

What Church Leaders Are Saying

about

When Loved Ones Turn Away from the Church

Show Understanding

“Question: If I have family or friends who are less active, how far do I go in my attempts to bring them back?”

“My answer is please do not preach to them! Your family members or friends already know the Church’s teachings. They don’t need another lecture! **What they need—what we all need—is love and understanding, not judging.** Share your positive experiences of living the gospel. *The most powerful thing you can do is share your spiritual experiences with family and friends.* Also, be genuinely interested in their lives, their successes, and their challenges. Always be warm, gentle, loving, and kind.”¹

—President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Listen with Love

“Let us follow the Savior’s path and increase our compassion, diminish our tendency to judge, and stop being the inspectors of the spirituality of others. **Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer,** and we may be able to help carry or lift the heavy clouds that suffocate our loved ones and friends so that, through our love, they can once again feel the Holy Ghost and perceive the light that emanates from Jesus Christ.”²

—Sister Reyna I. Aburto, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

Listening with love is one of the greatest gifts we can offer.



The Influence of Faithful Parents

“One of the greatest heartaches a valiant parent in Zion can suffer is a child who strays from the gospel path. Questions of ‘Why?’ or ‘What did I do wrong?’ and ‘How can this child now be helped?’ are pondered without ceasing in the minds and hearts of such parents. . . .

“ . . . Parents who honor temple covenants are in a position to exert great spiritual influence over time on their children. Faithful members of the Church can find comfort in knowing that they can lay claim to the promises of divine guidance and power, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the privileges of the priesthood, in their efforts to help family members receive the blessings of salvation and exaltation. . . .

“ . . . The influence of parents who honor covenants and obey commandments indeed can have a decisive spiritual impact upon children who stray. . . . However, righteous parental influence (1) does not replace in the life of an individual the need for the redeeming and strengthening power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, (2) does not overrule the consequences of the unrighteous exercise of moral agency, and (3) does not negate the responsibility of an individual as an agent ‘to act . . . and not to be acted upon’ (2 Nephi 2:26). . . .

“ . . . Thus, *faithful parents can invite the power of heaven to influence their children. Nevertheless, those children remain agents unto themselves, and the choice to repent or not ultimately is theirs.* . . .

“As parents are patient and persistent in loving their children and in becoming living examples of disciples of Jesus Christ, they most effectively teach the Father’s plan of happiness. The steadfastness of such parents bears powerful witness of the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Savior’s Atonement and invites wayward children to see with new eyes and to hear with new ears (see Matthew 13:43).”³

—Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



God Knows and Loves Each Child

“God has devised means to save each of His children. For many, that involves being placed with a brother or a sister or a grandparent who loves them no matter what they do. . . .

“ . . . From before the world was, a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son loved and worked with those who They knew would wander. God will love them forever.”⁴

—President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The Atonement Is for All

“Some of you . . . have family members who have temporarily lost their way. The Savior’s instruction to all who have 100 sheep is to leave the ninety and nine and go after and rescue the



one. His instruction to those who have 10 pieces of silver and lose one is to search until you find it. When the lost one is your son or your daughter, your brother or your sister, and he or she has chosen to leave, we learned in our family that, after all we can do, we love that person with all of our hearts and we watch, we pray, and we wait for the Lord's hand to be revealed.

“. . . All of us fall short of the glory of the Father (see Romans 3:23). *All of us need the Savior's Atonement to heal us. All of us are lost and need to be found.*”⁵

—Elder Brent H. Nielson of the Seventy

The Testimony of the Spirit Is Real

“A man who grew up in the Church, served as a full-time missionary, and married a lovely woman was surprised when some of his siblings began speaking critically of the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith. After a time they left the

Church and tried to persuade him to follow. As often happens in such cases, they bombarded him with essays, podcasts, and videos produced by critics, most of whom were themselves disaffected former members of the Church. His siblings mocked his faith, telling him he was gullible and misled. He didn't have answers for all their assertions, and his faith began to waver under the relentless opposition. He wondered if he should stop attending church. He talked with his wife. He talked with people he trusted. He prayed. As he meditated in this troubled state of mind, he recalled occasions when he had felt the Holy Spirit and had received a witness of truth by the Spirit. He concluded, *'If I am honest with myself, I must admit that the Spirit has touched me more than once and the testimony of the Spirit is real.'* He has a renewed sense of happiness and peace that is shared by his wife and children.”⁶

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

The Church Has Never Been Stronger

“Some have asserted that more members are leaving the Church today and that there is more doubt and unbelief than in the past. This is simply not true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never been stronger. The number of members removing their names from the records of the Church has always been very small and is significantly less in recent years than in the past. The increase in demonstrably measurable areas, such as endowed members with a current temple recommend, adult full-tithe payers, and those serving missions, has been dramatic. Let me say again, the Church has never been stronger. *But, ‘remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God’ [Doctrine and Covenants 18:10]. We reach out to everyone.*”⁷

—Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Blessed by Simple Gestures

“Simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves. . . .

“ . . . I have heard countless stories of brothers and sisters who were blessed by a simple gesture of inclusion and welcome at church, a thoughtful email or text message, a personal contact at a difficult time, an invitation to participate in a group activity, or an offer to help with a challenging situation. Single parents, new converts, less-active members, widows and widowers, or struggling youth may need extra attention and priority help from ministering brothers and sisters. . . .

*“ . . . With love as the motivation, miracles will happen, and we will find ways to bring our ‘missing’ sisters and brothers into the all-inclusive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”*⁸

—Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President



NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Questions and Answers” (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 14, 2017), 5, speeches.byu.edu.
2. Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2019, 58.
3. David A. Bednar, “Faithful Parents and Wayward Children: Sustaining Hope While Overcoming Misunderstanding,” *Ensign*, March 2014, 28, 31, 32, 33.
4. Henry B. Eyring, “To My Grandchildren,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 71, 72.
5. Brent H. Nielson, “Waiting for the Prodigal,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 103.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, “Firm and Steadfast in the Faith of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 32.
7. Quentin L. Cook, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 65.
8. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 104, 106.