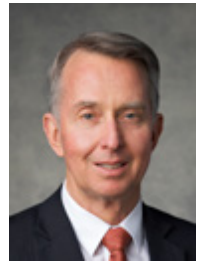


My mother's words linger as a reminder that we all can labor diligently to help Heavenly Father gather His children.

“Don't Give Up on Me”



By Elder
Larry S. Kacher
Of the Seventy

I am the only member of the Church in my parents' family. I was baptized at age 19. As a convert, I have felt the call to gather Israel, particularly within my own family. After my baptism, I looked for opportunities to share my testimony with them. While serving a full-time mission in French Polynesia, I wrote home and shared missionary experiences, hoping the Spirit would touch their hearts. Over the years, family members have come to witness the blessings and baptisms of our children, or to hear talks or attend special meetings. Yet, after 47 years, none of them showed interest in learning about or understanding the restored gospel.

My Mother's Words

Finally, when my mother was 90 years old, she agreed to let the sister missionaries teach her. She was in Minnesota and I was in Utah. I waited prayerfully for the appointed time, hoping her heart would be softened. I expected her to call after the lesson, but I heard nothing. Finally I called her. “They were very nice,” she said. “But I did all the talking, and I don't want them to come back.”

My heart sank. I had waited a long time. My patriarchal blessing said that, because of my testimony, members of my family and friends would join the Church. A few days later, as I was arriving at a stake meeting, my cell phone rang. I saw that it was my mother, but I couldn't take the call. Later I listened to her voice message. She simply said, “Don't give up on me.”

I have never forgotten her words. They are a powerful reminder to me. Heavenly Father does not give up on us. He gives us countless opportunities to hear His word and abide by His admonitions. He loves us. He cares for us. His arms are always outstretched (see Alma 5:33). If He will never give up on us, is it right for any of us to give up on those we love or those with whom we associate?

Jacob's Allegory

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob gives the allegory of the olive tree. Toward the end of the allegory, the Lord of the vineyard calls for his servants to “labor diligently” to gather the good fruit scattered throughout the vineyard and bring the natural branches back together until they

become “like unto one body” (Jacob 5:61, 74). That allegorical event is happening all over the world today as members of the Church assist in gathering Israel.

However, too often we are inclined to see our role in that gathering with our natural eyes. We may become discouraged. Our faith may waver. Such was the case, at first, with Enoch.

Seeing with Spiritual Eyes

When Enoch was called by the Lord, he struggled. He could not see what the Lord saw. He said, “Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?” (Moses 6:31).

But gently the Lord taught Enoch, telling him to anoint his eyes with clay. The Lord did this to help Enoch see with spiritual eyes. “And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye” (Moses 6:36). When Enoch saw through spiritual eyes, his faith increased. His desire to share the gospel expanded. And Enoch went forth as a true disciple of the Lord, trusting that if he did his part, God would make up the difference.

Alma’s Perseverance

Alma the Elder is another example of using spiritual vision to access the powers of heaven. He could easily have given up, along with King Mosiah, when their



sons went about trying to destroy the Church. Instead, Alma turned to the Lord. As a result, a great miracle occurred. His son’s heart and the hearts of his comrades were changed

and they became great missionaries. When Alma saw with spiritual eyes, he knew that with sufficient faith, he could bless his family. (See Mosiah 27:8–27; 28:3; Alma 26:22).

Reminders to Trust God

The scriptures are replete with examples of such faith, along with reminders that we must learn to trust God:

- “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes” (Proverbs 3:5–7).
- “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers” (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10).
- “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

Gathering Israel in the Lord’s Way

I have a personal testimony that as we learn His will and act accordingly, the Lord will enable us to help gather Israel. Many years ago while living in Brussels, Belgium, I was a home teacher to the McCormick family, doing what we now call ministering. Ken and Mary Kay McCormick had been married for 21 years. Mary Kay was raised in the Church, but Ken was not a member. Still, out of respect for his wife, Ken would usually attend Sunday meetings with the family. I loved the McCormicks. We visited regularly, traveled together, and did many fun things together. One day, though, I realized that as long as Ken stayed outside the Church, this family could not enjoy all the blessings of the covenant path.

The next Sunday I invited Ken to listen to my testimony. His response





startled me: “No, thank you.” I was dumbfounded. I returned home, a little downcast, wondering what I had done wrong. As I counseled with my wife, the thought came to me: “You have tried to do this in your own way. You have not depended upon Me.” It was true. I had good intentions, but I had acted on my own.

I was determined to repent. Time was short. We were moving back to America in a matter of weeks. I contacted my companion, Gerald Cardon, and a few days later we returned to the McCormick home. But this time, like Nephi, we were “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [we] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6).

First, I felt prompted to invite Brother Cardon to stand and sing, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” (*Hymns*, no. 136). He looked at me like I was crazy, but in his beautiful baritone voice he sang a wonderful rendition of this sacred hymn. Then the thought came to me to invite Ken’s wife and his daughter, Kristin, to share their testimonies. As they did, a powerful spirit filled the room. Ken started to cry. His heart was softened. Six days later, after 21 years of unbelief, Ken entered the waters of baptism. One year later, the McCormick family became an eternal family as they were sealed in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

We may not always see what God sees, but as we diligently labor in His vineyard, God will perform miracles through us.



Another 90-Year-Old

Recently, I had the opportunity to preside at a stake conference. During one session, I shared the story of my 90-year-old mother who did not join the Church but who had counseled me not to give up on her. Unknown

to me, there was in the congregation a 90-year-old grandmother who had come to hear her grandson (a high councilor) and his wife speak. Seated next to this sweet grandmother was her daughter, the high councilor’s mother. This mother had been baptized 40 years previously but, like me, had no one in her family follow her into the gospel.

Something happened during that meeting. The 90-year-old grandmother’s heart was softened by the Spirit. She turned to her daughter and said, “Don’t give up on me.” The next day, surrounded by family, this 90-year-old announced that she wanted to be baptized. Forty years of unbelief melted away. A few weeks later Norma Pitt was baptized by her grandson. Now this wonderful family is anxiously awaiting Norma’s one-year anniversary so they can be sealed in the house of the Lord.

We Can All Help

Not long ago, after both my parents had passed away, my wife and I knelt across the altar in the Accra Ghana Temple to be sealed for them. Yes, it would have been wonderful had I been able to see my mother and father baptized in this life, but as we exercise the prayer of faith and follow the teachings of the prophets, we can know that the work of salvation continues on both sides of the veil.

As we—like the servants in Jacob’s allegory—go forward with a quiet assurance that the Lord will never give up on us, we too must never give up on those we love, acting as instruments in the Lord’s hands to gather Israel.

President Russell M. Nelson said, “*Anytime* you do *anything* that helps *anyone*—on either side of the veil—take a step toward making covenants with God and receiving their essential baptismal and temple ordinances, you are helping to gather Israel.”¹ How blessed we will be if we but respond to this call from a living prophet. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).