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5).

The blessings of the Lord that come to faithful priesthood holders include sanctification “by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies” (D&C 84:33). They become heirs of the blessings of Moses and of Abraham (see D&C 84:34). Latter-day prophets and apostles are good examples of those who magnify their priesthood. Their lives are a testimony that the Lord honors them.

Temple Ordinances and Covenants

Men who worthily hold the higher priesthood and women who are worthy can receive sacred ordinances and make sacred covenants in the temple. Through temple ordinances and covenants, we learn to understand the purpose of this life and to become prepared for eternal life. We receive the ordinance and enter into the covenant of eternal marriage and of sealing to our families. We commit to consecrate our lives to God and to the work of salvation for all His children. Faithfully keeping these covenants entitles us to receive the spiritual guidance and power to overcome the trials of mortality and to obtain exaltation, the greatest blessing God can give to His children (see D&C 14:7). Exaltation, or eternal life, is to enjoy as families the quality of life our Heavenly Father lives.

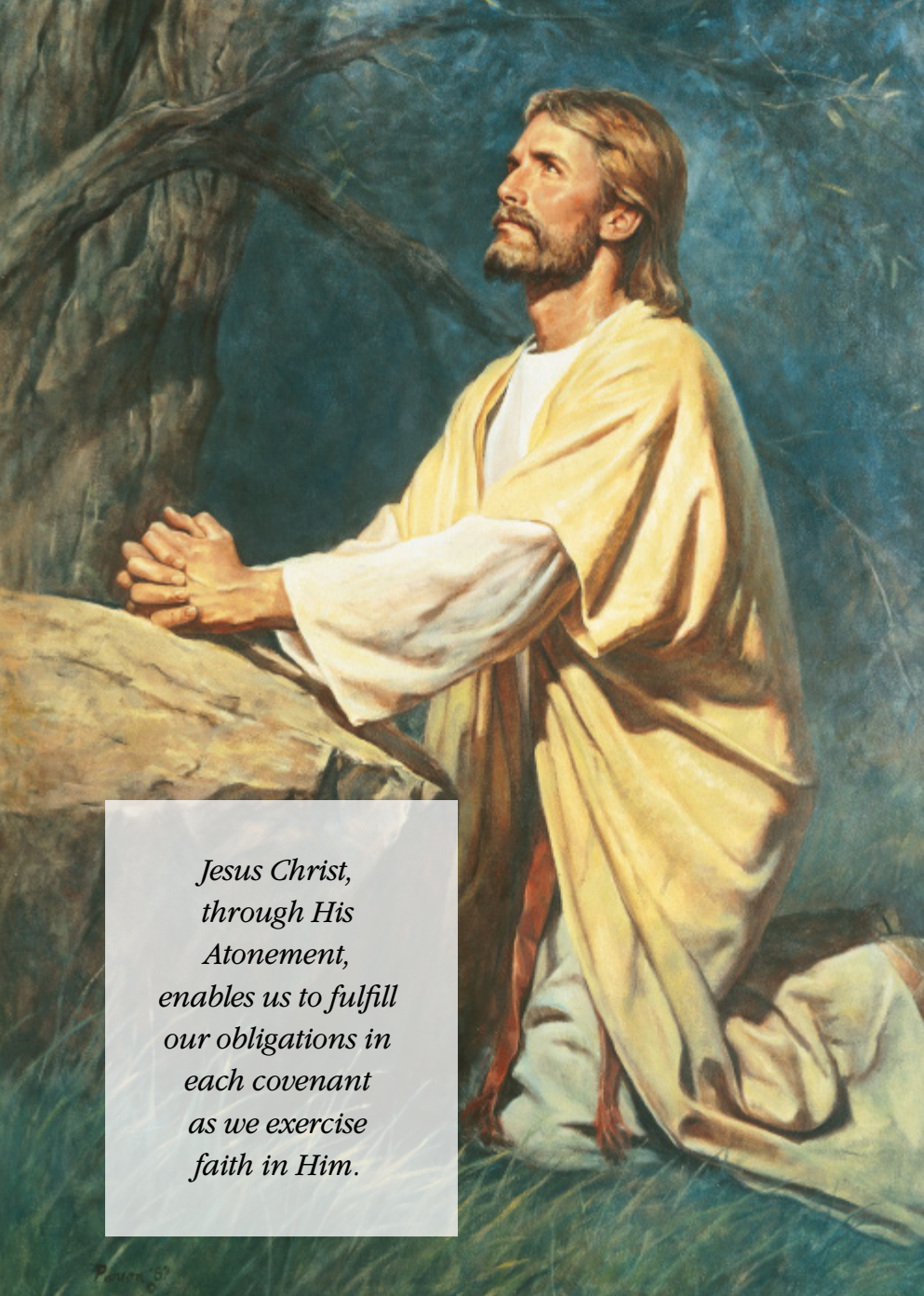
The Sacrament

For members of the Church, taking the sacrament worthily every Sabbath day is essential. By this ordinance, we confirm our continuing willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and to renew our commitment to keep all covenants we have made. We invoke the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to help us endure to the end in righteousness. As we do so, we qualify for all blessings of all the covenants we have made.

Righteous Desires

Breaking a covenant is offensive to God and renders the promised blessings of no effect (see D&C 82:10).

In 1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–34, we learn of the evil done by the sons of Eli the priest. They took advantage of their



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father's position to break the covenant of the priesthood. They sought to fulfill their lustful desires as they indulged in immoral conduct with female worshippers and as they corruptly took for themselves the meat of the sacrifices of the people of Israel. The Lord pronounced severe judgments against Eli's sons and against Eli himself for failing to restrain them.

Such carnal desires can be overcome by a determination to keep our covenants with God, as demonstrated by Joseph of Egypt when confronted by a lustful nonbeliever (see Genesis 39:9, 12). God honored Joseph and helped him overcome all designs of evil against him. He rose to

become the second most powerful man in Egypt and an instrument in the hands of God for the preservation of the family of Israel (see Genesis 45:7–8).

If we are overcome by temptation, the desire to restore our relationship with Heavenly Father will lead us to sincere repentance. The Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ then helps us to become worthy once again.

Following the Prophets

When Christ established His Church, He chose apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers “for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12–13).

Our living prophets and apostles teach that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the

Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129).

Our homes and our families provide the foundation for building strong relationships with God based on covenants. Following the inspired teachings of our living prophets will help us to have strong families, give us the power to keep our covenants, and secure the greatest blessings of our faith. ■