

Prayer and the Blue Horizon

BY PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

One of the things I loved most about flying was departing from a dark and rainy airport, climbing through thick and threatening winter clouds, and then suddenly breaking through the dark mist and steeply gaining altitude into the bright sunshine and endless blue sky.

I often marveled at how this physical act parallels our personal lives. How often do we find ourselves surrounded by threatening clouds and stormy weather, wondering if the darkness will ever pass? If there were only a way for us to lift ourselves up from the turmoil of life and break through to a place of peace and calm.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints know that such a thing is possible; there is a way to rise above the turbulence of everyday life. The knowledge, understanding, and guidance we receive from the word of God and from prophetic guidance in our day show us how to do exactly that.

Lift

In order to get an airplane off the ground, you must create lift. In

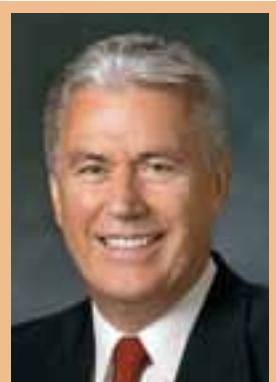
aerodynamics, lift happens when air passes over the wings of an airplane in such a way that the pressure underneath the wing is greater than the pressure above the wing. When the upward lift exceeds the downward pull of gravity, the plane rises from the ground and achieves flight.

In a similar way, we can create lift in our spiritual life. When the force that is pushing us heavenward is greater than the temptations and distress that drag us downward, we can ascend and soar into the realm of the Spirit.

Dictionaries describe lift as carrying or directing from a lower to a higher position; the power or force available for raising to a new level or altitude; a force acting in an upward direction, opposing the pull of gravity.¹

The Psalmist sets the goals even higher: “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Psalm 25:1) and “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord” (Psalm 121:1–2).

We lift our eyes toward the God of heaven by cultivating our own personal spirituality. We do it by living in harmony with the Father; the Son, our Savior; and



Prayer helps us transcend the stormy times. It reveals to us another vista—a glorious spiritual horizon filled with hope and the assurance of the bright blessings the Lord has promised to those who love and follow Him.

Prayer is a heavenly gift designed to help us achieve spiritual lift. It enhances and cultivates our relationship with God.



the Holy Ghost. We do it by striving to be truly “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19).

The Sincere Prayer of the Righteous Heart

Though there are many gospel principles that help us to achieve lift, I would like to focus on one in particular. Prayer is one of the principles of the gospel that provides lift. Prayer has the power to elevate us from our worldly cares, to lift us up through clouds of despair and darkness into a bright and clear horizon.

One of the greatest blessings and privileges and opportunities we have as children of our Heavenly Father is that we can communicate with Him. We can speak to Him of our life experiences, trials, and blessings. We can listen for and receive celestial guidance from the Holy Spirit. We can offer our petitions to heaven and receive an assurance that our prayers have been heard and that He will answer them as a loving and wise Father.

Prayers that ascend beyond the ceiling are those that are heartfelt and avoid trite repetitions or words spoken with little thought.

Our prayers should spring from our deepest yearning to be one with our Father in Heaven.

Prayer, if given in faith, is acceptable to God at all times. If you ever feel you cannot pray, that is the time you definitely need to pray,

exercising faith. Nephi taught in plainness: “If ye would hearken unto the Spirit [of God] which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit . . . teacheth him that he must not pray” (2 Nephi 32:8).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) taught: “The sincere prayer of the righteous heart opens to any individual the door to divine wisdom and strength in that for which he righteously seeks.”²

Are prayers answered? I testify that they are.

Can we receive divine help, wisdom, and support from heavenly realms? Again, I testify with certainty that such is the case.

Obedience assures us an answer to our prayers. We read in the New Testament that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22).

The answers to our prayers come in the Lord’s due time. Sometimes we may become frustrated that the Lord has delayed answering our prayers. In such times we need to understand that He knows what we do not know. He sees what we do not see. Trust in Him. He knows what is best for His child, and being a perfect God, He will answer our prayers perfectly and in the perfect time.

In other times, answers to our prayers may come instantaneously. The Prophet Joseph Smith learned in a revelation given to him in Kirtland in 1831: “He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done *even as he asketh*” (D&C 46:30; emphasis added). What a remarkable promise!

A New Vista

Prayer is a heavenly gift designed to help us achieve spiritual lift. It enhances and

cultivates our relationship with God. Isn't it remarkable that we can converse with the supreme Source of wisdom and compassion in the universe at any time of our choosing, in any place?

Daily simple, sincere, and mighty prayers lift our lives to a higher spiritual altitude. In our prayers we praise God, give thanks to Him, confess weaknesses, petition needs, and express deep devotion to our Heavenly Father. As we make this spiritual effort in the name of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, we are endowed with increased inspiration, revelation, and righteousness, which bring the brightness of heaven into our lives.

I think back on my days as a pilot and those times when thick clouds and threatening thunderstorms made all appear dark and gloomy. In spite of how bleak things looked from my earthly vantage point, I knew that above the clouds the sun beamed brightly like a dazzling jewel in an ocean of blue skies. I did not have faith that such was the case—I *knew* it. I knew it because I had experienced it for myself. I did not need to rely on other people's theories or beliefs. I knew.

In the same way that aerodynamic lift can transport us above the outer storms of the world, I know that the principles of spiritual lift can take us above the inner storms of life.

And I know something else. Although it was a breathtaking experience to break through the clouds and fly to the bright blue horizon, that is nothing compared to the wonders of what we all can experience as we lift up our hearts in humble and earnest prayer.

Prayer helps us transcend the stormy times. It gives us a glimpse of that blue sky that we cannot see from our earthly vantage point, and it reveals to us another vista—a glorious spiritual horizon filled with hope and the assurance of the bright blessings the Lord has promised to those who love and follow Him. ■

NOTES

1. See, for example, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), "lift," 718–19.
2. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 318.

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After prayerfully studying this message, share it using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. The following are some examples:

1. Show a picture of an airplane, and explain the concept of lift. Read the first two paragraphs of the section "A New Vista."

Share experiences when prayer has lifted you in difficult times, and invite family members to share experiences too.

2. Read the second paragraph of the section "A New Vista." For a family with young children, write "Increased inspiration," "Revelation," and "Righteousness" on a piece of paper, and place it on a shelf above the children's view (or use pictures representing these concepts). Have a parent or older sibling lift one of the smaller children so he or she can see the paper. Explain to the children what these concepts mean. Discuss how prayers "lift our lives to a higher spiritual altitude" so that we can receive these blessings.

3. Hold up a piece of paper, and let it fall to the floor. Then fold it into a paper airplane, and throw it softly so it flies. Read the last three paragraphs of the article. Explain how prayer can lift us above our trials. Share your testimony of prayer.

