

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2017

# Ensign



## General Conference Addresses

Five New Temples  
Announced

Six Seventies and  
New Relief Society  
General Presidency  
Called

# THE LIVING CHRIST

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth.

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come.

He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.

We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to “become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His “other sheep” (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised “dispensation of the fulness of times” (Ephesians 1:10).

Of the Living Christ, the Prophet Joseph wrote: “His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (D&C 110:3–4).

Of Him the Prophet also declared: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:22–24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—“built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

We testify that He will someday return to earth. “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts.

We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

*James A. Lincoln*  
*Thomas M. Monson*  
*James E. Faust*

January 1, 2000

### THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

*Boyd K. Packer*  
*L. Tom Perry*  
*David A. Bednar*  
*Neal A. Maxwell*  
*Russell M. Nelson*  
*Dallin H. Oaks*

*M. Russell Ballard*  
*Joseph B. Wirthlin*  
*Richard G. Scott*  
*Robert D. Hales*  
*Jerry A. Holland*  
*Henry B. Eyring*

## General Women's Session

- 6 **Trust in the Lord and Lean Not**  
*Bonnie H. Cordon*
- 9 **The Beauty of Holiness**  
*Carol F. McConkie*
- 12 **Certain Women**  
*Linda K. Burton*
- 15 **"My Peace I Leave with You"**  
*President Henry B. Eyring*

## Saturday Morning Session

- 19 **Gathering the Family of God**  
*President Henry B. Eyring*
- 23 **His Daily Guiding Hand**  
*M. Joseph Brough*
- 26 **Our Father's Glorious Plan**  
*Elder Weatherford T. Clayton*
- 29 **Our Good Shepherd**  
*Elder Dale G. Renlund*
- 33 **Confide in God Unwaveringly**  
*Elder Ulisses Soares*
- 36 **Brighter and Brighter until the Perfect Day**  
*Elder Mark A. Bragg*
- 39 **Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives**  
*President Russell M. Nelson*

## Saturday Afternoon Session

- 43 **The Sustaining of Church Officers**  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*
- 45 **Church Auditing Department Report, 2016**  
*Kevin R. Jergensen*
- 45 **Statistical Report, 2016**  
*Brook P. Hales*
- 46 **Becoming a Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ**  
*Elder Robert D. Hales*
- 49 **Songs Sung and Unsung**  
*Elder Jeffrey R. Holland*
- 52 **Stand Up Inside and Be All In**  
*Elder Gary B. Sabin*
- 55 **The Language of the Gospel**  
*Elder Valeri V. Cordón*
- 58 **Overcoming the World**  
*Elder Neil L. Andersen*
- 62 **Return and Receive**  
*Elder M. Russell Ballard*

## General Priesthood Session

- 66 **Kindness, Charity, and Love**  
*President Thomas S. Monson*
- 67 **Called to the Work**  
*Elder David A. Bednar*
- 75 **Prepare the Way**  
*Bishop Gérald Caussé*
- 78 **The Greatest among You**  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*
- 82 **"Walk with Me"**  
*President Henry B. Eyring*

## Sunday Morning Session

- 86 **The Power of the Book of Mormon**  
*President Thomas S. Monson*
- 87 **A Sin-Resistant Generation**  
*Joy D. Jones*
- 90 **Don't Look Around, Look Up!**  
*Elder Yoon Hwan Choi*
- 93 **Let the Holy Spirit Guide**  
*Elder Ronald A. Rasband*
- 97 **Whatsoever He Saith unto You, Do It**  
*Elder L. Whitney Clayton*
- 100 **The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation**  
*Elder Dallin H. Oaks*
- 104 **Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear**  
*President Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

## Sunday Afternoon Session

- 108 **The Voice of Warning**  
*Elder D. Todd Christofferson*
- 112 **To the Friends and Investigators of the Church**  
*Elder Joaquin E. Costa*
- 114 **Then Jesus Beholding Him Loved Him**  
*Elder S. Mark Palmer*
- 117 **How Does the Holy Ghost Help You?**  
*Elder Gary E. Stevenson*
- 121 **And This Is Life Eternal**  
*Elder C. Scott Grow*
- 124 **That Our Light May Be a Standard for the Nations**  
*Elder Benjamin De Hoyos*
- 127 **Foundations of Faith**  
*Elder Quentin L. Cook*
- 72 **General Authorities and General Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**
- 132 **They Spoke to Us: Making Conference Part of Our Lives**
- 134 **Conference Story Index**
- 135 **News of the Church**



# The 187th Annual General Conference

## Saturday Evening, March 25, 2017, General Women's Session

Conducting: Bonnie L. Oscarson.

Invocation: Robin Bonham.

Benediction: Elizabeth Rose.

Music by a combined Relief Society choir from Brigham Young University; Jean Applonie, director; Linda Margetts, organist: "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59, arr. Zabriskie, pub. by Holy Sheet Music; "I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74–75, arr. Murphy; "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83; "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," *Children's Songbook*, 228–29, arr. Staheli.

## Saturday Morning, April 1, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Kim B. Clark.

Benediction: Elder Jorge F. Zeballos.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1; "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise," *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "Do What Is Right," *Hymns*, no. 237; "Glory to God on High," *Hymns*, no. 67; "Teach Me to Walk in the Light," *Hymns*, 304, arr. Wilberg; "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66, arr. Murphy.

## Saturday Afternoon, April 1, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Von G. Keetch.

Benediction: Elder Hugo Montoya.

Music by a family choir from stakes in Tremonton, Garland, and Fielding, Utah; Jessica Lee Gilbert, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth," *Hymns*, no. 298, arr. Bastian; medley: "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301, and "How Will They Know?" *Children's Songbook*, 182–85, arr. Gilbert and Mohlman; "Go Forth with Faith," *Hymns*, no. 263; "A Child's Prayer," *Children's Songbook*, 12–13, arr. Perry, pub. by Jackman.

## Saturday Evening, April 1, 2017, General Priesthood Session

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Vern P. Stanfill.

Benediction: Elder Carlos A. Godoy.

Music by a priesthood choir from young single adult stakes in Holladay and Murray, Utah; Brett Taylor, director; Andrew Unsworth, organist: "Rise Up, O Men of God" (Men), *Hymns*, no. 324, arr. Staheli, pub. by Jackman; "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth," *Hymns*, no. 196, arr. Ripplinger, pub. by Jackman; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman.

## Sunday Morning, April 2, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Neill F. Marriott.

Benediction: Elder Richard J. Maynes.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81; "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3, arr. Wilberg; "Love Is Spoken Here," *Children's Songbook*, 190–91, arr. Cardon; "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 58; "Dearest Children, God Is Near You," *Hymns*, no. 96, arr. Wilberg; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5.

## Sunday Afternoon, April 2, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Eduardo Gavarret.

Benediction: Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "Come, Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 9, arr. Murphy; "More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Staheli, pub. by Jackman; "The Iron Rod," *Hymns*, no. 274; "Keep the Commandments," *Hymns*, no. 303; "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Wilberg.

## Conference Talks Available

To access general conference talks online in many languages, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org) and select a language. Talks are also available on the Gospel Library mobile app. Generally within six weeks following general conference, English video and audio recordings are available at distribution centers. Information on general conference in accessible formats for members with disabilities is available at [disability.lds.org](http://disability.lds.org).

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For home and visiting teaching messages, please select an address that best meets the needs of those you visit.

## On the Cover

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# Ensign

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May 2017 Volume 47 • Number 5

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## Speaker Index

Andersen, Neil L., 58  
Ballard, M. Russell, 62  
Bednar, David A., 67  
Bragg, Mark A., 36  
Brough, M. Joseph, 23  
Burton, Linda K., 12  
Causé, Gérard, 75  
Choi, Yoon Hwan, 90  
Christofferson, D. Todd, 108  
Clayton, L. Whitney, 97  
Clayton, Weatherford T., 26  
Cook, Quentin L., 127  
Cordon, Bonnie H., 6  
Cordón, Valeri V., 55  
Costa, Joaquin E., 112  
De Hoyos, Benjamín, 124  
Eyring, Henry B., 15, 19, 82  
Grow, C. Scott, 121  
Hales, Brook P., 45  
Hales, Robert D., 46  
Holland, Jeffrey R., 49  
Jergensen, Kevin R., 45  
Jones, Joy D., 87  
McConkie, Carol F., 9  
Monson, Thomas S., 66, 86  
Nelson, Russell M., 39  
Oaks, Dallin H., 100  
Palmer, S. Mark, 114  
Rasband, Ronald A., 93  
Renlund, Dale G., 29  
Sabin, Gary B., 52  
Soares, Ulisses, 33  
Stevenson, Gary E., 117  
Uchtdorf, Dieter F., 43, 78, 104

## Topic Index

Accountability, 108  
Activation, 15  
Adversity, 29, 33, 39, 46, 49,  
52, 90, 97, 104, 127  
Agency, 26  
Atonement, 6, 9, 19, 26, 29,  
39, 62  
Book of Mormon, 86, 112  
Charity, 15, 46, 66  
Children, 87, 117  
Church activity, 36  
Church callings, 78  
Church leaders, 23, 78  
Commandments, 23, 26  
Commitment, 52  
Compassion, 29  
Conversion, 90, 112  
Covenants, 9, 12, 39, 52, 58,  
62, 87  
Creation, 26, 100  
Death, 26  
Discipleship, 12, 39, 46, 49,  
52, 58, 78, 87  
Divine nature, 9, 87  
Example, 55, 121  
Faith, 33, 39, 46, 49, 90,  
97, 127  
Family, 19, 36, 55, 62, 87  
Family history, 19, 90, 124  
Fear, 104  
Forgiveness, 29  
General conference, 124  
Goals, 62  
Godhead, 93, 100, 117  
God the Father, 6, 62, 93,  
100, 104, 121  
Healing, 29  
Holy Ghost, 9, 15, 19, 36, 39,  
87, 93, 100, 117, 127  
Hope, 104  
Humility, 15, 78  
Jesus Christ, 6, 9, 12, 19, 23,  
26, 29, 33, 36, 39, 46, 49,  
58, 62, 66, 82, 90, 93, 97,  
100, 104, 108, 114, 121,  
124, 127

Joseph Smith, 127  
Kindness, 29, 66  
Leadership, 78  
Light of Christ, 19, 36  
Love, 29, 36, 46, 49, 66, 104,  
108, 114  
Missionary work, 67, 90, 114  
Music, 49  
Obedience, 46, 97, 114, 121  
Parenthood, 23, 55, 87, 108  
Peace, 58  
Plan of salvation, 19, 26, 52,  
62, 100, 104  
Pornography, 55  
Prayer, 6, 121  
Premortal existence, 6,  
26, 100  
Preparation, 67, 75  
Priesthood, 67, 75, 82  
Promptings, 93, 117  
Prophets, 108  
Repentance, 29, 52, 87,  
112, 121  
Sabbath, 55, 58, 124  
Sacrament, 9, 15, 75, 124  
Sacrament meeting, 127  
Sacrifice, 12, 23  
Scripture study, 6, 23, 39, 55,  
86, 121  
Service, 6, 15, 75, 78, 82  
Standards, 108  
Teaching, 87, 124  
Temple work, 19, 36, 90, 124  
Testimony, 86  
Traditions, 55  
Trust, 6, 33, 97  
Unity, 15, 49, 75  
Women, 12  
Worldliness, 58  
Worthiness, 67, 93, 117, 121  
Youth, 19, 23, 75



## Highlights from the 187th Annual General Conference

Every six months we gather to hear the word of God through living prophets and inspired Church leaders. Millions around the world gather together in homes or in chapels, in different time zones and languages, using a variety of different-sized screens.

But general conference is more than an event. It's an experience that can last for as long as we want. Conference is something we study, learn from, and live by.

To assist you in your conference experience, we try to capture the spirit of the event in this issue every six months. Whether you prefer studying conference in print, online, or on mobile, we hope it's a well you will return to often.

### We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet

**Page 86:** To strengthen our testimonies of the Savior and His gospel, President Thomas S. Monson implored us to “prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.”

**Page 66:** He also called on men to examine their lives and “follow the Savior’s example by being kind, loving, and charitable.”

### New Temples Announced

**Page 86:** President Monson announced five new temples to be constructed in Brasília, Brazil; the greater Manila, Philippines, area; Nairobi, Kenya; Pocatello, Idaho, USA; and Saratoga Springs, Utah, USA. (See page 141 for more information.)

### New Leaders Sustained

**Page 43:** On Saturday, the First Presidency announced the release of the Relief Society General Presidency: Linda K. Burton, Carole M. Stephens, and Linda S. Reeves.

**Page 135:** Learn more about the call of 10 new general Church leaders, including the new Relief Society General Presidency.

### Proclamations Revisited

**Inside covers:** Several speakers referred to “The Living Christ” and “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (see pages 26, 36, 39, 62, and 100). You can find these important documents on the inside covers of this issue. ■





By **Bonnie H. Cordon**  
Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

# Trust in the Lord and Lean Not

*We can center our lives on the Savior by coming to know Him, and He will direct our paths.*

While I was traveling in Asia, a dear sister approached me. She wrapped her arms around me and asked, “Do you really believe that this gospel is true?” Dear sister, I know it is true. I trust in the Lord.

In Proverbs 3:5–6, we read this counsel:

“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.”

This scripture comes with two admonitions, a warning, and a glorious promise. The two admonitions: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart” and “in all thy ways acknowledge him.” The warning: “Lean not unto thine own understanding.” And the glorious promise: “He shall direct thy paths.”

Let’s first discuss the warning. The visual image gives us much to ponder. The warning comes in the words “lean not”—“lean not unto thine own understanding.” In English the word *lean* has a connotation of physically listing or moving to one side. When we *physically* lean toward one side or another, we move off center, we are out

of balance, and we tip. When we *spiritually* lean to our own understanding, we lean away from our Savior. If we lean, we are not centered; we are not balanced; we are not focused on Christ.

Sisters, remember, in our premortal life we stood with the Savior. We trusted Him. We voiced our support, enthusiasm, and joy for the plan of happiness set forth by our Heavenly

Father. We leaned not. We fought with our testimonies and “aligned ourselves with the forces of God, and those forces were victorious.”<sup>1</sup> This battle between good and evil has moved to earth. Once again we have the sacred responsibility to stand as a witness and put our trust in the Lord.

We must each ask: How do I keep centered and *lean not* unto my own understanding? How do I recognize and follow the Savior’s voice when the voices of the world are so compelling? How do I cultivate trust in the Savior?

May I suggest three ways to increase our knowledge of and trust in the Savior. You will find that these principles are not new, but they are foundational. They are sung in every Primary, echoed in Young Women lessons, and are responses to many Relief Society questions. They are centering—and not leaning—principles.

First, we can come to know the Lord and trust Him as we “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”<sup>2</sup>







Several months ago we were having family scripture study. My two-year-old grandson was sitting on my lap as we read. I was in full-blown grandma mode, relishing the visit of my son's family.

With our scripture study complete, I closed my book. My grandson knew that it would soon be bedtime. He looked up with his eager blue eyes and spoke an eternal truth: "More scriptures, Nana."

My son, a good and consistent parent, warned me, "Mom, don't be a weak link. He is just trying to get out of going to bed."

But when my grandson asks for more scriptures, we read more scriptures! More scriptures enlighten our minds, nourish our spirits, answer our questions, increase our trust in the Lord, and help us center our lives on Him. "Remember to search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby."<sup>3</sup>

Second, we can come to know the Lord and trust Him through prayer.

What a blessing to be able to pray to our God! "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart."<sup>4</sup>

I have a sweet memory of a prayer that I treasure. For one of my summer breaks from college, I accepted a job in Texas. I had to drive hundreds of miles from Idaho to Texas in my old car, a car I had affectionately named Vern. Vern was packed to the roof, and I was ready for the new adventure.

On my way out the door, I gave my dear mother a hug and she said, "Let's say a prayer before you leave."

We knelt and my mother began to pray. She pleaded with Heavenly Father for my safety. She prayed for my non-air-conditioned car, asking that the car would function as I needed. She asked for angels to be with me throughout the summer. She prayed and prayed and prayed.

The peace that came from that prayer gave me the courage to trust in the Lord and lean not to my own understanding.

The Lord directed my path in the many decisions I made that summer.

As we make a habit of approaching Heavenly Father in prayer, we will come to know the Savior. We will come to trust Him. Our desires will become more like His. We will be able to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that Heavenly Father is ready to give if we will but ask in faith.<sup>5</sup>

Third, we can come to know the Lord and trust Him as we serve others. I share the following story with permission from Amy Wright, who came to understand the principle of serving even amid a terrifying and life-threatening illness. Amy wrote:

"On October 29, 2015, I found out I had cancer. My cancer has a 17 percent survival rate. The odds weren't good. I knew that I would be in for the fight of my life. I was determined to give it everything I had not just for myself but, more important, for my family. In December, I began chemo. I was



familiar with many of the side effects of cancer-fighting drugs, but I did not know that it was possible for someone to be so sick and still be alive.

“At one point, I declared chemotherapy a human rights violation. I told my husband that I was done. I quit! I was not going back to the hospital. In his wisdom, my sweetheart patiently listened and then responded, ‘Well, then we need to find someone to serve.’”

What? Did he miss the fact that his wife had cancer and couldn’t take one more bout of nausea or one more moment of excruciating pain?

Amy goes on to explain: “My symptoms gradually worsened to where I generally had one or two ‘OK’ days a month [when] I could somewhat function as a living, breathing human being. It was those days when our family would find ways to serve.”

On one of those days, Amy’s family distributed chemo comfort kits to other patients, kits filled with items to cheer and to help relieve symptoms. When Amy couldn’t sleep, she would think of ways to brighten someone else’s day. Some ways were big, but many were just small notes or text messages of encouragement and love. On those nights when her pain was too great to sleep, she would lie in bed with her iPad and search for ordinances that needed to be completed on behalf of her deceased ancestors. Miraculously the pain would subside, and she was able to endure.

“Service,” Amy testifies, “saved my life. Where I ultimately found my strength to keep moving forward was the happiness I discovered in trying to relieve the suffering of those around me. I looked forward to our service

projects with great joy and anticipation. Still to this day it seems like such a strange paradox. You would think that someone who was bald, poisoned, and fighting for [her] life was justified in thinking that ‘right now it is all about me.’ However, when I thought about myself, my situation, my suffering and pain, the world became very dark and depressing. When my focus turned to others, there was light, hope, strength, courage, and joy. I know that this is possible because of the sustaining, healing, and enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Amy came to trust in the Lord as she came to know Him. If she had leaned even a little to her own understanding, she might have rejected the idea that she serve. Service enabled her to withstand her pain and afflictions and to live this scripture: “When ye are in the

service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus Christ has overcome the world. And because of Him, because of His infinite Atonement, we all have great cause to trust, knowing that ultimately all will be well.

Sisters, each of us can trust in the Lord and lean *not*. We can center our lives on the Savior by coming to know Him, and He will direct our paths.

We are on earth to demonstrate the same trust in *Him* that allowed us to stand with Jesus Christ when He declared, “Here am I, send me.”<sup>7</sup>

My dear sisters, President Thomas S. Monson testified that “our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us . . . as we walk uprightly. . . . There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.”<sup>8</sup>

I add my testimony to that of our beloved prophet. If we trust in our Heavenly Father and in our Savior and lean not to our own understanding, They will direct our paths and will extend the arm of mercy toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Note: On April 1, 2017, Sister Cordon was released as Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency and called as First Counselor.*

#### NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Dawning of a Brighter Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 81.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. Mosiah 1:7.
4. Moroni 7:48.
5. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Prayer,” scriptures.lds.org.
6. Mosiah 2:17.
7. Abraham 3:27.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 92.



**By Carol F. McConkie**

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

## The Beauty of Holiness

*Our Father in Heaven has provided for us all that is required so that we can become holy as He is holy.*

As I have prepared for this meeting, my heart has turned to the many faithful sisters whom I have met, near and far. For me, they are best described in a psalm of thanksgiving by King David: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”<sup>1</sup>

I see the beauty of holiness in sisters whose hearts are centered on all that is good, who want to become more like the Savior. They offer their whole soul, heart, might, mind, and strength to the Lord in the way that they live every

day.<sup>2</sup> Holiness is in the striving and the struggle to keep the commandments and to honor the covenants we have made with God. Holiness is making the choices that will keep the Holy Ghost as our guide.<sup>3</sup> Holiness is setting aside our natural tendencies and becoming “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> “Every moment of [our lives] must be holiness to the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

The God of heaven commanded the children of Israel, “For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves.”<sup>6</sup>





Elder D. Todd Christofferson has taught: “Our Heavenly Father is a God of high expectations. . . . He proposes to make us holy so that we may ‘abide a celestial glory’ (D&C 88:22) and ‘dwell in his presence’ (Moses 6:57).”<sup>7</sup> *Lectures on Faith* explains, “No being can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness.”<sup>8</sup> Our Father in Heaven knows us. He loves us, and He has provided for us all that is required so that we can become holy as He is holy.

We are daughters of Heavenly Father, and each of us has a divine heritage of holiness. Our Father in Heaven has declared, “Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name.”<sup>9</sup> In the premortal world, we loved our Father and worshipped Him. We desired to be like Him. Out of perfect paternal love, He gave His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and Redeemer. He is the Son of Man of Holiness.<sup>10</sup> His “name is Holy,”<sup>11</sup> “the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>12</sup>

Our hope for holiness is centered in Christ, in His mercy and His grace. With faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, we may become clean, without spot, when we deny ourselves of ungodliness<sup>13</sup> and sincerely repent. We are baptized by water for the remission of sins. Our souls are sanctified when we receive the Holy Ghost with open hearts. Weekly, we partake of the

ordinance of the sacrament. In a spirit of repentance, with sincere desires for righteousness, we covenant that we are willing to take upon us the name of Christ, remember Him, and keep His commandments so that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. Over time, as we continually strive to become one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we become partakers of Their divine nature.<sup>14</sup>

#### Holiness Is Keeping Our Covenants

We recognize the multitude of tests, temptations, and tribulations that could pull us away from all that is virtuous and praiseworthy before God. But our mortal experiences offer us the opportunity to choose holiness. Most often it is the sacrifices we make to keep our covenants that sanctify us and make us holy.

I saw holiness in the countenance of Evangeline, a 13-year-old girl in Ghana. One of the ways she keeps her covenants is by magnifying her calling as the Beehive class president. She humbly explained that she goes to the homes of her friends, the less-active young women, to ask their parents to allow them to come to church. The parents tell her that it is difficult because on Sunday the children must do household chores. So Evangeline goes and helps with the chores, and by

her efforts her friends are often permitted to come to church.

If we will keep the associated covenants, the sacred priesthood ordinances will change us, sanctify us, and prepare us to enter the presence of the Lord.<sup>15</sup> So we bear one another’s burdens; we strengthen one another. We retain a remission of sins when we give spiritual and temporal relief to the poor, the hungry, the naked, and the sick.<sup>16</sup> We keep ourselves unspotted from the world when we keep the Sabbath day and worthily receive the sacrament on the Lord’s holy day.<sup>17</sup>

We bless our families and make our homes holy places. We bridle our passions so that we may be filled with pure and lasting love.<sup>18</sup> We reach out to others in kindness, with compassion, and stand as witnesses of God. We become a Zion people, of one heart and one mind, a pure people who dwell together in unity and righteousness.<sup>19</sup> “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness.”<sup>20</sup>

Sisters, come to the temple. If we are to be a holy people prepared to receive the Savior at His coming, we must arise and put on our beautiful garments.<sup>21</sup> In strength and honor, we forsake the ways of the world and keep our covenants, that we may be “clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.”<sup>22</sup>

#### Holiness Is Taking the Holy Ghost as Our Guide

Holiness is a gift of the Spirit. We accept this gift when we choose to do those things that will increase the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost in our lives.

When Martha received Jesus Christ into her home, she felt a tremendous desire to serve the Lord to the best of her ability. Her sister, Mary, chose to sit

“at Jesus’ feet” and to hear His word. When Martha felt burdened about serving without any help, she complained, “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?”

I love the words of the most gentle rebuke that I can imagine. With perfect love and infinite compassion, the Savior admonished:

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”<sup>23</sup>

Sisters, if we would be holy, we must learn to sit at the feet of the Holy One of Israel and give time to holiness. Do we set aside the phone, the never-ending to-do list, and the cares of worldliness? Prayer, study, and heeding the word of God invite His cleansing and healing love into our souls. Let us take time to be holy, that we may be filled with His sacred and sanctifying Spirit. With the Holy Ghost as our guide, we will be prepared to



receive the Savior in the beauty of holiness.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Holiness Is Becoming a Saint through the Atonement of Jesus Christ**

According to the inspired words of King Benjamin, those who become saints through the Atonement of Jesus Christ are those who are submissive, meek, humble, patient, and full of love, as the Savior is.<sup>25</sup> He prophesied that Jesus Christ, “the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come

down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay.” He came to bless the sick, the lame, the deaf, and the blind and to raise those who had died to life. And yet He suffered “more than man can suffer, except it be unto death.”<sup>26</sup> And though He is the only one through whom salvation comes, He was mocked, scourged, and crucified. But the Son of God rose from the grave, that we may all overcome death. He is the one who will stand to judge the world in righteousness. He is the one who will redeem us all. He is the Holy One of Israel. Jesus Christ is the beauty of holiness.

When King Benjamin’s people heard his words, they fell to the ground, so great was their humility and reverence for the grace and the glory of our God. They recognized their carnal state. Do we see our utter dependence on the grace and mercy of Christ, our Lord? Do we recognize that every good gift, temporal and spiritual, comes to us through Christ? Do we remember that according to the Father’s eternal plan, peace in this life and the glories of eternity are ours only in and through His holy Son?

May we join with the people of King Benjamin as they cried aloud with one voice, “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our



*If we would be holy, we must learn, like Mary, to sit at the feet of the Holy One of Israel and give time to holiness.*

hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things.”<sup>27</sup>

I testify that as we come unto the Holy One of Israel, His Spirit will come upon us, that we may be filled with joy and receive a remission of sins and peace of conscience.

Heavenly Father has given each of us the capacity to become holy. May we do our best to keep our covenants and take the Holy Ghost as our guide. With faith in Jesus Christ, we become saints through His Atonement, that we may receive immortality and eternal life and give God our Father the glory due His name. May our lives ever be a sacred offering, that we may stand before the Lord in the beauty of holiness. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 1 Chronicles 16:29.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:31–34.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
4. Mosiah 3:19.
5. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 1862, 313; see also James E. Faust, “Standing in Holy Places,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 62.
6. Leviticus 11:44.
7. D. Todd Christofferson, “As Many as I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 97.
8. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 77.
9. Moses 7:35.
10. See Moses 6:57.
11. Isaiah 57:15.
12. 1 Nephi 22:21, 24, 26, 28.
13. See Moroni 10:32–33.
14. See 2 Peter 1:4.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
16. See Mosiah 4:26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
18. See Alma 38:12.
19. See Moses 7:18–19.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 82:14.
21. See 2 Nephi 8:24.
22. 2 Nephi 9:14.
23. See Luke 10:38–42.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:57–59.
25. See Mosiah 3:19.
26. Mosiah 3:5, 7.
27. Mosiah 4:2.



By Linda K. Burton  
Relief Society General President

## Certain Women

*Certain women are disciples centered in the Savior Jesus Christ and have hope through the promise of His atoning sacrifice.*

My beloved sisters, how we love you and thank you for your tenderhearted and enthusiastic response to the First Presidency’s invitation and the #IWAsAStranger effort. Please keep praying, listening to the whisperings of the Spirit, and acting on the promptings you receive.

Whether I travel locally or throughout the world, it is not unusual for someone to ask, “Do you remember me?” Because I am painfully imperfect, I must admit I often can’t remember names. However, I do remember the very real love Heavenly Father has allowed me to feel as I meet His precious daughters and sons.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit some beloved women who are in prison. As we said our heartfelt goodbyes, one darling woman pleaded, “Sister Burton, please don’t forget us.” I hope she and others who want to be remembered will feel so as I share a few thoughts with you.

#### Certain Women in the Savior’s Day: Centered in the Savior Jesus Christ

Our sisters across the ages have demonstrated the faithful pattern of discipleship that we too strive for. “The New Testament includes accounts of [certain] women, named and unnamed,

who exercised faith in Jesus Christ [and in His Atonement], learned and lived His teachings, and testified of His ministry, miracles, and majesty. These women became exemplary disciples and important witnesses in the work of salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Consider these accounts in the book of Luke. First, during the Savior’s ministry:

“And it came to pass . . . that [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

“And *certain women*, . . . Mary called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna . . . , and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him.”<sup>2</sup>

Next, following His Resurrection:

“And *certain women* . . . which were early at the sepulchre;

“ . . . When they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had . . . seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.”<sup>3</sup>

I have read and passed over the seemingly unremarkable expression “certain women” numerous times before, but recently as I pondered more carefully, those words seemed to jump off the page. Consider these synonyms of one meaning of the word *certain* as



connected to faithful, *certain women*: “convinced,” “positive,” “confident,” “firm,” “definite,” “assured,” and “dependable.”<sup>4</sup>

As I pondered those powerful descriptors, I remembered two of those New Testament *certain women* who bore positive, confident, firm, assured testimonies of the Savior. Though they, like us, were imperfect women, their witness is inspiring.

Remember the unnamed woman at the well who invited others to come and see what she had learned of the Savior? She bore her *certain* witness in the form of a question: “Is not this the Christ?”<sup>5</sup> Her testimony and invitation were so compelling that “many . . . believed on him.”<sup>6</sup>

Following the death of her brother, Lazarus, Martha, the beloved disciple and friend of the Lord, declared with what must have been great emotion, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Consider her certainty as she continued, “*But I know*, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt

ask of God, God will give it thee.” She further testified, “I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”<sup>7</sup>

We learn from these sisters that *certain women* are disciples centered in the Savior Jesus Christ and have hope through the promise of His atoning sacrifice.

#### **Certain Covenant-Keeping Women of the Restoration: Willing to Sacrifice**

Anciently, *certain women* sacrificed as they testified and lived the teachings of Jesus. *Certain women* in the early days of the Restoration did the same. Drusilla Hendricks and her family were among those who, as new converts, suffered during the persecution of the Saints in Clay County, Missouri. Her husband was permanently paralyzed during the Battle of Crooked River. She was left to care for him as well as provide for her family.

“At one particularly distressing time, when the family was out of food, she

remembered that a voice told her, ‘Hold on, for the Lord will provide.’”

When her son was needed to volunteer for the Mormon Battalion, at first Drusilla resisted and wrestled in prayer with Heavenly Father until “it was as though a voice said to her, ‘Do you not want the highest glory?’ She answered naturally, ‘Yes,’ and the voice continued, ‘How do you think to gain it save by making the greatest sacrifices?’”<sup>8</sup>

We learn from this *certain woman* that covenant-keeping discipleship requires our willingness to sacrifice.

#### **Certain Women Today: Remembering and Preparing to Celebrate His Return**

I have mentioned *certain women* in the Savior’s day and in the early days of the Restoration of the gospel, but what about examples of discipleship and testimonies of *certain women* in our own day?

On my recent assignment to Asia, I was once again inspired by the many *certain women* I met. I was particularly

impressed with first-generation members in India, Malaysia, and Indonesia who strive to live the gospel culture in their own homes, sometimes at great sacrifice, as gospel living often clashes with family and country cultures. The multigenerational *certain women* I met in Hong Kong and Taiwan continue to bless the lives of their families, Church members, and communities by remaining centered in the Savior and willingly sacrificing to keep covenants. Similar *certain women* are found throughout the Church.

A *certain woman* who has blessed my life for decades has battled for the past 15 years the debilitating, difficult, and progressive disease called inclusion body myositis. Though confined to her wheelchair, she strives to be grateful and keeps up her “Can Can List”: a running list of things she *can* do, such as I can breathe, I can swallow, I can pray, and I can feel my Savior’s love. She bears her Christ-centered *certain* witness almost daily to family and friends.

I recently heard Jenny’s story. She is a returned missionary whose parents

divorced while she was serving her mission. She told how the thought of returning home “scared [her] to death.” But at the end of her mission to Italy, as she stopped in the mission home on her way home to the United States, a *certain woman*, the mission president’s wife, tenderly ministered to her simply by brushing her hair.

Years later, another *certain woman*, Terry—a stake Relief Society president and disciple of Jesus Christ—blessed Jenny’s life when Jenny was called as a ward Relief Society president. At that time, Jenny was working on her dissertation for her doctoral degree. Not only did Terry serve as a mentor to Jenny as a leader, but she also sat with her for 10 hours at the hospital when Jenny received the alarming diagnosis of leukemia. Terry visited the hospital and drove Jenny to appointments. Jenny confessed, “I think I may have thrown up several times in her car.”

Despite her illness, Jenny continued to serve valiantly as the ward Relief Society president. Even in her extremity, she made phone calls and sent

texts and emails from her bed, and she invited sisters to come see her. She mailed cards and notes to people, loving her sisters from a distance. When her ward requested a photograph of her presidency for their ward history, this is what they got. Because Jenny is a *certain woman* herself, she invited all to share others’ burdens, including her own.

As a *certain woman*, Jenny testified: “Not only are we here to save others but to save ourselves. And that salvation comes from partnering with Jesus Christ, from understanding His grace and His Atonement and His feelings of love for the women of the Church. That happens through things as simple as brushing someone’s hair; sending a note with an inspired, clear, revelatory message of hope and grace; or allowing women to serve us.”<sup>9</sup>

Sisters, when we have become distracted, doubtful, discouraged, sinful, sorrowful, or soul-stretched, may we accept the Lord’s invitation to drink of His living water, as did the *certain* woman at the well, inviting others to do the same as we bear our own *certain* witness: “Is not this the Christ?”

When life seems unfair, as it must have seemed to Martha at the death of her brother—when we experience the heartaches of loneliness, infertility, loss of loved ones, missing opportunities for marriage and family, broken homes, debilitating depression, physical or mental illness, stifling stress, anxiety, addiction, financial hardship, or a plethora of other possibilities—may we remember Martha and declare our similar *certain* witness: “*But I know . . . [and] I believe* that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.”

May we remember the many *certain women* who refused to abandon our precious Savior during the excruciating



Jenny (center), serving as ward Relief Society president despite having leukemia, with the members of her presidency.



experience He suffered on the cross and yet hours later were privileged to be among the *certain* witnesses of His glorious Resurrection. Let us be found staying close to Him in prayer and scripture study. Let us draw ourselves near to Him by preparing for and partaking of the sacred emblems of His atoning sacrifice weekly during the ordinance of the sacrament and as we keep covenants by serving others in their times of need. Perhaps then we might be part of the *certain women*, disciples of Jesus Christ, who will celebrate His glorious return when He comes again.

Sisters, I testify of loving Heavenly Parents; of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and of His infinite Atonement in our behalf. I know the Prophet Joseph Smith was foreordained as the prophet of the Restoration. I know the Book of Mormon is true and was translated by the power of God. We have been blessed with a living prophet in our own day, President Thomas S. Monson. Of these truths I am *certain!* In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Note: On April 1, 2017, Sister Burton was released as Relief Society General President.*

#### NOTES

1. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 3.
2. Luke 8:1–3; emphasis added.
3. Luke 24:22–23; emphasis added.
4. In English the word *certain* has a second meaning of “a selection of” or “a variety of.” But it is the meaning of assurance, confidence, and faithfulness that I most wish to emphasize today.
5. John 4:29.
6. John 4:39.
7. John 11:21–22, 27; emphasis added.
8. See Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017), 51–52.
9. Used with permission of the author, Jennifer Reeder, a specialist in 19th-century women’s history in the Church History Department.



**By President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

## “My Peace I Leave with You”

*The Lord promised peace to His disciples as He was about to leave them. He has made the same promise to us.*

**M**y dear sisters, we have been blessed by the Spirit of God tonight. The inspired messages from the powerful sister leaders and the music have fortified our faith and increased our desire to keep the sacred covenants we have made with our loving Heavenly Father. We have felt an

increase in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ and an appreciation for the marvelous gift of His atoning sacrifice.

My message tonight is a simple one. We have all felt peace tonight. All of us would like to feel such peace often within ourselves, in our families, and with the people around us. The Lord





promised peace to His disciples as He was about to leave them. He has made the same promise to us. But He said that He would give peace in His way, not in the world's way. He described His way of sending peace:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:26–27).

The sons of Mosiah needed that gift of peace as they embarked on their mission to the Lamanites. With more than a little anxiety as they sensed the greatness

of their task, they prayed for reassurance. And “the Lord did visit them with his Spirit, and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted” (Alma 17:10; see also Alma 26:27).

At times, you may long for peace as you face uncertainty and what seem to you to be looming challenges. The sons of Mosiah learned the lesson that the Lord taught to Moroni. It is a guide for us all: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all [who] humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

Moroni said that when he “heard these words,” he “was comforted”

(Ether 12:29). They can be a comfort to all of us. Those who do not see their weaknesses do not progress. Your awareness of your weakness is a blessing as it helps you remain humble and keeps you turning to the Savior. The Spirit not only comforts you, but He is also the agent by which the Atonement works a change in your very nature. Then weak things become strong.

You will at times have your faith challenged by Satan; it happens to all disciples of Jesus Christ. Your defense against these attacks is to keep the Holy Ghost as your companion. The Spirit will speak peace to your soul. He will urge you forward in faith. And He will bring back the memory of those times when you felt the light and the love of Jesus Christ.

Remembering may be one of the most precious gifts the Spirit can give you. He will “bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever [the Lord has] said unto you” (John 14:26). The memory may be of an answered prayer, of a priesthood ordinance received, of a confirmation of your testimony, or of a moment when you saw God’s guiding hand in your life. Perhaps in a future day when you need strength, the Spirit may bring to your memory the feelings you are having during this meeting. I pray that this may be so.

One memory that the Spirit often brings to my mind is of an evening sacrament meeting held many years ago in a metal shed in Innsbruck, Austria. The shed was under a railroad track. There were only about a dozen people present, sitting on wooden chairs. Most of them were women, some younger and some older. I saw tears of gratitude as the sacrament was passed among the small congregation. I felt the love of the Savior for those Saints, and so did they. But the miracle I remember



most clearly was the light that seemed to fill that metal shed, bringing with it a feeling of peace. It was nighttime and there were no windows, and yet the room was lit as if by noonday sunshine.

The light of the Holy Spirit was bright and abundant that evening. And the windows that let in the light were the humble hearts of those Saints, who had come before the Lord seeking forgiveness of their sins and committing to always remember Him. It was not hard to remember Him then, and my memory of that sacred experience has made it easier for me to remember Him and His Atonement in the years that have followed. That day the promise in the sacrament prayer that the Spirit will be with us was fulfilled and so brought feelings of light and peace.

Like you, I have been thankful for the many ways the Lord has visited me with the Comforter when I needed peace. Yet our Father in Heaven is concerned not just about our comfort but even more about our upward progress. “Comforter” is only one of the ways the Holy Ghost

is described in the scriptures. Here is another: “And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good” (D&C 11:12). Most often, the good He will lead you to do will involve helping someone else receive comfort from God.

In His wisdom, the Lord has brought you together in organizations and classes in His Church. He has done so to increase your power to do good. Within these organizations, you have specific charges to serve others for Him. For example, if you are a young woman, you might be asked by your bishop or your Young Women leader to reach out to a Laurel who has become what we sometimes call “less active.” You may know her better than does the bishop or the Young Women leader. You may know that she is feeling troubled at home or at school or perhaps both. Your leaders may not know why they felt impressed to ask you to reach out to her, but the Lord does, and He directs this work through the inspiration of His Spirit.

Success in your efforts will take a miracle of change both in your heart and in the heart of the young woman you were sent to rescue—and that requires the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit can allow you to see the less-active Laurel as the Lord sees her. The Lord knows her heart and your heart, and He knows the possibilities of hearts being changed. He can visit you both with His Spirit to inspire humility, forgiveness, and love.

That Spirit can inspire the words, the deeds, and the patience necessary for you to invite a lamb back to the flock. And He can touch the hearts of the flock in the Laurel class to love and welcome the lost sheep so that when she returns, she will feel she has come home.

Your power to do good as a group of God’s daughters will depend, to a great degree, on the unity and love that exist among you. This is another gift of peace that comes through the Holy Ghost.

Alma understood this. That is why he pleaded with his people “that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21).

Unity is necessary for us to have the Spirit in our class and in our family. But you know from experience, as I do, that such loving unity is hard to maintain. It takes having the Holy Ghost as a companion to open our eyes and temper our feelings.

I remember once a seven- or eight-year-old son of ours jumping on his bed hard enough that I thought it might break. I felt a flash of frustration, and I moved quickly to set my house in order. I grabbed my son by his little



shoulders and lifted him up to where our eyes met.

The Spirit put words into my mind. It seemed a quiet voice, but it pierced to my heart: “You are holding a great person.” I gently set him back on the bed and apologized.

Now he has become the great man the Holy Ghost let me see 40 years ago. I am eternally grateful that the Lord rescued me from my unkind feelings by sending the Holy Ghost to let me see a child of God as He saw him.

The unity we seek in our families and in the Church will come as we allow the Holy Ghost to affect what we see when we look at one another—and even when we think of each other. The Spirit sees with the pure love of Christ. Listen to the words Mormon used to describe charity. Think of times you have felt it:

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren [and I add sisters], if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity,

which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

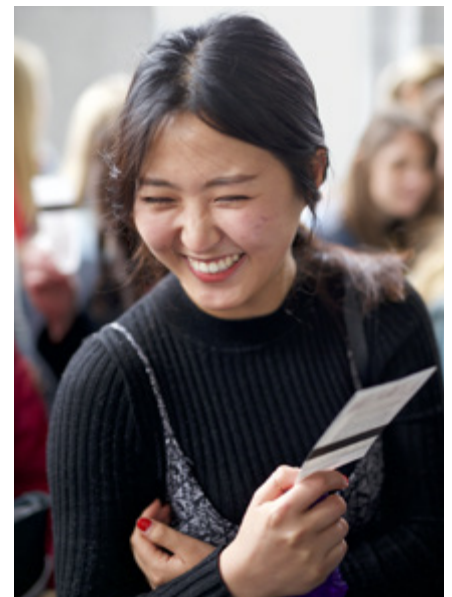
“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren [and sisters], pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:45–48).

This is the goal that your Father in Heaven has for you, His precious daughters. It may seem to you like a distant goal, but from His perspective, you’re not that far away. So He visits you with His Spirit to comfort you, encourage you, and inspire you to keep going.

I leave you my sure witness that the Father knows you—knows your needs and your name—loves you, and hears your prayers. His Beloved Son is inviting you to come unto Him. And They send the Holy Ghost to attend you in your efforts to serve others for Them.

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost will have a sanctifying and purifying effect on your spirit. You will then feel the peace the Savior promised to leave with His disciples. With that peace will come a bright hope and a feeling of light and love from the Father and His Beloved Son, who leads His kingdom on earth through revelation to His living prophet. I so testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■





**By President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# Gathering the Family of God

*God the Father wants His children home again, in families and in glory.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, I rejoice at the opportunity to be with you at the beginning of this session of general conference. I welcome you most warmly.

General conference has always been a time of gathering for the Latter-day Saints. We have long since outgrown the ability to gather physically in one place, but the Lord has provided ways for the blessings of general conference to reach out to you no matter where you are. While it is impressive to see the gathering of Saints in this large Conference Center, we who stand at this pulpit always have in our mind's eye the millions of people who are gathered with us around the world to watch and listen to the conference. Many of you are gathered with your families; some may be gathered with friends or fellow Church members.

Wherever you are and however you are hearing my voice, please know that even though you are not with us in person, we feel that you are with us in spirit. We hope all of you will feel one with us—that you will feel the spiritual power that comes whenever a body of believers gathers in the name of Jesus Christ.

I have felt impressed to speak to you today about another kind of gathering. This kind does not happen only every six months, as general conference does. Instead, it has been going on continuously since the early days of the Restoration of the Church, and it has been hastening in recent years. I refer to the gathering of the family of God.

To describe this gathering, it may be best to begin before we were born, before what the Bible calls “the beginning” (Genesis 1:1). At that time, we lived with Heavenly Father as His spirit





children. This is true of every person who has ever lived on earth.

You see, the names “brother” and “sister” are not just friendly greetings or terms of endearment for us. They are an expression of an eternal truth: God is the literal Father of all mankind; we are each part of His eternal family. Because He loves us with the love of a perfect Father, He wants us to progress and advance and become like Him. He ordained a plan by which we would come to earth, in families, and have experiences that would prepare us to return to Him and live as He lives.

The central element of this plan was the promise that Jesus Christ would offer Himself as a sacrifice, to rescue us from sin and death. Our task in that plan is to accept the Savior’s sacrifice by obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel. You and I accepted this

plan. In fact, we rejoiced in it, even though it would mean that we would leave the presence of our Father and forget what we had experienced there with Him.

But we were not sent here completely in the dark. Each of us was given a portion of God’s light, called the “Light of Christ,” to help us distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. This is why even those who live with little or no knowledge of the Father’s plan can still sense, in their hearts, that certain actions are just and moral while others are not.

Our sense of right and wrong seems especially keen when we are raising our children. Innate in almost every parent is the desire to teach his or her children moral virtues. This is part of the miracle of Heavenly Father’s plan. He wants His children to come to

earth, following the eternal pattern of families that exists in heaven. Families are the basic organizational unit of the eternal realms, and so He intends for them also to be the basic unit on earth. Though earthly families are far from perfect, they give God’s children the best chance to be welcomed to the world with the only love on earth that comes close to what we felt in heaven—parental love. Families are also the best way to preserve and pass on moral virtues and true principles that are most likely to lead us back to God’s presence.

Only a very small minority of God’s children obtain during this life a complete understanding of God’s plan, along with access to the priesthood ordinances and covenants that make the Savior’s atoning power fully operative in our lives. Even those with the best of parents may live faithfully according to the light they have but never hear about Jesus Christ and His Atonement or be invited to be baptized in His name. This has been true for countless millions of our brothers and sisters throughout the world’s history.

Some may consider this unfair. They may even take it as evidence that there is no plan, no specific requirements for salvation—feeling that a just, loving God would not create a plan that is available to such a small proportion of His children. Others might conclude that God must have determined in advance which of His children He would save and made the gospel available to them, while those who never heard the gospel simply were not “chosen.”

But you and I know, because of the truths restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that God’s plan is much more loving and just than that. Our Heavenly Father is anxious to gather

and bless all of His family. While He knows that not all of them will choose to be gathered, His plan gives each of His children the opportunity to accept or reject His invitation. And families are at the heart of this plan.

Centuries ago, the prophet Malachi said that in a coming day, God would send Elijah to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6).

This prophecy was so important the Savior quoted it when He visited the Americas after His Resurrection (see 3 Nephi 25:5–6). And when the angel Moroni visited the Prophet Joseph Smith, he too quoted the prophecy about Elijah and hearts, fathers, and children (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36–39).

Today is April 1. Two days from now, April 3, marks 181 years from the day when Malachi’s prophecy was fulfilled. On that day, Elijah did come, and he gave to Joseph Smith the priesthood power to seal families eternally (see D&C 110:13–16).

From that day to this, interest in exploring one’s family history has grown exponentially. At ever-increasing rates, people seem drawn to their ancestry with more than just casual curiosity. Genealogical libraries, associations, and technologies have emerged around the world to support this interest. The internet’s power to enhance communications has enabled families to work together to do family history research with a speed and thoroughness never before possible.

Why is all of this happening? For lack of a better term, we call it the “spirit of Elijah.” We could also equally call it “fulfillment of prophecy.” I bear testimony that Elijah did come. The hearts of the children—of you and me—have



turned to our fathers, our ancestors. The affection you feel for your ancestors is part of the fulfillment of that prophecy. It is deeply seated in your sense of who you are. But it has to do with more than just inherited DNA.

For example, as you follow the promptings to learn about your family history, you may discover that a distant relative shares some of your facial features or your interest in books or your talent for singing. This could be very interesting and even insightful. But if your work stops there, you will sense that something is missing. This is because to gather and unite God’s family requires more than just warm feelings. It requires sacred covenants made in connection with priesthood ordinances.

Many of your ancestors did not receive those ordinances. But in the providence of God, you did. And God knew that you would feel drawn to your ancestors in love and that you would have the technology necessary to identify them. He also knew that you would live in a time when access to holy temples, where the ordinances can be performed, would be greater than ever in history. And He knew that He could trust you to accomplish this work in behalf of your ancestors.

Of course, all of us have many pressing and important responsibilities that need our attention and time. All of us find parts of what the Lord expects us to do beyond our abilities. Fortunately, the Lord provides a way for each of us to gain confidence and satisfaction in all our service, including family history service. We gain strength to do what He asks through our faith that the Savior gives no commandment “save he shall prepare a way for [us] that [we] may accomplish the thing which he commandeth” (1 Nephi 3:7).

I know this is true from experience. Many years ago, as a university student, I met a man who worked for one of the largest computer companies in the world. This was in the early days of computing, and it just so happened that his company had sent him to sell computers to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As far as I could tell, this salesman had no religious faith. Yet he said with wonder and exasperation, “In this church they were doing what they called ‘genealogy,’ searching for names of people who are dead, trying to identify their ancestors. People, mostly women, were running around between filing cabinets, searching through little cards for information.” If I remember



right, he said the ladies were wearing tennis shoes so they could run a little faster. The man went on, “As I saw the magnitude of what they were trying to do, I realized that I had discovered the reason for the invention of computers.”

Well, he was partially right. Computers would be an important part of the future of family history work—just not the computers he was selling. An inspired leader of the Church chose not to buy his computers. The Church was to wait for technology that at that time had not yet even been imagined. But I have learned in the many years since that even the best technology can never be a substitute for revelation from heaven, like the kind that Church leader received. This is a spiritual work, and the Lord directs it through His Holy Spirit.

Just a few weeks ago, I was working on my family history with a consultant by my side and another helper on the phone. On the computer screen before me was a problem beyond my mortal power to solve. I saw two names, sent to me by the wonders of technology, of people who might be waiting for a temple ordinance. But the trouble was that the names were different, but there was a reason to believe they might be the same person. My task was to determine what was true.

I asked my consultants to tell me. They said, “No, you must choose.” And

they were completely sure I would discover the truth. The computer, with all its power and information, had left me the blessing of staring at those names on a screen, evaluating the available information, seeking other research, praying silently, and discovering what was true. As I prayed, I knew with surety what to do—just as I have in other situations when I needed to rely on heaven’s help to solve a problem.

We do not know what marvels God will inspire people to create to help in His work of gathering His family. But whatever marvelous inventions may come, their use will require the Spirit working in people like you and me. This should not surprise us. After all, these are beloved sons and daughters of God. He will send whatever inspiration is needed to give them the opportunity to return to Him.

In recent years, the youth of the Church have responded to the spirit of Elijah in an inspiring way. Many now hold their own limited-use temple recommend and use it often. Temple baptistries are busier than ever; some temples have even had to adjust their schedules to accommodate the increase in the number of young people attending the temple.

It used to be a rare but welcome exception for youth to bring the names of their own ancestors to the temple. Now this is the norm, and very often it is the young people themselves who found those ancestors.

In addition, many youth have discovered that giving of their time to do family history research and temple work has deepened their testimony of the plan of salvation. It has increased the influence of the Spirit in their lives and decreased the influence of the adversary. It has helped them feel closer to their families and closer to the

Lord Jesus Christ. They have learned that this work saves not just the dead; it saves all of us (see D&C 128:18).

The youth have caught the vision admirably; now their parents need to catch up. There are now many people who have accepted baptism in the spirit world because of the work done by the youth, and they are waiting for other ordinances that only adults can perform in temples in this world. The work of gathering Heavenly Father’s family is not just for young people, and it is not just for grandparents. It is for everyone. We are all gatherers.

This is the work of our generation, what the Apostle Paul called “the dispensation of the fulness of times,” when he said God would “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10). This is made possible through the atoning work of God’s Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Because of Him, our family members, “who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Ephesians 2:13–14). You have felt this, as I have, when you have experienced an increase of love as you looked at the picture of an ancestor. You have felt it in the temple when the name on a card seemed like more than a name, and you couldn’t help but sense that this person was aware of you and felt your love.

I testify that God the Father wants His children home again, in families and in glory. The Savior lives. He directs and blesses this work, and He watches over and guides us. He thanks you for your faithful service in gathering His Father’s family, and I promise you the inspired help that you seek and need. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■





By M. Joseph Brough

Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

## His Daily Guiding Hand

*Heavenly Father knows what you and I need better than anyone else.*

One of Heavenly Father's most beloved tools in guiding His children is righteous grandparents. My father's mother was such a woman. On an occasion that took place when I was too young to remember, my father was disciplining me. Observing this correction, my grandmother said, "Monte, I believe you are correcting him too harshly."

My father replied, "Mother, I will correct my children as I want."

And my wise grandmother softly stated, "And so will I."

I'm pretty sure my father heard the wise guidance of his mother that day.

When thinking of guidance, we might think of a hymn we all know and love—"I Am a Child of God." In the chorus we find the words "Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way."<sup>1</sup>

Until recently, I understood that chorus to be divine direction to parents. While pondering these words, I realized that while they contain that direction, there exists a far greater meaning. Individually, we each plead daily that Heavenly Father will guide us, lead us, and walk beside us.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained: "Our Father in Heaven knows His children's needs better than anyone else. It is His work and glory to help us at every turn, giving

us marvelous temporal and spiritual resources to help us on our path to return to Him."<sup>2</sup>

Listen to those words: Heavenly Father knows what you and I need better than anyone else. As a result, He has developed a personal care package suited to each one of us. It has many components. It includes His Son and the Atonement, the Holy Ghost, commandments, scriptures, prayer, prophets, apostles, parents, grandparents, local Church leaders, and many others—all to help us return to live with Him someday.

May I share today just a few of the components of the care package that

have made me recognize that a loving Father is leading, guiding, and walking beside me and my family? My prayer is that each of you will recognize in your experiences that Heavenly Father is leading, guiding, and walking beside you and, with that knowledge, you will proceed with confidence, knowing you are never really alone.

Heavenly Father's commandments are key components of the care package. Alma declared, "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>3</sup> Tolerating improper behavior without loving correction is false compassion and reinforces the common notion that wickedness might in fact be happiness. Samuel the Lamanite clearly countered this notion: "Ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head."<sup>4</sup>

Through His prophets, Heavenly Father constantly reminds us that righteousness is happiness. King Benjamin, for example, taught that Heavenly Father "doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which





if ye do, he doth immediately bless you.”<sup>5</sup> From another hymn comes the similar reminder:

*Keep the commandments; keep the commandments!  
In this there is safety; in this there is peace.  
He will send blessings.*<sup>6</sup>

Around my 14th birthday, I learned about some of these blessings. I noticed different behavior on the part of my parents. Considering what I observed, I asked, “Are we going on a mission?” The shock on my mother’s face confirmed my suspicion. Later, in a family council, my siblings and I learned that our parents had been called to preside over a mission.

We lived on a beautiful ranch in Wyoming. From my perspective, life was perfect. I could come home from school, complete my chores, and be off hunting, fishing, or exploring with my dog.

Shortly after learning of the calling, I realized that I would have to give up my dog, Blue. I confronted my father, asking what I should do with Blue. I wanted to emphasize the unfairness of what God was requiring. I will never forget this response. He said, “I’m not

sure. He probably cannot go with us, so you had better ask Heavenly Father.” That was not the response I had anticipated.

I began reading the Book of Mormon. I earnestly prayed to know if I had to give my dog away. My answer did not come in a moment; rather, a specific thought kept penetrating my mind: “Don’t be a burden to your parents. Don’t be a burden. I have called your parents.”

I knew what Heavenly Father required. That knowledge did not reduce the pain of giving my dog away. However, through that small sacrifice, my heart softened and I found peace in seeking Heavenly Father’s will.

I thank my Heavenly Father for the blessings and happiness I found through the scriptures, prayer, the Holy Ghost, and a worthy earthly father who embraced his role as the principal gospel teacher of his children. They were leading me, guiding me, and even walking beside me to help me find the way—especially when I had to do something difficult.

In addition to having the care package components I’ve mentioned, we are each blessed with a priesthood leader to lead and guide us.

President Boyd K. Packer said: “Bishops are inspired! Each of us has agency to accept or reject counsel from our leaders, but never disregard the counsel of your bishop, whether given over the pulpit or individually.”<sup>7</sup>

These men strive to represent the Lord. Whether we are old or young, when Satan wants us to think all is lost, bishops are there to guide us. When speaking with bishops, I have found a common theme regarding confessions of disobedience or the innocent suffering from terrible wrongs. Bishops instantly want to express Heavenly Father’s love for the individual and a desire to walk beside him or her as he or she finds the way home.

Perhaps Heavenly Father’s greatest care package component is described in these words: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”<sup>8</sup>

To teach us all that we must do, Jesus Christ led the way by giving the perfect example that we must try to emulate. He pleads with us with arms outstretched to come, follow Him.<sup>9</sup> And when we fail, which we all do, He reminds us, “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”<sup>10</sup>

What a wonderful gift! Repentance is not a punishment; it is a privilege. It is a privilege that leads and guides us. No wonder the scriptures declare that we should teach nothing save repentance.<sup>11</sup>

Heavenly Father has many resources, but often He uses another person to assist Him. Daily He gives us opportunities to lead, guide, and walk beside one in need. We must follow the example of the Savior. We too must be about Heavenly Father's work.

As the Young Men General Presidency, we know that youth are blessed when they have parents and leaders who act for Heavenly Father in leading, guiding, and walking beside them. Three principles<sup>12</sup> that will help us become part of Heavenly Father's care package for others are:

First, be with the youth. President Henry B. Eyring emphasized this point: "There are some things we can do that could matter most. Even more powerful than using words in our teaching the doctrine will be our examples of living the doctrine."<sup>13</sup> To lead youth requires being with them. Devoted time is an expression of love that allows us to teach by word and example.

Second, to truly guide youth, we must connect them with heaven. The time always comes when each must stand alone. Only Heavenly Father can be there to guide at all times and in all places. Our youth must know how to seek Heavenly Father's guidance.

Third, we must let youth lead. Like the loving parent who holds the hand of a toddler learning to walk, we must let go in order for youth to progress. Letting youth lead requires patience and love. It is harder and takes more time than doing it ourselves. They may stumble along the way, but we walk beside them.



Brothers and sisters, there will be times in our lives when the blessings of guidance seem distant or lacking. For such times of distress, Elder D. Todd Christofferson promised: "Let your covenants be paramount and let your obedience be exact. Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you as you work and watch. In His own time and way He will stretch forth His hand to you, saying, 'Here am I.'"<sup>14</sup>

At one such time, I sought Heavenly Father's counsel through constant and

heartfelt prayer for more than a year to find the solution to a difficult situation. I knew logically that Heavenly Father answers all sincere prayers. Yet I reached such desperation one day that I attended the temple with one question: "Heavenly Father, do You really care?"

I was sitting near the back of the Logan Utah Temple waiting room when, to my surprise, entering the room that day was the temple president, Vaughn J. Featherstone, a close family friend. He stood at the front of the congregation and welcomed all of



By Elder Weatherford T. Clayton  
Of the Seventy

us. When he noticed me among the temple patrons, he stopped speaking, looked me in the eyes, and then said, “Brother Brough, it is good to see you in the temple today.”

I will never forget the feeling of that simple moment. It was as if—in that greeting—Heavenly Father was stretching forth His hand and saying, “Here am I.”

Heavenly Father really does care and listen to and answer every child’s prayer.<sup>15</sup> As one of His children, I know the answer to my prayers came in the Lord’s time. And through that experience, I understood more than ever that we are children of God and that He has sent us here so that we can feel His presence now and return to live with Him someday.

I testify that Heavenly Father does lead us, guide us, and walk beside us. As we follow His Son and give heed to His servants, the apostles and prophets, we will find the way to eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Our Father, Our Mentor,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2016, 5.
3. Alma 41:10.
4. Helaman 13:38.
5. Mosiah 2:24.
6. “Keep the Commandments,” *Hymns*, no. 303.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “The Bishop and His Counselors,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 58; *Liahona*, July 1999, 72.
8. John 3:16.
9. See Luke 18:22.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
11. See Mosiah 18:20.
12. See “Young Men Auxiliary Training,” [lds.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood/auxiliary-training](http://lds.org/callings/aaronic-priesthood/auxiliary-training).
13. Henry B. Eyring, “The Preparatory Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 61.
14. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 22.
15. See “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12–13.

## Our Father’s Glorious Plan

*Because of God’s holy plan, we know that birth and death are actually just milestones on our journey to eternal life with our Heavenly Father.*

Early in my training as a physician, I had the privilege of helping a young mother deliver her first child. She was calm, focused, and happy. When the baby was delivered, I handed the precious newborn to her. With tears of happiness streaming down her face, she took that brand-new baby into her arms and examined him from head to toe. She held him close and loved him as only a mother can. It was a privilege to be in that room with her.

Such was the beginning of life for each of us. Yet was our birth truly the beginning? The world sees birth and death as the beginning and the end. But because of God’s holy plan, we know that birth and death are actually just milestones on our journey to eternal life with our Heavenly Father.<sup>1</sup> They are essential parts of our Father’s plan—sacred moments when mortality and heaven intersect. Today, reflecting on what I have learned from observing birth and death through my years of medical





practice and Church service, I want to testify of our Father's glorious plan.

"Before we were born, we lived with God, the Father of our spirits. All [of us] on earth are literally brothers and sisters" in His family,<sup>2</sup> and each of us is precious to Him. We lived with Him for eons of time before our mortal birth—learning, choosing, and preparing.

Because Heavenly Father loves us, He wants us to have the greatest gift He can give, the gift of eternal life.<sup>3</sup> He could not simply give us this gift; we had to receive it by choosing Him and His ways. This required that we leave His presence and begin a wonderful and challenging journey of faith, growth, and becoming. The journey our Father prepared for us is called the plan of salvation or the plan of happiness.<sup>4</sup>

In a grand premortal council, our Father told us about His plan.<sup>5</sup> When we understood it, we were so happy that we shouted for joy, and "the morning stars sang together."<sup>6</sup>

That plan is built upon three grand pillars: the pillars of eternity.<sup>7</sup>

The first pillar is the Creation of the earth, the setting for our mortal journey.<sup>8</sup>

The second pillar is the Fall of our first earthly parents, Adam and Eve. Because of the Fall, some marvelous things were given to us. We were able to be born and receive a physical body.<sup>9</sup> I will be forever grateful to my mother for bringing my brothers and me into the world and teaching us about God.

God also gave us moral agency—the ability and privilege of choosing and acting for ourselves.<sup>10</sup> To help us choose well, Heavenly Father gave us commandments. Each day, as we keep His commandments, we show God that we love Him, and He blesses our lives.<sup>11</sup>

Knowing that we would not always choose well—or in other words, sin—Father gave us the third pillar: the Savior Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Through His suffering, Christ paid the price for both physical death and sin.<sup>12</sup> He taught, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, always keeping His Father's commandments. "He walked the roads

of Palestine," teaching the truths of eternity, "healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead."<sup>14</sup> He "went about doing good"<sup>15</sup> and "entreated all to follow His example."<sup>16</sup>

At the end of His mortal life, He knelt down and prayed, saying:

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. . . .

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."<sup>17</sup>

Christ helped us better understand the magnitude of His suffering when He told the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit."<sup>18</sup>

There in the Garden of Gethsemane, He began to pay the price for our sins



and our sicknesses, our pains and our infirmities.<sup>19</sup> Because He did, we will never be alone in those infirmities if we choose to walk with Him. “He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross.” On the cross “He gave [up] His life to atone for the sins of all mankind [in] a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth.”<sup>20</sup>

He declared:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

“And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world.”<sup>21</sup>

Then, on the first day of the week,<sup>22</sup> He rose from the tomb with a perfect resurrected body, never to die again. And because He did, so will we.

I testify that Christ did indeed rise from the tomb. But to rise from that tomb, He first had to die. And so must we.

Another of the great blessings of my life has been to feel the closeness of

heaven during those moments when I sit at the bedside of people as they pass away. Early one morning some years ago, I entered the hospital room of a faithful Latter-day Saint widow who had cancer. Two of her daughters were sitting with her. As I went to her bedside, I quickly discovered that she was no longer suffering, because she had just died.

In that moment of death, the room was filled with peace. Her daughters had a sweet sadness, but their hearts were filled with faith. They knew that their mother was not gone but had returned home.<sup>23</sup> Even in our moments of deepest grief, in the moments when time stands still and life seems so unfair, we can find comfort in our Savior because He suffered as well.<sup>24</sup> It was a privilege for me to be in that room.

When we die, our spirits leave our bodies, and we go to the next stage of our journey, the spirit world. It is a place of learning, repentance, forgiveness, and becoming<sup>25</sup> where we await the Resurrection.<sup>26</sup>

On some future great day, everyone who has ever been born will rise from the tomb. Our spirits and our physical bodies will be reunited in their perfect

form. Everyone will be resurrected, “both old and young, . . . both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous,” and “every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame.”<sup>27</sup>

After the Resurrection we will have the supreme blessing of being judged by our Savior, who said:

“I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

“And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.”<sup>28</sup>

And then, through Christ and His Atonement, all who choose to follow Him through faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end<sup>29</sup> will find that their journey’s end is to receive “their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”<sup>30</sup> They will return to their Father’s presence to live with Him forever. May we choose well.

There is so much more to our existence than just what happens between birth and death. I invite you to come and follow Christ.<sup>31</sup>

I invite all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to, each day, “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, . . . [that] through the shedding of the blood of Christ, . . . ye [may] become holy, without spot.”<sup>32</sup>

I invite those who are not yet members of this Church to come and read the Book of Mormon and listen to the missionaries. Come and have faith and repent of your sins. Come and be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. Come and live a happy, Christ-filled life. As you come to Him and keep His commandments, I promise that you can find peace and purpose in this often

tumultuous mortal experience and “eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>33</sup>

For those who have experienced these truths and for whatever reason have wandered away, I invite you to come back. Come back today. Our Father and the Savior love you. I testify that Christ has the power to answer your questions, heal your pains and sorrows, and forgive your sins. I know this is true. I know that all these things are true. Christ lives! This is His Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
2. “Plan of Salvation,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; Moses 1:39.
4. See Alma 42:8.
5. See Abraham 3:24–28.
6. Job 38:7.
7. See Russell M. Nelson, “Standards of the Lord’s Standard-Bearers,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, 5–6.
8. See 3 Nephi 9:15.
9. See 2 Nephi 2:22–25.
10. See Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 86; “Agency,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
11. See John 14:15, 23; see also Alma 38:1.
12. See Alma 34:8–16.
13. John 3:16; see also John 3:17.
14. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2.
15. Acts 10:38.
16. “The Living Christ,” 2.
17. Luke 22:42, 44.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–18.
19. See Isaiah 53:4–6; Alma 7:11–13.
20. “The Living Christ,” 2.
21. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
22. See John 20:1.
23. See Alma 40:11.
24. See 1 Peter 2:21–25.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:57–59.
26. See Alma 40:2–12.
27. Alma 11:44.
28. 3 Nephi 27:15–16.
29. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 1.
30. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
31. See 2 Nephi 9:50–51; 31:13.
32. Moroni 10:32–33.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.



By Elder Dale G. Renlund

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Our Good Shepherd

*Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, finds joy in seeing His diseased sheep progress toward healing.*

We get a glimpse into our Heavenly Father’s character as we recognize the immense compassion He has for sinners and appreciate the distinction He makes between sin and those who sin. This glimpse helps us have a more “correct [understanding of] his character, perfections, and attributes”<sup>1</sup> and is foundational to exercising faith in Him and in His Son, Jesus Christ. The Savior’s compassion in the face of our imperfections

draws us toward Him and motivates us in our repeated struggles to repent and emulate Him. As we become more like Him, we learn to treat others as He does, regardless of any outward characteristic or behavior.

The impact of distinguishing between the outward characteristics of an individual and the individual himself is central to the novel *Les Misérables*, by the French author Victor Hugo.<sup>2</sup> As the novel opens, the narrator introduces





Bienvenu Myriel, the bishop of Digne, and discusses a dilemma facing the bishop. Should he visit a man who is an avowed atheist and is despised in the community because of his past behavior in the French Revolution?<sup>3</sup>

The narrator states that the bishop could naturally feel a deep aversion for the man. Then the narrator poses a simple question: “All the same, should the scabs of the sheep cause the shepherd to recoil?”<sup>4</sup> Answering for the bishop, the narrator provides a definitive answer, “No”—and then adds a humorous comment: “But what a sheep!”<sup>5</sup>

In this passage, Hugo compares the man’s “wickedness” with skin disease in sheep and compares the bishop with a shepherd who does not withdraw when faced with a sheep that is sick. The bishop is sympathetic and later in the novel demonstrates a similar compassion for another man, the main protagonist in the novel, a degraded ex-convict, Jean Valjean. The bishop’s mercy and empathy motivate Jean Valjean to change the course of his life.

Since God uses disease as a metaphor for sin throughout the scriptures, it is reasonable to ask, “How does Jesus Christ react when faced with our metaphorical diseases—our sins?” After all, the Savior said that He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of

allowance”;<sup>6</sup> so how can He look at us, imperfect as we are, without recoiling in horror and disgust?

The answer is simple and clear. As the Good Shepherd,<sup>7</sup> Jesus Christ views disease in His sheep as a condition that needs treatment, care, and compassion. This shepherd, our Good Shepherd, finds joy in seeing His diseased sheep progress toward healing.

The Savior foretold that He would “feed his flock like a shepherd,”<sup>8</sup> “seek [out] that which [is] lost, . . . bring again that which [is] driven away, . . . bind up that which [is] broken, and . . . strengthen that which [is] sick.”<sup>9</sup> Though apostate Israel was depicted as being consumed with sinful “wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,”<sup>10</sup> the Savior encouraged, exhorted, and promised healing.<sup>11</sup>

The Savior’s mortal ministry was indeed characterized by love, compassion, and empathy. He did not disdainfully walk the dusty roads of Galilee and Judea, flinching at the sight of sinners. He did not dodge them in abject horror. No, He ate with them.<sup>12</sup> He helped and blessed, lifted and edified, and replaced fear and despair with hope and joy. Like the true shepherd He is, He seeks us and finds us to offer relief and hope.<sup>13</sup> Understanding His compassion and love helps us exercise faith in Him—to repent and be healed.

The Gospel of John records the effect of the Savior’s empathy on a sinner. Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in the very act of adultery to the Savior. The accusers implied that she should be stoned, in compliance with the law of Moses. Jesus, in response to persistent questioning, finally said to them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

The accusers departed, “and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

“When Jesus . . . saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”<sup>14</sup>

Surely, the Savior did not condone adultery. But He also did not condemn the woman. He encouraged her to reform her life. She was motivated to change because of His compassion and mercy. The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible attests to her resultant discipleship: “And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name.”<sup>15</sup>

While God is empathetic, we should not mistakenly believe that He is accepting and open-minded about sin. He is not. The Savior came to earth to save us *from* our sins and, importantly, will not save us *in* our sins.<sup>16</sup> A skilled interrogator, Zeezrom once tried to trap Amulek by asking: “Shall [the coming Messiah] save his people in their sins? And Amulek answered and said unto him: I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word. . . . He cannot save them in their sins.”<sup>17</sup> Amulek spoke a fundamental truth that to be saved from our sins, we must abide “the conditions of repentance,” which unleash the Redeemer’s power to save our souls.<sup>18</sup>

The Savior’s compassion, love, and mercy draw us toward Him.<sup>19</sup> Through His Atonement, we are no longer satisfied with our sinful state.<sup>20</sup> God is clear about what is right and acceptable to Him and what is wrong and sinful. This is not because He desires to have mindless, obedient followers. No, our Heavenly Father desires that





His children knowingly and willingly choose to become like Him<sup>21</sup> and qualify for the kind of life He enjoys.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, His children fulfill their divine destiny and become heirs to all that He has.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, Church leaders cannot alter God's commandments or doctrine contrary to His will, to be convenient or popular.

However, in our lifelong quest to follow Jesus Christ, His example of kindness to those who sin is particularly instructive. We, who are sinners, must, like the Savior, reach out to others with compassion and love. Our role is also to help and bless, lift and edify, and replace fear and despair with hope and joy.

The Savior rebuked individuals who recoiled from others they viewed as unclean and who self-righteously judged others as more sinful than they.<sup>24</sup> That is the pointed lesson the Savior directed to those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." He spoke this parable:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus then concluded, "I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."<sup>25</sup>

The message for us is clear: a repenting sinner draws closer to God than does the self-righteous person who condemns that sinner.

The human tendency to be self-righteous and judgmental was also present in Alma's day. As the people "began to establish the church more fully . . . the church began to wax proud, . . . the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, . . .

they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure."<sup>26</sup>

This persecution was specifically prohibited: "Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves."<sup>27</sup> The guiding principle for Latter-day Saints is the same. We must not be guilty of persecuting anyone inside or outside the Church.

Those who have been persecuted for any reason know what unfairness and bigotry feel like. As a teenager living in Europe in the 1960s, I felt that I was repeatedly picked on and bullied because I was an American and because I was a member of the Church. Some of my schoolmates treated me as though I were personally responsible for unpopular U.S. foreign policies. I was also treated as though my religion were an affront to the nations in which I lived because it differed from state-sponsored religion. Later, in various



countries across the world, I have had small glimpses into the ugliness of prejudice and discrimination suffered by those who are targeted because of their race or ethnicity.

Persecution comes in many forms: ridicule, harassment, bullying, exclusion and isolation, or hatred toward another. We must guard against bigotry that raises its ugly voice toward those who hold different opinions. Bigotry manifests itself, in part, in unwillingness to grant equal freedom of expression.<sup>28</sup> Everyone, including people of religion, has the right to express his or her opinions in the public square. But no one has a license to be hateful toward others as those opinions are expressed.

Church history gives ample evidence of our members being treated with hatred and bigotry. How ironically sad it would be if we were to treat others as we have been treated. The Savior taught, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”<sup>29</sup> For us to ask for respect, we must be respectful. Furthermore, our genuine conversion brings “meekness, and lowliness of heart,” which invites “the Holy Ghost [and fills us with] perfect love,”<sup>30</sup> an “unfeigned love”<sup>31</sup> for others.

Our Good Shepherd is unchanging and feels the same way today about sin and sinners as He did when He walked the earth. He does not recoil from us

because we sin, even if He on occasion must think, “But what a sheep!” He loves us so much that He provided the way for us to repent and become clean so we can return to Him and our Heavenly Father.<sup>32</sup> In doing so, Jesus Christ also set the example for us to follow—to show respect to all and hatred toward none.

As His disciples, let us fully mirror His love and love one another so openly and completely that no one feels abandoned, alone, or hopeless. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for us. He knows us and laid down His life for His sheep.<sup>33</sup> He also lives for us and wants us to know Him and exercise faith in Him. I love and adore Him, and I am profoundly grateful for Him, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
2. The novel *Les Misérables*, by Victor Hugo (1802–85), tells the story of Jean Valjean, who committed a minor crime by stealing a loaf of bread to feed his sister’s family. Sentenced to a term of 5 years’ imprisonment, Valjean spent 19 years doing hard labor because of four failed escape attempts. He emerged from prison a hardened and bitter man.  
Because of his criminal record, Valjean was unable to find employment, food, and lodging. Exhausted and demoralized, he was finally given lodging with the bishop of Digne, who showed Valjean kindness and compassion. During the night, Valjean surrendered to a sense of hopelessness and stole the bishop’s silverware and ran away. Valjean was captured and returned to

the bishop. Inexplicably and contrary to Valjean’s expectations, the bishop told the police that Valjean had been given the silverware and insisted that Valjean take two silver candlesticks as well. (See Hugo, *Les Misérables* [1987], book 2, chapters 10–12.)

3. See Hugo, *Les Misérables*, book 1, chapter 10.
4. The narrator asks, *Toutefois, la gale de la brebis doit-elle faire reculer le pasteur?* (Hugo, *Les Misérables* [1985], book 1, chapter 10, page 67). *Gale*, in veterinary pathology, refers to any of a variety of skin diseases caused by parasitic mites and characterized by loss of hair and scabby eruptions (“mange” in English). This phrase has been translated in various ways into English.
5. The narrator’s humorous editorial comment about the conventionist is *Mais quelle brebis!* It has occasionally been translated as “But what a black sheep.”
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
7. See John 10:11, 14; Alma 5:38; Doctrine and Covenants 50:44.
8. Isaiah 40:11.
9. Ezekiel 34:16.
10. Isaiah 1:6.
11. See Isaiah 1:18.
12. See Luke 15:1–2.
13. See Matthew 18:11.
14. See John 8:3–11.
15. Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:11 (in John 8:11, footnote c).
16. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Abide in My Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 48.
17. Alma 11:34, 37.
18. See Helaman 5:10–11.
19. See 3 Nephi 27:14–15.
20. In modern times the Savior clarified: “That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willetth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:35).
21. See 2 Nephi 2:26–27.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; 132:19–20, 24, 55.
23. See Romans 8:16–17; Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
24. See Matthew 23:13.
25. Luke 18:9–14.
26. Alma 4:4, 6, 8.
27. Alma 1:21.
28. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, “bigotry” and “intolerance,” oed.com.
29. Matthew 7:12.
30. Moroni 8:26.
31. 1 Peter 1:22.
32. See Articles of Faith 1:3.
33. See John 10:11–15.



By Elder Ulisses Soares  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Confide in God Unwaveringly

*If we are steadfast and do not waver in our faith, the Lord will increase our capacity to raise ourselves above the challenges of life.*

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to begin my message today by testifying that I know that President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of God in our day. His counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles are also, in fact, prophets, seers, and revelators. They represent the Lord Jesus Christ and have the right to declare His mind and will as it is revealed to them. I testify that there is safety in following their counsel. The Lord is inspiring them to emphasize strengthening our faith in Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in His Atonement so that we will not waver as we face the challenges of our day.

In the Book of Mormon, we read about a man named Ammon who was sent from the land of Zarahemla to the land of Lehi-Nephi to inquire concerning his brethren. There he found King Limhi and his people, who were in bondage to the Lamanites. King Limhi was encouraged by the things Ammon shared with him about his people in Zarahemla. His heart was filled with such great hope and joy that he gathered his people to the temple and said:

“Therefore, lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God. . . .

“ . . . If ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, . . . and serve him with all diligence of mind, . . . he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.”<sup>1</sup>

The faith of King Limhi’s people was so profoundly affected by the words of Ammon that they made a covenant with God to serve Him and to keep

His commandments, regardless of their difficult circumstances. Because of their faith, they were able to devise a plan to escape from the hands of the Lamanites.<sup>2</sup>

Brothers and sisters, please consider the importance of the invitation King Limhi gave to his people and its relevance to us. He said, “Lift up your heads, and rejoice, and put your trust in God.” With these words, Limhi invited his people to look to the future through the eyes of faith; to replace their fears with the optimism of hope born of faith; and to not waver in placing their trust in God regardless of circumstance.

Mortal life is a period of testing where we will be proven to see if we will do all things that the Lord our God shall command us.<sup>3</sup> This will require unwavering faith in Christ even in times of great difficulty. It will require that we press forward with steadfast faith in Christ, being led by the Spirit and trusting that God will provide for our needs.<sup>4</sup>

At the conclusion of His earthly ministry, just before being taken prisoner, the Savior taught His disciples, “In the



world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Ponder with me for a moment—Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father, lived a sinless life and overcame all the temptations, pains, challenges, and afflictions of the world. He shed drops of blood in Gethsemane;

He suffered terrible pain beyond any power of description. He took upon Himself all our pains and sicknesses. He stands ready to help—to help each of us—with every burden. Through His life, suffering, death, and Resurrection, He removed every impediment to our rejoicing and finding peace on this earth. The benefits of His atoning

sacrifice are extended to all those who accept Him and deny themselves and to those who take up His cross and follow Him as His true disciples.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, we will be strengthened, our burdens will be eased, and through Him we will overcome the world.

Brothers and sisters, as we contemplate the strength and hope that we can receive from the Savior, we do have reason to lift up our heads, rejoice, and press forward in faith without wavering, “for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. . . . A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”<sup>7</sup>

King Limhi likewise urged, “Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, . . . serve him with *all* diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.”<sup>8</sup>

Listen to the Savior’s own words as He entreats us:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. . . .

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . .

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”<sup>9</sup>

God blesses us according to our faith.<sup>10</sup> Faith is the source of living with divine purpose and eternal perspective. Faith is a practical principle that inspires diligence. It is a vital, living force manifest in our positive attitude and desire to willingly do everything that God and Jesus Christ ask of us. It takes us to our knees to implore the Lord for guidance and to arise and act with confidence to achieve things consistent with His will.



Years ago while serving as a mission president, I received a phone call from the parents of one of our beloved missionaries informing me about the death of his sister. I remember, in the tenderness of that moment, that missionary and I discussed God’s marvelous plan of salvation for His children and how this knowledge would comfort him.

Although he was stunned and saddened by that adversity, this missionary—through his tears and with faith in God—rejoiced in his sister’s life. He expressed unwavering confidence in the tender mercies of the Lord. Resolutely, he told me that he would continue to serve his mission with all faith and diligence in order to be worthy of the promises that God had for him and his family. In this time of need, that faithful missionary turned his heart to God, placed all of his trust in Him, and renewed his commitment to serve the Lord with faith and with all diligence.

Brothers and sisters, if we are not rooted by steadfast trust in God and the desire to serve Him, the painful experiences of mortality can lead us to feel as though we are burdened by a heavy yoke; and we can lose the motivation to live the gospel fully. Without faith, we will end up losing the capacity to appreciate those designs of our God regarding the things that will happen later in our life.<sup>11</sup>

In these moments of trial, the adversary—who is always on the lookout—tries to use our logic and reasoning against us. He tries to convince us that it is useless to live the principles of the gospel. Please remember that the logic of the natural man “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.”<sup>12</sup> Remember that Satan “is an enemy [of] God, and [he] fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth



[us] to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.”<sup>13</sup> We must not allow him to deceive us; for when we do, we falter in our faith and lose the power to obtain God’s blessings.

If we are steadfast and do not waver in our faith, the Lord will increase our capacity to raise ourselves above the challenges of life. We will be enabled to subdue negative impulses, and we will develop the capacity to overcome even what appear to be overwhelming obstacles. This was what enabled King Limhi’s people to make a spectacular escape from their Lamanite captivity.

Brothers and sisters, I invite you to place all of your trust in God and in the teachings of His prophets. I invite you to renew your covenants with God, to serve Him with all your heart, regardless of the complex situations of life. I testify that by the power of your unwavering faith in Christ, you will become free of the captivity of sin, of doubt, of unbelief, of unhappiness, of suffering; and you will receive all of the promised blessings from our loving Heavenly Father.

I testify that God is real. He lives. He loves us. He listens to our prayers in our moments of happiness and in our moments of doubt, sadness, and desperation. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. He is the Redeemer.

I close my remarks today with the lyrics of the hymn “Not Now but in the Coming Years,” found in the Portuguese hymnal:

*If clouds instead of sun spread shadows  
o’er our heart,  
If pain afflicts us, never mind; we will  
soon know who Thou art.  
Jesus guides us with His hand, and He  
will tell us why;  
If we listen to His voice, He will tell us  
by and by.  
Confide in God unwaveringly, and  
let Him us sustain;  
Sing His glory endlessly, for later  
He’ll explain.*<sup>14</sup>

I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mosiah 7:19, 33.
2. See Mosiah 21:32; 22:1–14.
3. See Abraham 3:25.
4. See 1 Nephi 4:6–7; 2 Nephi 31:20.
5. John 16:33.
6. See Luke 9:23.
7. James 1:6, 8.
8. Mosiah 7:33; emphasis added.
9. John 14:1, 15, 21.
10. See 2 Nephi 27:23; Alma 37:40; Ether 12:29.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:3.
12. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
13. Moroni 7:12.
14. “Not Now but in the Coming Years,” translated from “Agora Não, mas Logo Mais,” *Hymns* (Portuguese), no. 156.



By Elder Mark A. Bragg  
Of the Seventy

# Brighter and Brighter until the Perfect Day

*Even in the most difficult and darkest of times, there is light and goodness all around us.*

Paul shared a wonderful message of hope with the Corinthians: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

“Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”<sup>1</sup>

What was the source of Paul’s hope? Listen to his explanation: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Even in the most difficult and darkest of times, there is light and goodness all around us. Last October, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf reminded us, “We are surrounded by such an astonishing wealth of light and truth that I wonder if we truly appreciate what we have.”<sup>3</sup>

However, the adversary would rather have us focus on “mists of darkness . . . which blindeth the eyes, . . . hardeneth . . . hearts . . . , and . . . leadeth . . . away.”<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, with perfect understanding of the challenges of our day, the Lord promises, “That which is of

God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”<sup>5</sup>

We are children of God. Receiving light, continuing in God, and receiving more light are what we are created to do. From the very beginning, we followed the light; we followed our Heavenly Father and His plan. Seeking the light is in our spiritual DNA.

I heard this eternal truth taught beautifully in an unexpected place. While I was working for a large bank, I was invited to attend an executive program at the University of Michigan. During the program, Professor Kim Cameron taught the concept of positive leadership and its heliotropic effect. He explained: “This refers to the tendency in all living systems toward positive energy [light] and away from negative energy [darkness]. From single-cell organisms to complex human systems, everything alive has an inherent inclination toward the positive and away from the negative.”<sup>6</sup>

Supported by a wealth of studies, he also focused on three critical components of a successful workplace culture: compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude.<sup>7</sup> It makes perfect sense that as people turn towards the positive (light), the attributes perfectly exemplified by the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, are present!

Brothers and sisters, please take comfort that there is light available to us. May I suggest three areas where we will *always* find light:



## 1. The Light of the Church

The Church is a beacon of light to a darkening world. This is a wonderful time to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! The Church is stronger than it has ever been<sup>8</sup> and quite literally grows stronger each day as new members join us, new congregations are formed, new missionaries are called, and new territories are opened to the gospel. We see those who have slipped from activity in the Church for a time returning as the rescue envisioned by President Thomas S. Monson brings daily miracles.

I recently visited with youth in Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina during their For the Strength of Youth conferences. Thousands and thousands of young men and women spent a week strengthening their love of the Savior and then returned home to their families and friends, radiating the light and love of Christ.

Look, the Church will always have its critics. It has been that way from the beginning and will continue to the end. But we cannot allow such criticism to dull our sensitivity to the light that is available to us. Recognizing the light and seeking after it will qualify us for even more light.

In a darkening world, the *light of the Church* will shine brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

## 2. The Light of the Gospel

The light of the gospel is the path that “shineth more and more unto the perfect day,”<sup>9</sup> and it shines brightest in our families and in temples throughout the world.

*Preach My Gospel* states: “Through the light of the gospel, families can resolve misunderstandings, contentions, and challenges. Families torn by discord can be healed through



repentance, forgiveness, and faith in the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Now more than ever, our families must be sources of great light to everyone around us. Families increase in light as they increase in love and kindness. As we establish families of “faith, . . . repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, [and] compassion,”<sup>11</sup> we will feel an increase in love towards the Savior and towards one another. The family will grow stronger, and the light in each of us will grow brighter.

We read in the Bible Dictionary that “only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”<sup>12</sup> We now have 155 operating temples and more coming soon. More and more families are sealed for time and all eternity. Members are submitting more and more names of ancestors to the temple to perform their saving ordinances. We truly are experiencing great joy and celebration on both sides of the veil!

In a darkening world, the *light of the gospel* will shine brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

### 3. The Light of Christ

You cannot speak of the light *in* the world without speaking of the Light *of* the World, Jesus Christ. A manifestation of a loving Heavenly Father is that everyone who comes to this life is blessed with the Light of Christ to help them return home. President Boyd K. Packer taught: “The Spirit of Christ is always there. . . . The Light of Christ is as universal as sunlight itself. Wherever there is human life, there is the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>13</sup> The Light of Christ “inviteth and enticeth to do good continually”<sup>14</sup> and prepares all who seek goodness and truth to receive the Holy Ghost.

The Savior teaches that He is the light that “enlighteneth your eyes,” “quickeneth your understandings,” and “giveth life to all things.”<sup>15</sup> The Light of Christ will help us see others through the Savior’s eyes. We will be more loving and understanding of the struggles of others. It will help us be more patient with those who may not worship as we do or serve as we might. It will help us understand the great plan

of happiness more fully and see how we all fit into that great loving plan. It gives life, meaning, and purpose to all that we do. Now, with all the happiness that will come to us as we more fully understand the Light of Christ, it will not match the joy that we feel when we see the Light of Christ working in others: family, friends, and even complete strangers.

I felt that joy when I heard about the efforts of a brave group of firefighters who fought to save a burning stake center in Southern California in 2015. As the fire raged, a battalion commander called an LDS friend to ask where the sacred relics and sacrament cups were kept so they could be saved. His friend assured him that there were no sacred relics and that the sacrament cups were actually very, very replaceable. But the commander felt he should do more, so he sent firefighters back into the burning building to pull every painting of Christ off of the walls that they might be preserved. They even placed one in the firetruck in the hope that the firefighters might be watched

over. I was truly touched by the commander’s kindness, goodness, and sensitivity to the Light during a dangerous and difficult time.

In a darkening world, the *Light of Christ* will shine brighter and brighter until the perfect day!

I again echo the words of Paul: “Let us put on the armour of light.”<sup>16</sup> I testify of Christ. He is the Light of the World. May we be strengthened by the light that is available to us through greater participation at church and greater application of gospel principles in our families. May we see the Light of Christ in others constantly and help them see it in themselves. As we receive that light, we will be blessed with more light, even until the perfect day when we again see “the Father of lights,”<sup>17</sup> our Heavenly Father. I so testify in the holy name of the Light of the World, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

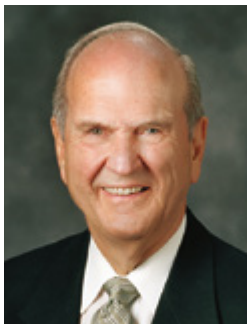
#### NOTES

1. 2 Corinthians 4:8–9.
2. 2 Corinthians 4:6.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “O How Great the Plan of Our God!” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 20.
4. 1 Nephi 12:17.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
6. Kim Cameron, *Positive Leadership: Strategies for Extraordinary Performance*, 2nd ed. (2012), xii; see also Kim S. Cameron, “Leading with Energy,” Wheatley Institution Fellow Notes, Feb. 17, 2017, wheatley.byu.edu.
7. See Cameron, *Positive Leadership*, 33, 36, 39.
8. See Quentin L. Cook, “The Lord Is My Light,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 65.
9. Proverbs 4:18.
10. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 3.
11. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
12. Bible Dictionary, “Temple.”
13. Boyd K. Packer, “The Light of Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2005, 13.
14. Moroni 7:13.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:11, 13.
16. Romans 13:12.
17. James 1:17; Doctrine and Covenants 67:9.



A firefighter rescues a painting of the Savior from a burning stake center in California, USA.





By President Russell M. Nelson  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives

*The gospel of Jesus Christ is filled with His power, which is available to every earnestly seeking daughter or son of God.*

My dear brothers and sisters, we live in a most difficult dispensation. Challenges, controversies, and complexities swirl around us. These turbulent times were foreseen by the Savior. He warned us that in our day the adversary would stir up anger in the hearts of men and lead them astray.<sup>1</sup> Yet our Heavenly Father never intended that we would deal with the maze of personal problems and social issues on our own.

God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son<sup>2</sup> to help us.<sup>3</sup> And His Son, Jesus Christ, gave His life for us. All so that we could have access to godly power—power sufficient to deal with the burdens, obstacles, and temptations of our day.<sup>4</sup> Today I would like to speak about *how* we can draw into our lives the power of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

We begin by learning about Him.<sup>5</sup> “It is impossible for [us] to be saved in ignorance.”<sup>6</sup> The more we know about the Savior’s ministry and mission<sup>7</sup>—the more we understand His doctrine<sup>8</sup>

and what He did for us—the more we know that He can provide the power that we need for our lives.

Earlier this year, I asked the young adults of the Church to consecrate a portion of their time each week to study *everything* Jesus said and did as recorded in the standard works.<sup>9</sup> I invited them to let the scriptural citations about Jesus Christ in the Topical Guide become their personal core curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

I gave that challenge because I had already accepted it myself. I read and underlined *every* verse cited about Jesus Christ, as listed under the main heading and the 57 subtitles in the Topical Guide.<sup>11</sup> When I finished that exciting exercise, my wife asked me what impact it had on me. I told her, “I am a different man!”

I felt a renewed devotion to Him as I read again in the Book of Mormon the Savior’s own statement about His mission in mortality. He declared:

“I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.



“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross.”<sup>12</sup>

As Latter-day Saints, we refer to His mission as the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which made resurrection a reality for all and made eternal life possible for those who repent of their sins and receive and keep essential ordinances and covenants.

It is doctrinally incomplete to speak of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice by shortcut phrases, such as “the Atonement” or “the enabling power of the Atonement” or “applying the Atonement” or “being

strengthened by the Atonement.” These expressions present a real risk of misdirecting faith by treating the *event* as if it had living existence and capabilities independent of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Under the Father’s great eternal plan, it is the Savior who suffered. It is the Savior who broke the bands of death. It is the Savior who paid the price for our sins and transgressions and blots them out on condition of our repentance. It is the Savior who delivers us from physical and spiritual death.

There is no amorphous entity called “the Atonement” upon which we may call for succor, healing, forgiveness, or power. Jesus Christ is the source. Sacred terms such as *Atonement* and *Resurrection* describe what the Savior did, according to the Father’s plan, so that we may live with hope in this life and gain eternal life in the world to come. The Savior’s atoning sacrifice—the central act of all human history—is best understood and appreciated when we expressly and clearly connect it to Him.

The importance of the Savior’s mission was emphasized by the Prophet Joseph Smith, who declared emphatically that “the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”<sup>13</sup>

It was this very statement of the Prophet that provided the incentive for 15 prophets, seers, and revelators to issue and sign their testimony to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of the Lord’s birth. That historic testimony is titled “The Living Christ.”<sup>14</sup> Many members have memorized its truths. Others barely know of its existence. As you seek to learn more about Jesus Christ, I urge you to study “The Living Christ.”

As we invest time in learning about the Savior and His atoning sacrifice, we are drawn to participate in another key element to accessing His power: we choose to have faith in Him and follow Him.

True disciples of Jesus Christ are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world. They are undaunted, devoted,





and courageous. I learned of such disciples during a recent assignment in Mexico, where I met with government officials as well as leaders of other religious denominations. Each thanked me for our members' heroic and successful efforts to protect and preserve strong marriages and families in their country.

There is nothing easy or automatic about becoming such powerful disciples. Our focus must be riveted on the Savior and His gospel. It is mentally rigorous to strive to look unto Him in *every* thought.<sup>15</sup> But when we do, our doubts and fears flee.<sup>16</sup>

Recently I learned of a fearless young Laurel. She was invited to participate in a statewide competition for her high school on the same evening she had committed to participate in a stake Relief Society meeting. When she realized the conflict and explained to competition officials that she would need to leave the competition early to attend an important meeting, she was told she would be disqualified if she did so.

What did this latter-day Laurel do? She kept her commitment to participate in the Relief Society meeting. As promised, she was disqualified from the statewide competition. When asked about her decision, she replied simply, "Well, the Church is more important, isn't it?"

Faith in Jesus Christ propels us to do things we otherwise would not do. Faith that motivates us to action gives us more access to His power.

We also increase the Savior's power in our lives when we make sacred covenants and keep those covenants with precision. Our covenants bind us to Him and give us godly power. As faithful disciples, we repent and follow Him into the waters of baptism. We walk along the covenant path to receive other essential ordinances.<sup>17</sup> And gratefully, God's plan provides for those blessings to be extended to ancestors who died without an opportunity to obtain them during their mortal lives.<sup>18</sup>

Covenant-keeping men and women seek for ways to keep themselves

unspotted from the world so there will be nothing blocking their access to the Savior's power. One faithful wife and mother wrote this recently: "These are troubled and perilous times. How blessed we are to have the increased knowledge of the plan of salvation and the inspired guidance from loving prophets, apostles, and leaders to help us sail these stormy seas safely. We stopped our habit of turning on the radio in the morning. Instead, we now listen to a general conference talk on our mobile phones every morning as we prepare ourselves for another day."

Another element in drawing the Savior's power into our lives is to reach up to Him in faith. Such reaching requires diligent, focused effort.

Do you remember the biblical story of the woman who suffered for 12 years with a debilitating problem?<sup>19</sup> She exercised great faith in the Savior, exclaiming, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole."<sup>20</sup>

This faithful, focused woman needed to stretch as far as she could



to access His power. Her physical stretching was symbolic of her spiritual stretching.

Many of us have cried out from the depths of our hearts a variation of this woman's words: "If I could spiritually stretch enough to draw the Savior's power into my life, I would know how to handle my heart-wrenching situation. I would know what to do. And I would have the power to do it."

When you reach up for the Lord's power in your life with the same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours. When the Savior knows you truly want to reach up to Him—when He can feel that the greatest desire of your heart is to draw His power into your life—you will be led by the Holy Ghost to know exactly what you should do.<sup>21</sup>

When you spiritually stretch beyond anything you have ever done before, then His power will flow into you.<sup>22</sup> And then you will understand the deep meaning of words we sing in the hymn "The Spirit of God":

*The Lord is extending the Saints' understanding. . . .*

*The knowledge and power of God are expanding;*

*The veil o'er the earth is beginning to burst.<sup>23</sup>*

The gospel of Jesus Christ is filled with His power, which is available to every earnestly seeking daughter or son of God. It is my testimony that when we draw His power into our lives, both He and we will rejoice.<sup>24</sup>

As one of His special witnesses, I declare that God lives! Jesus is the Christ! His Church has been restored to the earth! God's prophet upon the earth today is President Thomas S. Monson, whom I sustain with all my heart. I so testify, with my expression of love and blessing for each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 28:19–30.

2. See John 3:16.

3. Jesus was the Anointed One—anoined by Heavenly Father to be His personal representative in all things pertaining to the salvation of mankind. Jesus was anoined to be our Savior and Redeemer. Before the world was formed, Jesus was anoined to make immortality a reality and eternal life a possibility for all of God's children (see John 17:24; 1 Peter 1:20). Thus, Jesus bore two unique titles: *the Messiah* (Hebrew) and *the Christ* (Greek)—each meaning "anoined." (See Bible Dictionary, "Anointed One.")

4. We can protect ourselves by knowing and living by the word of God (see Ephesians 6:17–18; Doctrine and Covenants 27:18).

5. Under the direction of His Father, Jesus was Creator of the earth (see John 1:2–3) and other worlds without number (see Moses 1:33). Long before His mortal birth, Jesus was the great Jehovah—God of the Old Testament. It was Jehovah who

communed with Moses on Mount Sinai.

It was Jehovah who made a covenant with Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's lineage. And it was Jehovah who made covenants with families of the house of Israel. Jesus was also the promised Immanuel, as prophesied by Isaiah (see Isaiah 7:14).

6. Doctrine and Covenants 131:6.

7. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:40–41.

8. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21.

9. Holy Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

10. See Topical Guide, "Jesus Christ." In addition to text under that major heading, there are 57 subtitles about Him. For non-English editions of the scriptures, use Guide to the Scriptures.

11. More than 2,200 listings are cited in those 18 pages of the Topical Guide.

12. 3 Nephi 27:13–14.

13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.

14. See "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.

15. See Helaman 8:15.

16. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.

17. Jesus Christ taught us the importance of sacred ordinances, such as baptism (see John 3:5), the sacrament (see Doctrine and Covenants 59:9), and the endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple (see Doctrine and Covenants 124:39–42).

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–32.

19. See Luke 8:43–44.

20. Mark 5:28.

21. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.

22. When the faithful woman touched the Savior's clothing, He instantly responded, "I perceive that *virtue* [from the Greek *dunamis*, meaning "power"] is gone out of me" (Luke 8:46; emphasis added).

23. "The Spirit of God," *Hymns*, no. 2.

24. See 3 Nephi 17:20.



**Presented by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, President Monson has asked that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.  
Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell M. Nelson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, and Dale G. Renlund.

Those in favor, please manifest it.  
Any opposed may so indicate.  
It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.  
All in favor, please manifest it.  
Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

We gratefully acknowledge the service of Elder Bruce D. Porter, our friend and associate, who passed away on December 28, 2016. We express our love and heartfelt condolences to Sister Susan Porter and to their children and grandchildren. We are thankful to have served with this good man.

It is proposed that we release Taylor G. Godoy and John C. Pingree Jr. as Area Seventies. Those who wish to express appreciation to these brethren for their service, please so indicate.

It is proposed that we release with heartfelt gratitude Sisters Linda K. Burton, Carole M. Stephens, and Linda S. Reeves as the Relief Society





General Presidency. We likewise extend releases to members of the Relief Society general board.

All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation to these sisters for their remarkable service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Sister Jean B. Bingham as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency and Sister Bonnie H. Cordon as Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

Those who wish to extend appreciation to these sisters may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new General Authority Seventies: Taylor G. Godoy, Joni L. Koch, Adilson de Paula Parrella, John C. Pingree Jr., Brian K. Taylor, and Taniela B. Wakolo.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Jean B. Bingham to serve as Relief Society General President with Sharon L. Eubank as First Counselor and Reyna I. Aburto as Second Counselor.

It is further proposed that we sustain Bonnie H. Cordon to now serve as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency and Cristina B. Franco to serve as Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies: Luis R. Arbizú, David A. Benalcázar, Berne S. Broadbent, David L. Buckner, L. Todd Budge, Luciano Cascardi, Ting Tsung Chang, Pablo H. Chavez, Raymond A. Cutler, Fernando P. Del Carpio, José Luiz Del Guerso, Aleksandr A. Drachyov, I. Raymond Egbo, Carlos R. Fusco Jr., Jorge A. García, Gary F. Gessel, Guillermo I. Guardia, Marcel Guei, José Hernández, Karl D. Hirst, Ren S. Johnson, Jay B. Jones, Anthony M. Kaku, Paul N. Lekias, John A. McCune, Tomas S. Merdegia, Artur J. Miranda, Elie K. Monga, Juan C. Pozo, Anthony Quaisie, James R. Rasband, Carlos G. Revillo Jr., Martin C. Rios, Johnny F. Ruiz, K. Roy Tunnicliffe, and Moisés Villanueva.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies as presently constituted.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

The voting has been noted. Those who may have opposed any of the proposals should contact their stake presidents.

My dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church.

We now invite the new General Authority Seventies and the new Relief Society General Presidency to take their seats on the rostrum. President Monson always says, "It's a long walk." Thank you, sisters. Thank you, brethren. As a matter of information, Sister Franco is currently serving a mission with her husband in Argentina. She was just sustained, as you know, and will officially begin her service upon their return in July. ■

# Church Auditing Department Report, 2016

**Presented by Kevin R. Jergensen**  
Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

*To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

**D**ear Brethren: As directed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes—composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric—authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. Church entities disburse funds in accordance with approved budgets, policies, and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department, which consists of credentialed professionals and is independent of all other Church departments, has responsibility to perform audits for the purpose of providing reasonable assurance regarding contributions received,

expenditures made, and safeguarding of Church assets.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2016 have been recorded and administered in accordance with approved Church budgets, policies, and accounting practices. The Church follows the practices taught to its members of living within a budget, avoiding debt, and saving against a time of need.

Respectfully submitted,  
Church Auditing Department  
Kevin R. Jergensen  
Managing Director ■



# Statistical Report, 2016

**Presented by Brook P. Hales**  
Secretary to the First Presidency

**T**he First Presidency has issued the following statistics concerning the status of the Church as of December 31, 2016.

## Church Units

Stakes .....	3,266
Missions .....	421
Districts.....	556
Wards and Branches.....	30,304

## Church Membership

Total Membership .....	15,882,417
New Children of Record .....	109,246
Converts Baptized.....	240,131

## Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries.....	70,946
Church-Service Missionaries .....	33,695

## Temples

Temples Dedicated in 2016 (Provo City Center, Sapporo Japan, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, Fort Collins Colorado, Star Valley Wyoming, and Hartford Connecticut) .....	6
Temples Rededicated (Suva Fiji and Freiberg Germany).....	2
Temples in Operation at Year End.....	155



By Elder Robert D. Hales  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Becoming a Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*The constellation of characteristics that result from faith in Christ are all necessary to our standing strong in these last days.*

What does it mean to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ? A disciple is one who has been baptized and is willing to take upon him or her the name of the Savior and follow Him. A disciple strives to become as He is by keeping His commandments in mortality, much the same as an apprentice seeks to become like his or her master.

Many people hear the word *disciple* and think it means only “follower.” But genuine discipleship is a state of

being. This suggests more than studying and applying a list of individual attributes. Disciples live so that the characteristics of Christ are woven into the fiber of their beings, as into a spiritual tapestry.

Listen to the Apostle Peter’s invitation to become a disciple of the Savior:

“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

“And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

“And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”<sup>1</sup>

As you can see, weaving the spiritual tapestry of personal discipleship requires more than a single thread. In the Savior’s day, there were many who claimed to be righteous in one or another aspect of their lives. They practiced what I have called selective obedience. For example, they kept the commandment to refrain from work on the Sabbath yet criticized the Savior for healing on that holy day.<sup>2</sup> They gave alms to the poor but offered only their excess—what they did not need for themselves.<sup>3</sup> They fasted but only with long faces.<sup>4</sup> They prayed but only to be seen of men.<sup>5</sup> Jesus said, “They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”<sup>6</sup> Such men and women may focus on mastering a specific attribute or action but do not necessarily become as He is in their hearts.

Of these, Jesus declared:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”<sup>7</sup>

The attributes of the Savior, as we perceive them, are not a script to be followed or list to be checked off. They are interwoven characteristics, added one to another, which develop in us in interactive ways. In other words, we cannot obtain one Christlike characteristic without also obtaining and influencing others. As one characteristic becomes strong, so do many more.

In 2 Peter and in Doctrine and Covenants section 4, we learn that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. We measure our faith by what it leads us to do—by our obedience.





“If ye will have faith in me,” the Lord promised, “ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”<sup>8</sup> Faith is a catalyst. Without works, without virtuous living, our faith is without power to activate discipleship. Indeed, faith is dead.<sup>9</sup>

And so, Peter explains, “add to your faith virtue.” This virtue is more than sexual purity. It is cleanliness and holiness in mind and body. Virtue is also power. As we faithfully live the gospel, we will have power to be virtuous in every thought, feeling, and action. Our minds become more receptive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and the

Light of Christ.<sup>10</sup> We embody Christ not only in what we say and do but also in who we are.

Peter continues, “Add to [your] virtue, knowledge.” As we live virtuous lives, we come to know our Heavenly Father and His Son in a special way. “If any man will do [the Father’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine.”<sup>11</sup> This knowledge is personal testimony, born from personal experience. It is knowledge that transforms us so that our “light cleaveth unto [His] light” and our “virtue loveth [His] virtue.”<sup>12</sup> By our virtuous living, we make the journey from “I believe” to the glorious destination of “I know.”

Peter exhorts us to add “to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience.” As temperate disciples, we live the gospel in a balanced and steady way. We do not “run faster than [we have] strength.”<sup>13</sup> Day by day we move forward, undeterred by the refining challenges of mortality.

Being temperate in this way, we develop patience and trust in the Lord. We are able to rely on His design for our lives, even though we cannot see it with our own natural eyes.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, we can “be still and know that [He is] God.”<sup>15</sup> When faced with the storms of tribulation, we ask, “What wouldst





Thou have me learn from this experience?" With His plan and purposes in our hearts, we move forward not only enduring all things but also enduring them patiently and well.<sup>16</sup>

This patience, Peter teaches, leads us to godliness. As the Father is patient with us, His children, we become patient with one another and ourselves. We delight in the agency of others and the opportunity it gives them to grow "line upon line,"<sup>17</sup> "brighter and brighter until the perfect day."<sup>18</sup>

From temperance to patience and from patience to godliness, our natures change. We gain the brotherly kindness that is a hallmark of all true disciples. Like the Good Samaritan, we cross the road to minister to whoever is in need, even if they are not within the circle of our friends.<sup>19</sup> We bless them that curse us. We do good to those who despitefully use us.<sup>20</sup> Is any attribute more godly or Christlike?

I testify that the efforts we make to become disciples of our Savior are truly added upon until we are "possessed" of His love.<sup>21</sup> This love is the defining characteristic of a disciple of Christ:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."<sup>22</sup>

It is faith, hope, and charity that qualify us for the work of God.<sup>23</sup> "And now abideth . . . these three; but the greatest of these is charity."<sup>24</sup>

Brothers and sisters, now more than ever, we cannot be a "part-time disciple"! We cannot be a disciple on just one point of doctrine or another. The constellation of characteristics that result from faith in Christ—including the ones we have talked about today—are all necessary to our standing strong in these last days.

As we earnestly strive to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, these characteristics will be interwoven, added upon, and interactively strengthened in us. There will be no disparity between the kindness we show our enemies

and the kindness we bestow on our friends. We will be as honest when no one is looking as when others are watching. We will be as devoted to God in the public square as we are in our private closet.

I testify that everyone can be a disciple of the Savior. Discipleship is not constrained by age, gender, ethnic origin, or calling. Through our individual discipleship, we, as Latter-day Saints, build up a collective strength to bless our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Now is the time to recommit ourselves to being His disciples with all diligence.

Brothers and sisters, we are all called to be disciples of our Savior. Let this conference be your opportunity to "begin as in times of old, and come unto [Him] with all your heart."<sup>25</sup> This is His Church. I bear my special witness that He lives. May He bless us in our eternal quest to become devoted and valiant disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 2 Peter 1:5–7.
2. See Luke 13:14.
3. See Luke 21:4.
4. See Matthew 6:16.
5. See Matthew 6:5; see also Alma 38:13.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also Isaiah 29:13; Luke 6:46.
7. Matthew 7:22–23.
8. Moroni 7:33.
9. See James 2:20.
10. See 1 Corinthians 2:16.
11. John 7:17.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.
13. Mosiah 4:27.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:3.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:8.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 98:12.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
19. See Luke 10:33.
20. See Matthew 5:44.
21. Moroni 7:47.
22. 1 Corinthians 13:1–2.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
24. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
25. Mormon 9:27.



By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Songs Sung and Unsung

*I plead with each one of us to stay permanently and faithfully in the choir.*

“There is sunshine in my soul today,” Eliza Hewitt wrote, “more glorious and bright than glows in any earthly sky, for Jesus is my light.”<sup>1</sup> With radiance in every note, that marvelous old Christian hymn is virtually impossible to sing without smiling. But today I wish to lift out of context just one line from it that may help on days when we find it hard to sing *or* smile and “peaceful happy moments” do *not* seem to “roll.” If for a time you are unable to echo the joyous melodies you hear coming from others, I ask you to hold tenaciously to the line in this hymn that reassures, “Jesus listening can hear the songs [you] cannot sing.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the realities we face as children of God living in a fallen world is that some days are difficult, days when our faith and our fortitude are tested. These challenges may come from a lack in us, a lack in others, or just a lack in life, but whatever the reasons, we find they can rob us of songs we so much want to sing and darken the promise of “springtime in [the] soul”<sup>3</sup> that Eliza Hewitt celebrates in one of her verses.

So what do we do in such times? For one thing, we embrace the Apostle Paul’s counsel and “hope for that [which] we see not . . . [and] with patience wait for it.”<sup>4</sup> In those moments when the melody of joy falters below

our power of expression, we may have to stand silent for a time and simply listen to others, drawing strength from the splendor of the music around us. Many of us who are “musically challenged” have had our confidence bolstered and our singing markedly improved by positioning ourselves next to someone with a stronger, more certain voice. Surely it follows that in singing the anthems of eternity, we should stand as close as humanly possible to the Savior and Redeemer of the world—who has absolutely perfect pitch. We then take courage from His ability to hear our silence and take

hope from His melodious messianic intercession in our behalf. Truly it is “when the Lord is near” that “the dove of peace sings in my heart [and] the flow’rs of grace appear.”<sup>5</sup>

On those days when we feel a little out of tune, a little less than what we think we see or hear in others, I would ask us, especially the youth of the Church, to remember it is by divine design that not all the voices in God’s choir are the same. It takes variety—sopranos and altos, baritones and basses—to make rich music. To borrow a line quoted in the cheery correspondence of two remarkable Latter-day Saint women, “All God’s critters got a place in the choir.”<sup>6</sup> When we disparage our uniqueness or try to conform to fictitious stereotypes—stereotypes driven by an insatiable consumer culture and idealized beyond any possible realization by social media—we lose the richness of tone and timbre that God intended when He created a world of diversity.

Now, this is not to say that everyone in this divine chorus can simply



start shouting his or her own personal oratorio! Diversity is not cacophony, and choirs do require discipline—for our purpose today, Elder Hales, I would say discipleship—but once we have accepted divinely revealed lyrics and harmonious orchestration composed before the world was, then our Heavenly Father delights to have us sing in our own voice, not someone else's. Believe in yourself, and believe in Him. Don't demean your worth or denigrate your contribution. Above all, don't abandon your role in the chorus. Why? Because you are unique; you are irreplaceable. The loss of even one voice diminishes every other singer in this great mortal choir of ours, including the loss of those who feel they are on the margins of society or the margins of the Church.

But even as I encourage all of *you* to have faith regarding songs that may be difficult to sing, I readily acknowledge that for different reasons *I* struggle with other kinds of songs that should be—but are not yet—sung.

When I see the staggering economic inequality in the world, I feel guilty singing with Mrs. Hewitt of “blessings which [God] gives me now [and] joys ‘laid up’ above.”<sup>7</sup> That chorus cannot be fully, faithfully sung until we have honorably cared for the poor. Economic deprivation is a curse that keeps on cursing, year after year and generation after generation. It damages bodies, maims spirits, harms families, and destroys dreams. If we could do more to alleviate poverty, as Jesus repeatedly commands us to do, maybe some of the less fortunate in the world

could hum a few notes of “There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today,” perhaps for the first time in their lives.

I also find it hard to sing sunny, bouncy lyrics when so many around us suffer from mental and emotional illness or other debilitating health limitations. Unfortunately, these burdens sometimes persist despite the valiant efforts of many kinds of caregivers, including family members. I pray we will not let these children of God suffer in silence and that we will be endowed with His capacity to hear the songs they cannot now sing.

And someday I hope a great global chorus will harmonize across all racial and ethnic lines, declaring that guns, slurs, and vitriol are *not* the way to deal with human conflict. The declarations of heaven cry out to us that the only



way complex societal issues can ever be satisfactorily resolved is by loving God and keeping His commandments, thus opening the door to the one lasting, salvific way to love each other as neighbors. The prophet Ether taught that we should “hope for a better world.” Reading that thought a thousand years later, war- and violence-weary Moroni declared that the “more excellent way” to that world will always be the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

How grateful we are that in the midst of these kinds of challenges, there comes, from time to time, another kind of song that we find ourselves unable to sing, but for a different reason. This is when feelings are so deep and personal, even so sacred, that they either cannot be or should not be expressed—like Cordelia’s love for her father, of which she said: “My love’s . . . richer than my tongue. . . . I cannot heave my heart into my mouth.”<sup>9</sup> Coming to us as something holy, these sentiments are simply unutterable—spiritually ineffable—like the prayer Jesus offered for the Nephite children. Those who were witnesses to that event recorded:

“Eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard . . . so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;

“. . . *No tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak.*”<sup>10</sup>

These kinds of sanctified moments remain unuttered because expression, even if it were possible, might seem like desecration.

Brothers and sisters, we live in a mortal world with many songs we cannot or do not yet sing. But I plead with each one of us to stay permanently and faithfully in the choir, where we will be



able to savor forever that most precious anthem of all—“the song of redeeming love.”<sup>11</sup> Fortunately, the seats for this particular number are limitless. There is room for those who speak different languages, celebrate diverse cultures, and live in a host of locations. There is room for the single, for the married, for large families, and for the childless. There is room for those who once had questions regarding their faith and room for those who still do. There is room for those with differing sexual attractions. In short, there is a place for everyone who loves God and honors His commandments as the inviolable measuring rod for personal behavior, for if love of God is the melody of our shared song, surely our common quest to obey Him is the indispensable harmony in it. With divine imperatives of love and faith, repentance and compassion, honesty and forgiveness, there is room in this choir for all who wish to be there.<sup>12</sup> “Come as you are,” a loving Father says to each of us, but He adds, “Don’t plan to stay as you are.” We smile and remember that God is determined to make of us more than we thought we could be.

In this great oratorio that is His plan for our exaltation, may we humbly follow His baton and keep working on the songs we cannot sing, until we can offer those “carol[s] to [our] King.”<sup>13</sup> Then one day, as our much-loved hymn says:

*We’ll sing and we’ll shout with the armies of heaven,*

*Hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb! . . .  
 . . . As Jesus descends with his chariot of fire!*<sup>14</sup>

I testify that hour will come, that God our Eternal Father will again send to earth His Only Begotten Son, this time to rule and reign as King of kings forever. I testify that this is His restored Church and is the vehicle for bringing the teachings and saving ordinances of His gospel to all humankind. When His message “has penetrated every continent [and] visited every clime,”<sup>15</sup> Jesus will indeed “[show] his smiling face.”<sup>16</sup> There will be plenty of eternal sunshine for the soul that day. For this promised hour to come, I longingly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today,” *Hymns*, no. 227.
2. *Hymns*, no. 227.
3. *Hymns*, no. 227.
4. Romans 8:25.
5. *Hymns*, no. 227.
6. Bill Staines, “All God’s Critters Got a Place in the Choir,” in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Emma Lou Thayne, *All God’s Critters Got a Place in the Choir* (1995), 4.
7. *Hymns*, no. 227.
8. See Ether 12:4, 11.
9. William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, act 1, scene 1, lines 79–80, 93–94.
10. 3 Nephi 17:16–17; emphasis added.
11. Alma 5:26; see also Alma 26:13.
12. See 2 Nephi 26:33.
13. *Hymns*, no. 227.
14. “The Spirit of God,” *Hymns*, no. 2.
15. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 142.
16. *Hymns*, no. 227.



By Elder Gary B. Sabin  
Of the Seventy

# Stand Up Inside and Be All In

*May we recalculate our route if need be and look forward with great hope and faith. May we “stand up inside” by being valiant and “all in.”*

Several years ago our young granddaughter ran up to me and excitedly announced, “Grandpa, Grandpa, I scored all three goals at my soccer game today!”

I enthusiastically replied, “That’s great, Sarah!”

Her mother then looked at me with a twinkle in her eye and said, “The score was two to one.”

I didn’t dare ask who’d won!

Conference is a time of reflection, revelation, and sometimes *redirection*.

There is a car rental company with a GPS system called NeverLost. If you make a wrong turn once you put in your desired destination, the guiding voice does not say, “You fool!” Rather, in a very pleasant voice, it says, “Recalculating route—when possible, make a legal U-turn.”

In Ezekiel we read this wonderful promise:

“If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

“All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be

mentioned unto him.”<sup>1</sup>

What a fabulous promise, but it requires two *alls* to receive the promise of the third. Turn from all; keep all; then all is forgiven. This requires being “all in”!

We should not be like the man who, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, sent an envelope filled with cash along with an anonymous letter to the Internal Revenue Service which said, “Dear IRS: Enclosed please find money I owe for past taxes. P.S. If after this my conscience still bothers me, I’ll send you the rest.”<sup>2</sup>

That’s not how we do it! We don’t hold back to see what the minimum is

we can get by with. The Lord requires the heart and a willing mind.<sup>3</sup> Our whole heart! When we are baptized, we are fully immersed as a symbol of our promise to fully follow the Savior, not half-heartedly. When we are fully committed and “all in,” heaven shakes for our good.<sup>4</sup> When we are lukewarm or only partially committed, we lose out on some of heaven’s choicest blessings.<sup>5</sup>

Many years ago, I took the Scouts on a campout in the desert. The boys slept by a large fire they had made, and like every good Scout leader, I slept in the back of my truck. In the morning when I sat up and looked at the campsite, I saw one Scout, whom I will call Paul, who looked particularly rough around the edges. I asked how he had slept, and he replied, “Not very well.”

When I asked why, he said, “I was cold; the fire went out.”

I answered, “Well, fires do that. Wasn’t your sleeping bag warm enough?”

No answer.

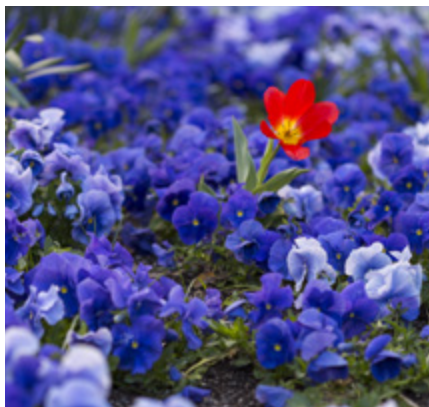
Then one of the other Scouts loudly volunteered, “He didn’t use his sleeping bag.”

I asked in disbelief, “Why not, Paul?”

Silence—then finally the sheepish reply: “Well, I thought if I didn’t unroll my sleeping bag, I wouldn’t have to roll it up again.”

True story: he froze for hours because he was trying to save five minutes of work. We may think, “How foolish! Who would ever do that?” Well, we do it all the time in much more dangerous ways. We are, in effect, refusing to unroll our spiritual sleeping bags when we don’t take the time to sincerely pray, study, and earnestly live the gospel each day; not only will the fire go out, but we will be unprotected and grow spiritually cold.

When we are complacent with our covenants, we are complicit with the



consequences. The Lord has counseled us “to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.”<sup>6</sup> And He further declared, “My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not.”<sup>7</sup>

In reality, it is much easier to be “all in” than partially in. When we are partially in or not in at all, there is, in the *Star Wars* vernacular, “a disturbance in the force.” We are out of sync with God’s will and therefore out of sync with the nature of happiness.<sup>8</sup> Isaiah said:

“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, no matter where we are or where we have been, we are not beyond the reach of the Savior, who said: “Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again.”<sup>10</sup>

As we continually repent and rely upon the Lord, we gain strength as we come full circle in possessing the humility and faith of a little child,<sup>11</sup> enriched with the wisdom borne from a life of experience. Job proclaimed, “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.”<sup>12</sup> It was Tennyson who wrote, “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure.”<sup>13</sup> The Lord has counseled, “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”<sup>14</sup>

Our son Justin passed away at age 19 after fighting a lifelong disease. In a sacrament meeting talk he gave not long before he left us, he shared a story that must have resonated with him about a father and his young son who went into a toy store where there



was an inflatable punching bag in the shape of a man. The boy punched the inflatable man, who tipped over and immediately bounced back after every punch. The father asked his young son why the man kept bouncing back up. The boy thought for a minute and then said, “I don’t know. I guess it’s because he’s standing up on the inside.” In order to be “all in,” we need to “stand up inside,” “come what may.”<sup>15</sup>

We stand up inside when we wait patiently upon the Lord to remove or give us strength to endure our thorns in the flesh.<sup>16</sup> Such thorns may be disease, disability, mental illness, death of a loved one, and so many other issues.

We stand up inside when we lift up the hands that hang down. We stand up inside when we defend the truth

against a wicked and secular world that is becoming increasingly more uncomfortable with light, calling evil good and good evil<sup>17</sup> and “condemning the righteous because of their righteousness.”<sup>18</sup>

Standing up inside in spite of difficulties is possible because of a clear conscience, the strengthening and comforting assurance from the Holy Ghost, and an eternal perspective which surpasses mortal understanding.<sup>19</sup> In our premortal life we shouted for joy at the opportunity to experience mortality.<sup>20</sup> We were “all in” as we excitedly made the decision to be valiant defenders of our Heavenly Father’s plan. It is time to stand up and defend His plan again!

My 97-year-old father recently passed away. Whenever someone



asked him how he was doing, his consistent reply was “On a scale of 1–10, I’m about a 25!” Even when this dear man could no longer stand or even sit and had great difficulty speaking, his answer was still the same. He was always standing up inside.

When my dad was 90, we were in an airport and I asked him if I could get him a wheelchair. He said, “No, Gary—maybe when I get old.” And then he added, “Besides, if I get tired of walking, I can always run.” If we are not able to be “all in” the way we are presently walking, then maybe we need to run; maybe we need to recalculate our route. We might even need to make a U-turn. We might need to study more intently, pray more earnestly, or just let some things go so we can hang on to those things that really matter. We may need to let go of the world so we can hang on to eternity. My father understood this.

When he was in the navy during World War II, there were those in the great and spacious building<sup>21</sup> who made fun of his principles, but two of his shipmates, Dale Maddox and Don Davidson, took note and did not. They asked, “Sabin, why are you so different from everyone else? You have high morals and don’t drink, smoke, or swear, but you seem calm and happy.”

Their positive impression of my father did not match what they had been taught about the Mormons, and my father was able to teach and

baptize both shipmates. Dale’s parents were very upset and warned him that if he joined the Church he would lose his sweetheart, Mary Olive, but she met with the missionaries at his request and was also baptized.

Near the end of the war, President Heber J. Grant called for missionaries, including some married men. In 1946, Dale and his wife, Mary Olive, decided Dale should serve even though they were expecting their first child. They eventually had nine children—three boys and six girls. All nine served missions, followed by Dale and Mary Olive, who served three missions of their own. Dozens of grandchildren have also served. Two of their sons, John and Matthew Maddox, are currently members of the Tabernacle Choir, as is Matthew’s son-in-law Ryan. The Maddox family now numbers 144 and are wonderful examples of being “all in.”

In going through my dad’s papers, we came across a letter from Jennifer Richards, one of the five daughters of the other shipmate, Don Davidson. She wrote: “Your righteousness changed our lives. It is hard to comprehend what our lives would be like without the Church. My dad died loving the gospel and trying to live it to the end.”<sup>22</sup>

It is hard to measure the impact for good each individual can have by standing up inside. My father and his two shipmates refused to listen to those in the great and spacious building who were pointing the finger of scorn.<sup>23</sup>

They knew that it is far better to follow the Creator than the crowd.

The Apostle Paul could have been describing our day when he told Timothy that “some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling.”<sup>24</sup> There is a lot of “vain jangling” going on in the world today. It is the conversation of those in the great and spacious building.<sup>25</sup> Often it appears as a form of rationalization to justify wickedness or manifests itself when people lose their way and accelerate. It sometimes comes from those who have not paid the price to be “all in” and prefer to follow the natural man as opposed to the prophet.

Gratefully, we know how it ends for the faithful. When we are “all in,” we have the all-encompassing assurance that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”<sup>26</sup> As Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “Don’t fear, just live right.”<sup>27</sup>

My father-in-law taught at BYU and loved BYU football but could not bring himself to watch their games because he was so nervous about the outcome. Then a wonderful thing happened—the VCR was invented, which made it possible for him to record the games. If BYU won, he would watch the recording with perfect confidence, absolutely certain of the ending! If they were penalized unfairly, injured, or behind late in the fourth quarter, he wasn’t stressed because he knew they would pull it out! You might say he had “a perfect brightness of hope!”<sup>28</sup>

So it is with us. As we are faithful, we can have equal certainty that things will work out well for us in the end. The Lord’s promises are sure. This does not mean this mortal university will be easy or without many tears, but as Paul wrote, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the



things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>29</sup>

Brothers and sisters, no one has sinned tomorrow. May we recalculate our route if need be and look forward with great hope and faith. May we “stand up inside” by being valiant and “all in.” May we be pure and courageous in defending our Heavenly Father’s plan and the mission of His Son, our Savior. I bear you my witness that our Father lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and of the reality of the great plan of happiness. I pray the Lord’s choicest blessings to be with you, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Ezekiel 18:21–22.
2. See, for example, Roy B. Zuck, comp., *The Speaker’s Quote Book: Over 5,000 Illustrations and Quotations for All Occasions* (2009), 107–8.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
5. See Revelation 3:15–16.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 29:17.
8. See Alma 41:11.
9. Isaiah 57:20–21.
10. 3 Nephi 9:22.
11. See 3 Nephi 11:37–38.
12. Job 17:9.
13. Alfred Tennyson, “Sir Galahad,” in *Poems of the English Race*, sel. Raymond MacDonald Alden (1921), 296.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
15. See Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 26–28.
16. See 2 Corinthians 12:7.
17. See Isaiah 5:20.
18. Helaman 7:5.
19. See Philippians 4:7.
20. See Job 38:7.
21. See 1 Nephi 8:26.
22. Jennifer Richards, letter to Marvin Sabin, July 5, 2009.
23. See 1 Nephi 8:27, 33.
24. 1 Timothy 1:6.
25. See 1 Nephi 8:26–28.
26. Romans 8:28.
27. See Bangambiki Habyarinmana, *Inspirational Quotes for All Occasions* (2013).
28. 2 Nephi 31:20.
29. 1 Corinthians 2:9.



By Elder Valeri V. Cordón  
Of the Seventy

## The Language of the Gospel

*Powerful teaching is extremely important to preserve the gospel in our families, and it requires diligence and effort.*

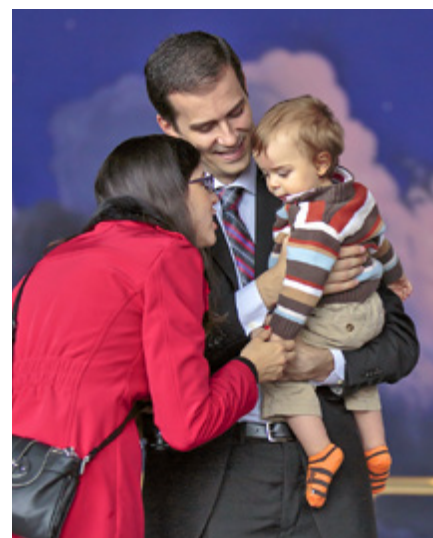
After being called as a General Authority, I moved with my family from Costa Rica to Salt Lake City for my first assignment. Here in the United States, I have been blessed to visit wonderful people of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. Among them are many who, like me, were born in the countries of Latin America.

I have noticed that many of the first-generation Hispanics here speak Spanish as their primary language and enough English to communicate with others. The second generation, who were either born in the United States or came at an early age and attend school here, speak very good English and perhaps some broken Spanish. And often by the third generation, Spanish, the native language of their ancestors, is lost.<sup>1</sup>

In linguistic terms, this is simply called “language loss.” Language loss may happen when families move to a foreign land where their native language is not predominant. It happens not only among Hispanics but also among populations throughout the world where a native language is replaced in favor of a

new one.<sup>2</sup> Even Nephi, a prophet in the Book of Mormon, was concerned about losing the native language of his fathers when he was preparing to move to the promised land. Nephi writes, “Behold, it is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that *we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers.*”<sup>3</sup>

But Nephi was also concerned about losing another kind of language. In the next verse, he continues, “And





also that *we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets*, which have been delivered unto them by the Spirit and power of God, since the world began, even down unto this present time.”<sup>4</sup>

I noticed a similarity between preserving a mother tongue and preserving the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Today in my analogy, I would like to emphasize not any particular earthly language but rather an eternal language that must be preserved in our families and never lost. I speak of the language<sup>5</sup> of the gospel of Jesus Christ. By “language of the gospel,” I mean all the teachings of our prophets, our obedience to those teachings, and our following righteous traditions.

I will discuss three ways that this language can be preserved.

#### First: Being More Diligent and Concerned at Home

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord invited many prominent members of the Church, including Newel K. Whitney, to set their homes in order. The Lord said, “My servant Newel K. Whitney . . . hath need to be chastened, and set in order his family, and see that *they are more diligent and concerned at home*, and pray always, or they shall be removed out of their place.”<sup>6</sup>

One factor that influences language loss is when parents don’t spend time teaching their children the native language. It is not enough to merely *speak* the language in the home. If parents

desire to preserve their language, it must be *taught*. Research has found that parents who make a conscious effort to preserve their native language tend to succeed in doing so.<sup>7</sup> So what would be a conscious effort to preserve the language of the gospel?

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles cautioned that “weak gospel teaching and modeling in the home” is a powerful cause that may break the cycle of multi-generational families in the Church.<sup>8</sup>

We can therefore conclude that powerful teaching is extremely important to preserve the gospel in our families, and it requires diligence and effort.

We have been invited many times to acquire the practice of daily family and personal scripture study.<sup>9</sup> Many families that are doing this are blessed each day with greater unity and a closer relationship with the Lord.

When will daily scripture study happen? It will happen when parents take the scriptures in hand and, with love, invite the family to gather together to study. It is difficult to see this study happening in any other way.

Fathers and mothers, don’t miss out on these great blessings. Don’t wait until it’s too late!

#### Second: Strong Modeling in the Home

One linguistics expert wrote that to preserve a native language, “you need to *bring the language alive* for your children.”<sup>10</sup> We “bring language alive” when our teaching and modeling work together.

When I was young, I worked in my father’s factory during vacations. The first question my father always asked after I received my salary was “What are you going to do with your money?”

I knew the answer and responded, “Pay my tithing and save for my mission.”

After working with him for about eight years and constantly answering his same question, my father figured he had taught me about paying my tithing. What he didn’t realize was that I had learned this important principle in just one weekend. Let me tell you how I learned that principle.

After some events related to a civil war in Central America, my father’s business went bankrupt. He went from about 200 full-time employees to fewer than five sewing operators who worked as needed in the garage of our home. One day during those difficult times, I heard my parents discussing whether they should pay tithing or buy food for the children.

On Sunday, I followed my father to see what he was going to do. After our Church meetings, I saw him take an envelope and put his tithing in it. That was only part of the lesson. The question that remained for me was what we were going to eat.

Early Monday morning, some people knocked on our door. When I opened it, they asked for my father. I called for him, and when he arrived, the visitors told him about an urgent sewing order they needed as quickly as possible. They told him that the order was so urgent that they would pay for it in advance. That day I learned the principles of paying tithing and the blessings that follow.

In the New Testament, the Lord talks about modeling. He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father

do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”<sup>11</sup>

It is not enough just to *talk* to our children about the importance of temple marriage, fasting, and keeping the Sabbath day holy. They must see us making room in our schedules to attend the temple as frequently as we can. They need to see our commitment to fasting regularly<sup>12</sup> and keeping the entire Sabbath day holy. If our youth cannot fast two meals, cannot study the scriptures regularly, and cannot turn off the TV during a big game on Sunday, will they have the spiritual self-discipline to resist the powerful temptations of today’s challenging world, including the temptation of pornography?

### Third: Traditions

Another way language can be altered or lost is when other languages and traditions are mixed with a mother tongue.<sup>13</sup>

In the early years of the restored Church, the Lord invited many prominent members of the Church to set their homes in order. He began His invitation by addressing two ways we may lose light and truth from our homes: “That wicked one cometh and *taketh away light and truth*, through *disobedience*, from the children of men, and *because of the tradition of their fathers*.”<sup>14</sup>

As families, we need to avoid any tradition that will prevent us from keeping the Sabbath day holy or having daily scripture study and prayer at home. We need to close the digital doors of our home to pornography and all other evil influences. To combat the worldly traditions of our day, we need to use the scriptures and the voice of our modern prophets to teach our children about their divine identity, their purpose in life, and the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

In the scriptures, we find several examples of “language loss.”<sup>15</sup> For example:

“Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that *could not understand the words* of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers. . . .

“And now because of their unbelief *they could not understand the word of God*; and their hearts were hardened.”<sup>16</sup>

For the rising generation, the gospel became a strange language. And while the benefits of maintaining a native language are sometimes debated, in the context of the plan of salvation there is *no debate* about the eternal consequences of losing the language of the gospel in our homes.

As children of God, we are imperfect people trying to learn a perfect language.<sup>17</sup> Just as a mother is compassionate with her little children, our Heavenly Father is patient with our imperfections and mistakes. He treasures and understands our feeblest utterances, mumbled in sincerity, as if they were fine poetry. He rejoices at the sound of our first gospel words. He teaches us with perfect love.

No achievement in this life, important as it may be, will be relevant if we lose the language of the gospel in our families.<sup>18</sup> It is my testimony that Heavenly Father will bless us in our efforts as we strive to embrace His language, even until we become fluent in this higher level of communication, which always was our mother tongue. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. Among Hispanics, by the third generation “the level of English monolingualism is . . . 72 percent” (Richard Alba, “Bilingualism





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- Persists, but English Still Dominates,” Migration Policy Institute, Feb. 1, 2005, [migrationpolicy.org/article/bilingualism-persists-english-still-dominates](http://migrationpolicy.org/article/bilingualism-persists-english-still-dominates)).
2. “Speaking only English is the predominant pattern by the third generation” (Alba, “Bilingualism Persists, but English Still Dominates”).
  3. 1 Nephi 3:19; emphasis added.
  4. 1 Nephi 3:20; emphasis added.
  5. A language can be defined as “a system of communication used by a particular country or community” (Oxford Living Dictionaries, “language,” [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com)).
  6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:50; emphasis added.
  7. “[Preserving a native language] is possible, but it takes dedication and planning” (Eowyn Crisfield, “Heritage Languages: Fighting a Losing Battle?” [onraisingbilingualchildren.com/2013/03/25/heritage-languages-fighting-a-losing-battle](http://onraisingbilingualchildren.com/2013/03/25/heritage-languages-fighting-a-losing-battle)). “For example, German speakers in the Midwest were successful in maintaining their mother tongue across generations” (Alba, “Bilingualism Persists, but English Still Dominates”).
  8. David A. Bednar, “Multigenerational Families,” in General Conference Leadership Meetings, Apr. 2015, [broadcasts.lds.org](http://broadcasts.lds.org).
  9. One modern example is instruction from the First Presidency: “We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities” (First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999).
  10. “You need to *bring the language alive* for your children, so that they can understand and communicate and feel a part of the people represented by the language” (Crisfield, “Heritage Languages: Fighting a Losing Battle?” emphasis added).
  11. John 5:19.
  12. “A proper fast day observance typically includes abstaining from food and drink for two consecutive meals in a 24-hour period, attending fast and testimony meeting, and giving a generous fast offering to help care for those in need” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 21.1.17).
  13. See Omni 1:17.
  14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:39; emphasis added.
  15. In the context of this talk, “language loss” refers to how the gospel can be lost (see Judges 2:10; Omni 1:17; 3 Nephi 1:30).
  16. Mosiah 26:1, 3; emphasis added.
  17. See Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48.
  18. See Matthew 16:24–26.

# Overcoming the World

*Overcoming the world is not one defining moment in a lifetime, but a lifetime of moments that define an eternity.*

Many years ago, President David O. McKay told of a beautiful experience he had while sailing on a boat toward Samoa. After falling asleep, he “beheld in vision something infinitely sublime. In the distance,” he said, “I beheld a beautiful white city. . . . Trees with luscious fruit . . . and flowers in perfect bloom abounded everywhere. . . . A great concourse of people [was] approaching the city. Each one wore a white flowing robe. . . . Instantly my attention . . . centered upon their leader, and though I could see only the profile of his features . . . , I recognized him at once

as my Savior! The . . . radiance of his countenance [was] glorious. . . . [The] peace about him . . . was divine!”

President McKay continues, “The city . . . was his . . . the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.”

President McKay wondered, “Who [are] they? [Who are these people?]”

He explains what happened next: “As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to [words in] a semicircle that . . . appeared above [the people], . . . written in gold . . . :

*“These Are They Who Have Overcome the World—*



*“Who Have Truly Been Born Again!”<sup>1</sup>*

For decades, I have remembered the words: “These are they who have overcome the world.”

The blessings that the Lord has promised to those who overcome the world are breathtaking. They will be “clothed in white . . . and [named in] the book of life.” The Lord “will confess [their names] before [the] Father, and before his angels.”<sup>2</sup> Each shall have “part in the first resurrection,”<sup>3</sup> receive eternal life,<sup>4</sup> and “go no more out”<sup>5</sup> from the presence of God.

Is it possible to overcome the world and receive these blessings? Yes, it is.

**Love for the Savior**

Those who overcome the world develop an all-encompassing love for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

His divine birth, His perfect life, His infinite Atonement at Gethsemane and Golgotha assured the Resurrection of each of us. And with our sincere repentance, He alone is able to cleanse us from our sins, allowing us to return to the presence of God. “We love him, because he first loved us.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”<sup>7</sup>

Later He added, “I will that ye should overcome the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Overcoming the world is not one defining moment in a lifetime, but a lifetime of moments that define an eternity.

It can begin as a child learns to pray and reverently sings, “I’m trying to be like Jesus.”<sup>9</sup> It continues as a person studies the life of the Savior in the New Testament and ponders the power of the Savior’s Atonement in the Book of Mormon.

Praying, repenting, following the Savior, and receiving His grace lead us



to better understand why we are here and who we are to become.

Alma described it this way: “A mighty change [is] wrought in their hearts, and they [humble] themselves and put their trust in the true and living God . . . [remaining] faithful until the end.”<sup>10</sup>

Those overcoming the world know that they will be accountable to their Heavenly Father. Sincerely changing and repenting of sins is no longer restraining but liberating, as “sins [of] scarlet . . . [become] white as snow.”<sup>11</sup>

**Accountability to God**

Those of the world have difficulty with accountability to God—like a child who parties in his parents’ home while they are out of town, enjoying the ruckus, refusing to think about the consequences when the parents return 24 hours later.

The world is more interested in indulging the natural man than in subduing him.

Overcoming the world is not a global invasion but a private, personal battle, requiring hand-to-hand combat with our own internal foes.

Overcoming the world means treasuring the greatest commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”<sup>12</sup>

The Christian writer C. S. Lewis described it this way: “Christ says ‘Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You.’”<sup>13</sup>

Overcoming the world is keeping our promises to God—our baptismal and temple covenants and our oath of faithfulness to our eternal companion. Overcoming the world leads us humbly to the sacrament table each week, asking for forgiveness and pledging to “remember him and keep his commandments,” that we “may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>14</sup>

Our love for the Sabbath day does not end when the chapel doors close behind us but instead opens the doors to a beautiful day of resting from routine tasks, studying, praying, and reaching out to family and others who need our attention. Instead of breathing a sigh of relief when church is over and



frantically running in search of a television before the football game begins, let our focus remain on the Savior and upon His holy day.

The world is incessantly pulled by a flood of enticing and seductive voices.<sup>15</sup>

Overcoming the world is trusting in the one voice that warns, comforts, enlightens, and brings peace “not as the world giveth.”<sup>16</sup>

#### Unselfishness

Overcoming the world means turning ourselves outward, remembering the second commandment<sup>17</sup>: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”<sup>18</sup> The happiness of our spouse is more important than our own pleasure. Helping our children to love God and keep His commandments is a primary priority. We willingly share our material blessings through tithing, fast offerings, and giving to those in need. And as our spiritual antennas are pointed heavenward, the Lord guides us to those we can help.

The world builds its universe around itself, proudly proclaiming: “Look at me compared to my neighbor! Look at what is mine! See how important I am!”

The world is easily irritated, disinterested, and demanding, loving the cheers of the crowd, while overcoming the world brings humility, empathy, patience, and compassion for those different than yourself.

#### Safety in the Prophets

Overcoming the world will always mean that we will have some beliefs that are ridiculed by the world. The Savior said:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.”<sup>19</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson said this morning, “True disciples of Jesus Christ are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world.”<sup>20</sup>

A disciple of Christ is not alarmed if a post about her faith does not receive 1,000 likes or even a few friendly emojis.

Overcoming the world is being less concerned with our online connections and more concerned with our heavenly connection to God.

The Lord gives us safety as we heed the guidance from His living prophets and apostles.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: “The world can be . . . challenging. . . . [As we go to the temple], . . . we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation. . . . We will be renewed and fortified.”<sup>21</sup>

With increasing temptations, distractions, and distortions, the world attempts to beguile the faithful into dismissing the rich spiritual experiences of one’s past, redefining them as foolish deceptions.

Overcoming the world is remembering, even when we are discouraged, the times we have felt the love and light of the Savior. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained one of these experiences this way: “I had been blessed, and I knew that God knew that I knew I had been blessed.”<sup>22</sup> Although we may temporarily feel forgotten, we do not forget.

Overcoming the world does not mean we live a cloistered life, protected from the unfairness and difficulties of mortality. Rather, it opens the more expansive view of faith, drawing us to the Savior and His promises.

While perfection is not complete in this life, overcoming the world keeps

our hope aflame that one day we “shall stand before [our Redeemer]; [and] see his face with pleasure,”<sup>23</sup> and hear His voice: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.”<sup>24</sup>

#### The Example of Elder Bruce D. Porter

On December 28 of this past year, our dear friend and beloved General Authority Elder Bruce D. Porter completed his mortality. He was 64 years old.

I first met Bruce when we were students at Brigham Young University. He was one of the best and the brightest. After he received his doctoral degree from Harvard University, emphasizing Russian affairs, Bruce’s thinking and writing brought prominence that could have derailed him, but the wealth and praise of the world never clouded his view.<sup>25</sup> His loyalty was to his Savior, Jesus Christ; to his eternal companion, Susan; to his children and grandchildren.



*Elder and Sister Porter with their young family.*



*The Porters, while serving together in Russia.*



Bruce was born with a kidney defect. He had surgery, but over time his kidneys continued to decline.

Shortly after Bruce’s call as a General Authority in 1995, we served together with our families in Frankfurt, Germany, where his work centered in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Life for Elder Porter changed dramatically in 1997 when his kidney function and health began to fail. The Porter family returned to Salt Lake City.

During his 22 years of service in the Seventy, Bruce was hospitalized numerous times, including for 10 surgeries. Doctors told Susan on two occasions that Bruce would not live through the night, but he did.

For more than 12 years of his service as a General Authority, Bruce was on dialysis to clean his blood. For much of that time, the dialysis consumed five evenings a week for four hours each treatment so that he could serve in his calling during the day and accept conference assignments on the weekends. When his health did not improve after several priesthood blessings, Bruce was puzzled, but he knew in whom he trusted.<sup>26</sup>

In 2010, Bruce received a kidney from his son David. This time his body did not reject the transplant. It was a miracle, bringing renewed health and eventually allowing him and Susan to

return to their beloved Russia, with him serving in the Area Presidency.

On December 26 of last year, after fighting continuous infections in a hospital in Salt Lake City, he asked the doctors to leave the room. Bruce told Susan “that he knew through the Spirit that there was nothing the doctors could do that would save his life. He knew . . . that Heavenly Father would take him home. He was filled with peace.”<sup>27</sup>

On December 28, Bruce returned to his family home. A few hours later, surrounded by loved ones, he peacefully returned to his heavenly home.

Years ago, Bruce Porter wrote these words to his children:

“The testimony I have of the reality and love of Jesus Christ has been the compass of my life. . . . It [is] a pure, burning witness of the Spirit that he lives, that he is my Redeemer and Friend in every time of need.”<sup>28</sup>

“Our challenge . . . is to come to know [the Savior] . . . and, through faith in him, to overcome the trials and temptations of this world.”<sup>29</sup>

“Let us be faithful and true, trusting in him.”<sup>30</sup>

Bruce Douglas Porter overcame the world.

May we each try a little harder in our efforts to overcome the world, not excusing serious offenses yet being

patient with minor slips and falls, eagerly hastening our speed and generously helping others. As you trust more fully in the Savior, I promise you blessings of greater peace in this life and a greater assurance of your eternal destiny, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 1–2.
2. Revelation 3:5.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 76:64.
4. See Revelation 2, chapter heading.
5. Revelation 3:12.
6. 1 John 4:19.
7. John 16:33.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:2.
9. “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78.
10. Alma 5:13.
11. Isaiah 1:18.
12. Mark 12:30.
13. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1960), 153.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
15. See James E. Faust, “The Voice of the Spirit” (Brigham Young University fire-side, Sept. 5, 1993), speeches.byu.edu.
16. John 14:27.
17. See Mark 12:31.
18. Matthew 23:11.
19. John 15:18–19.
20. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 40.
21. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 93.
22. Personal conversation with Elder Neal A. Maxwell referring to a story shared in his April 2004 conference talk, “Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been” (see *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 44–46).
23. Enos 1:27.
24. Matthew 25:34.
25. An example of Elder Porter’s intellectual capacity is his 400-page book *War and the Rise of the State*, written 23 years ago. It is still available and widely circulated among political thinkers.
26. Personal correspondence from Susan Porter, dated Mar. 6, 2017.
27. Personal correspondence from Susan Porter, dated Mar. 6, 2017.
28. Bruce D. Porter, *The King of Kings* (2000), 14, 15.
29. Bruce D. Porter, *The King of Kings*, 7.
30. Bruce D. Porter, *The King of Kings*, 18.



By Elder M. Russell Ballard  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Return and Receive

*To return to God’s presence and to receive the eternal blessings that come from making and keeping covenants are the most important goals we can set.*

My brothers and sisters, it is now my assignment to speak to you, and your assignment is to listen. My goal is to finish my assignment before you finish yours. I will do my best.

Over the years, I have observed that those who accomplish the most in this world are those with a vision for their lives, with goals to keep them focused on their vision and tactical plans for how to achieve them. Knowing where you are going and how you expect to get there can bring meaning, purpose, and accomplishment to life.

Some have difficulty differentiating between a goal and a plan until they learn that a goal is a destination or an *end*, while a plan is the route by which you get there. For example, we can have a goal to drive to a certain unfamiliar location, and as some of you dear sisters know, we men often think we know how to get there—often resulting in our saying, “I know it must be just around the next corner.” My wife must be smiling. The goal was clear, but there wasn’t a good plan in place to reach the destination.

Goal setting is essentially beginning with the end in mind. And planning





is devising a way to get to that end. A key to happiness lies in understanding what destinations truly matter—and then spending our time, effort, and attention on the things that constitute a sure way to arrive there.

God, our Heavenly Father, has given us the perfect example of goal setting and planning. His goal is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man [and woman],”<sup>1</sup> and His means to achieve it is the plan of salvation.

Our beloved Heavenly Father’s plan includes giving us a growing, stretching, learning, physical mortality through which we can become more like Him. Clothing our eternal spirits in physical bodies; living by the teachings and commandments of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and forming eternal families allows us, through the Savior’s Atonement, to fulfill God’s goal of immortality and eternal life for His children with Him in His celestial kingdom.

Wise goal setting includes the understanding that short-term goals are only effective if they lead to clearly understood longer-term goals. I believe that one important key to happiness is to learn how to set our own goals and establish our own plans within the framework of our Heavenly Father’s eternal plan. If we focus on this eternal path, we will inevitably qualify to return to His presence.

It is good to have goals and plans for our careers, for our education, even for our golf game. It is also important to have goals for our marriages, our families, and our Church councils and callings; this is especially true for missionaries. But our greatest and most overriding goals should fit into Heavenly Father’s eternal plan. Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”<sup>2</sup>



Experts on goal setting tell us that the simpler and more straightforward a goal is, the more power it will have. When we can reduce a goal to one clear image or one or two powerful and symbolic words, that goal can then become part of us and guide virtually everything we think and do. I believe that there are two words that, in this context, symbolize God’s goals for us and our most important goals for ourselves. The words are *return* and *receive*.

To *return* to His presence and to *receive* the eternal blessings that come from making and keeping covenants are the most important goals we can set.

We *return* and *receive* by having “unshaken faith in [the Lord Jesus Christ], relying wholly upon” His

merits, pressing “forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men [and women] . . . , feasting upon the word of Christ, and endur[ing] to the end.”<sup>3</sup>

Lucifer did not accept our Father’s plan that allowed us to *return* to His presence and *receive* His blessings. In fact, Lucifer rebelled and attempted to completely modify our Father’s plan, wanting to take the glory, honor, and power of God to himself. As a result, he was cast out with his minions from God’s presence and “became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men [and women], and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto [the Lord’s] voice.”<sup>4</sup>

Because of his premortal choices, Satan can neither *return* nor *receive*. The only thing left for him is to oppose the Father's plan by using every possible enticement and temptation to bring us down and make us miserable like unto himself.<sup>5</sup> Satan's plan to accomplish his diabolical goal applies to every individual, generation, culture, and society. He uses loud voices—voices that seek to drown out the small and still voice of the Holy Spirit that can show us “all things” we should do to *return* and *receive*.<sup>6</sup>

These voices belong to those who disregard gospel truth and who use the internet, social and print media, radio, television, and movies to present in an enticing way immorality, violence, ugly language, filth, and sleaze in a way that distracts us from our goals and the plans we have for eternity.

These voices may also include well-intentioned individuals who are blinded by the secular philosophies of men and women and who seek to

destroy the faith and divert the eternal focus of those who are simply trying to *return* to the presence of God and *receive* “all that [our] Father hath.”<sup>7</sup>

I have found that to stay focused on *returning* and *receiving* the promised blessings, I need to regularly take time to ask myself, “How am I doing?”

It's kind of like having a personal, private interview with yourself. And if that sounds unusual, think about it: who in this world knows you better than you know yourself? You know your thoughts, your private actions, your desires, and your dreams, goals, and plans. And you know better than anyone how you are progressing along the road to *returning* and *receiving*.

As a guide for me during this private, personal review, I like to read and ponder the introspective words found in the fifth chapter of Alma, wherein Alma asks: “Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in

your hearts?”<sup>8</sup> Alma's questions are a reminder of what our goals and plans ought to include in order to *return* and *receive*.

Remember the Savior's invitation to “come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”<sup>9</sup>

As we increase our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's power to give rest unto our souls by forgiving sins, redeeming imperfect relationships, healing the spiritual wounds that stifle growth, and strengthening and enabling us to develop the attributes of Christ, we will more deeply appreciate the magnitude of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

During the coming weeks, find time to review your life's goals and your plans, and make sure they align with our Heavenly Father's great plan for our happiness. If you need to repent and change, then consider doing so now. Take the time to prayerfully think about what adjustments are needed to help you keep your “eye single to the glory of God.”<sup>11</sup>

We must keep the doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ at the center of our goals and plans. Without Him, no eternal goal is possible, and our plans to achieve our eternal goals will surely fail.

One additional help is “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,”<sup>12</sup> which was presented to the Church on January 1, 2000. Place a copy where you can see it, and take time to review each of the statements found in this inspired testimony of Christ by His special witnesses who signed it.

I would urge you to study it along with “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” We speak often about the family proclamation, but please





remember to read it in light of the saving power of the living Christ. Without the living Christ, our fondest expectations will be unfulfilled. As the family proclamation states: “The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”<sup>13</sup>

This can happen only because the living Christ is the atoning Savior and Redeemer of the world.

In this regard, you may also consider searching the scriptures to expand your understanding of the specific truths found in “The Living Christ.”

Prayerfully reading “The Living Christ” is like reading the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the prophets of the Book of Mormon. It will increase your faith in the Savior and help you stay focused on Him as you follow your plans to reach your eternal goals.

Despite our mistakes, shortcomings, detours, and sins, Jesus Christ’s Atonement allows us to repent,

prepared to *return* and *receive* the matchless blessings God has promised—to live forever with the Father and the Son in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

Now as you all know, no one will escape death; therefore, our long-term goal and plan should be that when we *return* to our Heavenly Father, we will *receive* all that He has planned for each one of us.<sup>15</sup>

I testify there is no greater goal in mortality than to live eternally with our Heavenly Parents and our beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is more than just *our* goal—it is also *Their* goal. They have a perfect love for us, more powerful than we can even begin to comprehend. They are totally, completely, eternally aligned with us. We are Their work. Our glory is Their glory. More than anything else, They want us to come home—to *return* and *receive* eternal happiness in Their presence.

My dear brothers and sisters, in one week, we will celebrate Palm Sunday—commemorating Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In two weeks, we will celebrate Easter

Sunday—commemorating the Savior’s triumph over death.

As we focus our attention on the Savior during these two special Sundays, let us remember Him and renew our lifelong commitment to keeping His commandments. Let us look deeply into our own lives, setting our own goals and focusing our plans to align with God’s in a way that will ultimately lead us toward our precious privilege to *return* and *receive*—which is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. 3 Nephi 13:33.
3. 2 Nephi 31:19–20.
4. Moses 4:4.
5. See 2 Nephi 2:18.
6. See 2 Nephi 32:5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
8. Alma 5:14.
9. Matthew 11:28–29.
10. See “Becoming Like God,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
12. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.
13. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 62; 70.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.



By President Thomas S. Monson

# Kindness, Charity, and Love

*Let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior's example by being kind, loving, and charitable.*

My dear brethren, I am honored by the privilege to address you in this worldwide gathering of faithful holders of the priesthood of God. This evening I reference a topic about which I have spoken before.

The prophet Mormon outlined one of the key characteristics of the Savior and which is to be emulated by His disciples. Said he:

“And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

“And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked. . . .

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”<sup>1</sup>

Brethren, we do not honor the priesthood of God if we are not kind to others.

My dear friend and associate Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin was truly a kind man. Said he:

“Kindness is the essence of a celestial life. Kindness is how a Christlike person treats others. Kindness should permeate all of our words and actions at work, at school, at church, and especially in our homes.

“Jesus, our Savior, was the epitome of kindness and compassion.”<sup>2</sup>

The scriptures teach us that the righteous exercise of the priesthood is dependent upon our living the principles of kindness, charity, and





By Elder David A. Bednar  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

love. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, . . . by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”<sup>3</sup>

Brethren, let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior’s example by being kind, loving, and charitable. And as we do so, we will be in a better position to call down the powers of heaven for ourselves, for our families, and for our fellow travelers in this sometimes difficult journey back to our heavenly home. I so pray in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. Moroni 7:44–47.
2. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 26.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.

# Called to the Work

*An assignment to labor in a specific place is essential and important but secondary to a call to the work.*

President Monson, we are thrilled to hear your voice and to receive your instruction. We love you, we sustain you, and we ever pray for you.

I pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost as we consider together principles pertaining to the great work of preaching the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.<sup>1</sup>

**Called to Serve and Assigned to Labor**

Every year tens of thousands of young men and young women, and

many senior couples, eagerly anticipate receiving a special letter from Salt Lake City. The content of the letter affects forever the person to whom it is addressed, as well as family members and a great number of other people. Upon arrival, the envelope may be opened neatly and patiently or ripped apart excitedly and with great haste. Reading this special letter is an experience never to be forgotten.

The letter is signed by the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the first two sentences read as follows: “You are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are assigned to labor in the \_\_\_\_\_ Mission.”

Please note that the first sentence is a call to serve as a full-time missionary in the Lord’s restored Church. The second sentence indicates an assignment to labor in a specific place and mission. The important distinction expressed in these two sentences is essential for all of us to understand.

In the culture of the Church, we often talk of being called to serve in a country such as Argentina, Poland, Korea, or the United States. But a missionary is not called to a place; rather, he or she is called to serve. As the Lord





declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1829, “If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work.”<sup>2</sup>

Each mission call and assignment, or a later reassignment, is the result of revelation through the Lord’s servants. A call to the work comes from God through the President of the Church. An assignment to one of the more than 400 missions presently operating around the world comes from God through a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, acting with the authorization of the Lord’s living prophet. The spiritual gifts of prophecy and revelation attend all mission calls and assignments.

Section 80 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a record of a mission call to Stephen Burnett extended by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832. Studying this call to Brother Burnett can help us to (1) understand more clearly the distinction between being “called to the work” as a missionary and “assigned to labor” in a particular place and (2) appreciate more completely our individual and divinely appointed responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

Verse 1 of this section is a call to serve: “Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Stephen Burnett: Go ye, go ye into the world and preach the gospel to every creature that cometh under the sound of your voice.”<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, verse 2 informs Brother Burnett about his assigned missionary companion: “And inasmuch as you desire a companion, I will give unto you my servant Eden Smith.”<sup>4</sup>

Verse 3 indicates where these two missionaries are to labor: “Wherefore, go ye and preach my gospel, whether to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it mattereth not, for ye cannot go amiss.”<sup>5</sup>

I do not believe that the phrase “it mattereth not” as used by the Lord in this scripture suggests that He does not care where His servants labor. In fact, He cares deeply. But because the work of preaching the gospel is the Lord’s work, He inspires, guides, and directs His authorized servants. As missionaries strive to be ever more worthy and capable instruments in His hands and do their best to fulfill faithfully their duties, then with His help they “cannot go amiss”—wherever they serve. Perhaps one of the lessons the Savior is teaching us in this revelation is that an assignment to labor in a specific place is essential and important but secondary to a call to the work.

The next verse highlights important qualifications for all missionaries: “Therefore, declare the things which ye have *heard*, and verily *believe*, and *know to be true*.”<sup>6</sup>

The final verse reminds Brother Burnett and all of us from whom a call to serve truly comes: “Behold, this is the will of him who hath called you, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. Amen.”<sup>7</sup>

### Overcoming Misunderstanding

Some of you may be asking yourselves why I have chosen to discuss in a priesthood session of general conference this seemingly obvious distinction between being called to the work and assigned to labor. My answer to this question is quite straightforward: my experience has taught me that these principles are not well understood by many members of the Church.

The single greatest reason for addressing this matter is what I have learned over time about the concern, the worry, and even the guilt felt by many missionaries who for various reasons were reassigned to a different field of labor during their time of service.

Such reassignments sometimes are necessary because of events and circumstances such as physical accidents and injuries, delays and challenges in obtaining visas, political instability, creating and staffing new missions, or the evolving and ever-changing needs around the world in the work of proclaiming the gospel.<sup>8</sup>

When a missionary is reassigned to a different field of labor, the process is precisely the same as for the initial assignment. Members of the Quorum of the Twelve seek inspiration and guidance in making all such reassignments.

I recently spoke with a faithful man who shared with me the deepest feelings of his heart. In a meeting, I had just explained the difference between being called to the work and assigned to labor. This good brother shook my hand and with tears in his eyes said to me, “The things you helped me learn today have lifted a burden from my shoulders that I have carried for more than 30 years. As a young missionary, I was initially assigned to a field of labor in South America. But I was unable to obtain a visa, so my assignment was

changed to the United States. All these years I have wondered why I was unable to serve in the place to which I had been called. Now I know I was called to the work and not to a place. I cannot tell you how much this understanding has helped me.”

My heart ached for this good man. As I have taught these basic principles throughout the world, countless individuals have expressed privately to me the same sentiment as the man I just described. I am addressing this subject today because not a single member of this Church should carry an unnecessary burden of misunderstanding, uncertainty, anguish, or guilt about an assignment to labor.

“Wherefore, go ye and preach my gospel, whether to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it mattereth not, for ye cannot go amiss.”<sup>9</sup> As you ponder the words of this scripture and open your heart, I

hope and pray you will invite the Holy Ghost to carry deep into your soul the understanding, the healing, and the restoring you may need.

One additional reason I have felt impressed to discuss this topic is my personal experience assigning missionaries over many years. For the Twelve, nothing affirms the reality of ongoing latter-day revelation more powerfully than seeking to discern the Lord’s will as we fulfill our responsibility to assign missionaries to their respective fields of labor. I witness that the Savior knows and is mindful of each of us one by one and name by name.

#### Preparing for a Call to the Work

I now want to discuss briefly a fundamental but frequently overlooked aspect of preparing for a call to the work.

Three interrelated words define a pattern of preparation and progression

for sons of God: *priesthood, temple, mission*. Sometimes as parents, friends, and Church members, we focus so extensively upon missionary preparation for young men that we may neglect to a degree the other vital steps along the covenant pathway that must be fulfilled before beginning full-time missionary service. Working as a missionary certainly is one but not the only important building block in the process of creating a strong foundation for a lifetime of spiritual growth and service. Priesthood and temple blessings, both of which precede arriving in an assigned field of labor, also are necessary to fortify and strengthen us spiritually throughout our entire lives.

Young men, as you fulfill your duties in and honor the Aaronic Priesthood, or lesser priesthood, you are preparing to receive and magnify the oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood, or higher priesthood.<sup>10</sup> Personal worthiness





is the single most important requirement for receiving the higher priesthood. A lifetime of selfless priesthood service lies before you. Prepare now by frequently rendering meaningful service. Please learn to love being and remaining worthy. Be worthy. Stay worthy.

After receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood and a call to serve, a young man can be armed with power<sup>11</sup> through the covenants and ordinances of the holy temple. Going to the temple and having the spirit of the temple go through you precedes effective service as a full-time missionary. Personal worthiness is the single most important requirement for receiving the blessings of the temple for you young men and for all members of the Church. As you live in accordance with gospel standards, you can enter the house of the Lord and participate in sacred ordinances throughout your teenage years. Your love for and understanding of temple ordinances will strengthen and bless you throughout your life. Please learn to love being and remaining worthy. Be worthy. Stay worthy.

Many young men and young women already hold a current limited-use temple recommend. As Aaronic Priesthood holders, you are finding your own family names and performing baptisms and confirmations for your family members in the temple.

Maintaining your temple recommend demonstrates your worthiness, and serving others in the temple is an important part of preparing for the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Young men, each of you is a missionary now. All around you, every day, are friends and neighbors “who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”<sup>12</sup> As you are directed by the Spirit, you can share a thought, an invitation, a text or tweet that will introduce your friends to the truths of the restored gospel. You need not and should not wait for your official call to become anxiously engaged in missionary work.

As priesthood, temple, and mission blessings are gathered “together in one . . . in Christ”<sup>13</sup> and synergistically interact in the heart, mind, and soul of a young missionary, he can qualify for the work.<sup>14</sup> His capacity is increased to fulfill the responsibility to represent authoritatively the Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritually potent combination of honoring priesthood and temple covenants, receiving “the power of godliness”<sup>15</sup> through priesthood ordinances,<sup>16</sup> serving selflessly, and proclaiming the everlasting gospel to God’s children enables a young man to become “firm and steadfast in the faith”<sup>17</sup> and “rooted and built up in [Christ].”<sup>18</sup>

In our homes and at church, we should give balanced emphasis to all three elements of the Lord’s pattern of preparation and progression for faithful sons of God: *priesthood, temple, mission*. All three require us to love being and remaining worthy. Be worthy. Stay worthy.

#### Promise and Testimony

My beloved brethren, I promise that the spiritual gift of revelation will attend your call to the work of proclaiming the gospel and your assignment to a specific field or fields of labor. As you diligently prepare now through selfless priesthood and temple service, your witness of the Lord’s living reality will be strengthened. Love for Him and His work will fill your heart. As you learn to love being worthy, you will become a mighty instrument in the hands of the Lord to bless and serve many people.

Joyfully, I witness that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, live. To be engaged in Their service is one of the greatest blessings we can ever receive. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 133:37.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 4:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 80:1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 80:2.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 80:3.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 80:4; emphasis added.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 80:5.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:49.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 80:3.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
13. Ephesians 1:10.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:5.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
17. Helaman 15:8.
18. Colossians 2:7.





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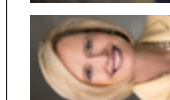
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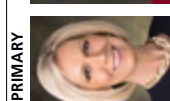
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## SUNDAY SCHOOL

## YOUNG WOMEN

## RELIEF SOCIETY

## PRIMARY

## YOUNG MEN





By Bishop Gérald Caussé  
Presiding Bishop

## Prepare the Way

*Even though they are vested with different missions and authority, the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood are inseparable partners in the work of salvation.*

When I was 30 years old, I began working for a retail group in France. One day the company president, a good man of another faith, called me into his office. His question startled me: “I just learned you are a priest in your church. Is that true?”

I replied, “Yes, that is correct. I hold the priesthood.”

Visibly intrigued by my response, he further inquired, “But did you study at a theological seminary?”

“Of course,” I answered, “between the ages of 14 and 18, and I studied seminary lessons nearly every day!” He almost fell off his chair.

To my great surprise, several weeks later he called me back to his office to offer me a managing director position in one of the group’s companies. I was astonished and expressed my concern that I was too young and inexperienced to hold such an important responsibility. With a benevolent smile, he said, “That may be true, but it doesn’t matter. I know your principles, and I know what you’ve learned in your church. I need you.”

He was right about what I had learned in the Church. The years that followed were challenging, and I don’t

know if I could have had any success without the experience I acquired by serving in the Church from the time I was a young man.

I had the blessing of growing up in a small branch. Because our numbers were few, the youth were called upon to actively participate in all aspects of the branch. I was very busy and loved

feeling useful. On Sundays I officiated at the sacrament table, served in my priesthood quorum, and functioned in various other callings. During the week I often accompanied my father and other adult priesthood holders as we home taught members, comforted the sick and afflicted, and helped those in need. No one seemed to think I was too young to serve or even to lead. For me, it all seemed normal and natural.

The service I rendered during those teenage years helped me build my testimony and anchor my life in the gospel. I was surrounded by good and compassionate men who were committed to using their priesthood to bless the lives of others. I wanted to be like them. In serving with them, much more than I realized at the time, I learned to be a leader in the Church and also in the world.

We have many young men attending or tuning in to this meeting tonight





who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. As I look out at this audience, I see many of you sitting next to mature men, perhaps your fathers, your grandfathers, your older brothers, or your priesthood leaders—all holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood. They love you, and in large part, they came here tonight to be with you.

This gathering of generations offers a marvelous vision of the unity and brotherhood that exist between the two priesthoods of God. Even though they are vested with different missions and authority, the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood are

inseparable partners in the work of salvation. They go hand in hand and have great need of each other.

The perfect model of the close relationship that exists between the two priesthoods is found in the interaction between Jesus and John the Baptist. Can one possibly imagine John the Baptist without Jesus? What would the Savior's mission have been like without the preparatory work performed by John?

John the Baptist was given one of the most noble missions to ever exist: "to prepare the way of the Lord,"<sup>1</sup> to baptize Him with water, and to make

ready a people to receive Him. This "just . . . and . . . holy [man],"<sup>2</sup> who had been ordained to the lesser priesthood, was perfectly aware of both the importance and the limits of his mission and his authority.

People flocked to John to hear him and be baptized by him. He was honored and revered in his own right as a man of God. But when Jesus appeared, John humbly deferred to One greater than himself and declared, "I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, . . . who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."<sup>3</sup>

For His part, Jesus the Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father, who held the higher priesthood, humbly recognized the authority of John. Of him, the Savior said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."<sup>4</sup>

Just think of what would take place in our priesthood quorums if the relationships between the holders of the two priesthoods were inspired by the pattern established by Jesus and John the Baptist. My young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, like John's, your role is to "prepare the way"<sup>5</sup> for the great work of the Melchizedek Priesthood. You are doing this in many different ways. You administer the ordinances of baptism and of the sacrament. You help prepare a people for the Lord by preaching the gospel, by "[visiting] the house of each member,"<sup>6</sup> and by "[watching] over the church."<sup>7</sup> You provide assistance to the poor and needy by collecting fast offerings, and you participate in taking care of Church meetinghouses and other temporal resources. Your role is important, needful, and sacred.

My adult brethren, whether you are fathers, bishops, Young Men advisers,



or simply holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, you can follow the Savior's example by turning to your brothers who hold the lesser priesthood and inviting them to labor with you. In reality, this invitation comes from the Lord Himself. He said, "Therefore, take with you those who are ordained unto the lesser priesthood, and send them before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way, and to fill appointments that you yourselves are not able to fill."<sup>8</sup>

As you invite your younger brothers to "prepare the way," you help them recognize and honor the sacred authority they hold. By doing so, you help them prepare their own way as they prepare for the day that they receive and exercise the higher priesthood.

Allow me to share the true story of Alex, a quiet, thoughtful, and bright young priest. One Sunday, Alex's bishop found him alone in a classroom in a state of great distress. The young man explained how painfully difficult it was for him to attend church without his father, who was not a member. Then he tearfully said it would probably be better for him to leave the Church.

With genuine concern for this young man, the bishop immediately mobilized the ward council to help Alex. His plan was simple: to keep Alex active and help him develop a heartfelt testimony of the gospel, they needed to "surround him with good people and give him important things to do."

Quickly the priesthood brethren and all the ward members rallied around Alex and expressed their affection and support. The high priests group leader, a man of great faith and love, was chosen to be his home teaching companion. Members of the bishopric took him under their wings and made him their closest associate.

The bishop said: "We kept Alex busy. He ushered at weddings, ushered at funerals, assisted me at graveside dedications, baptized several new members, ordained young men to Aaronic Priesthood offices, taught youth lessons, taught with the missionaries, unlocked the building for conferences, and locked up the building late at night after conferences. He did service projects, accompanied me on visits to elderly members in hospices, gave talks in sacrament meeting, administered the sacrament to the sick in hospitals or in their homes, and

became one of only a very small handful of people that I could totally rely on as bishop."

Little by little, Alex changed. His faith in the Lord increased. He gained confidence in himself and in the power of the priesthood that he held. The bishop concluded: "Alex has been and will always be one of my greatest blessings in my time as bishop. What a privilege it has been to associate with him. I genuinely believe that no young man has ever gone into the mission field more prepared by his priesthood service."<sup>9</sup>

My dear bishops, you have, included in your ordination and setting apart as bishop of your ward, the sacred calling to serve as president of the Aaronic Priesthood and of the priests quorum. I am aware of the heavy burdens you carry, but you should make your duty toward these young men one of your highest priorities. You cannot neglect it or delegate your role in this responsibility to others.

I invite you to reflect upon each of the young Aaronic Priesthood holders in your ward. Not one of them should ever feel left out or useless. Is there a young man whom you and other priesthood brethren could help? Invite him to serve alongside you. Too often



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

we try to entertain our young men and relegate them to a spectator role, when their faith and love for the gospel can be best developed by magnifying their priesthood. By actively participating in the work of salvation, they will be connected with heaven and they will gain awareness of their divine potential.

The Aaronic Priesthood is more than just an age group, a teaching or activity program, or even a term to designate the young men of the Church. It is power and authority to participate in the great work of saving souls—both the souls of those young men who hold it and the souls of those they serve. Let us put the Aaronic Priesthood in its rightful place, a choice place—a place of service, preparation, and accomplishment for all the young men of the Church.

My dear brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I invite you to strengthen the essential link that unites the two priesthoods of God. Empower your Aaronic Priesthood youth to prepare the way before you. Tell them with confidence, “I need you.” To you young holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, I pray that, as you serve with your older brethren, you will hear the voice of the Lord telling you: “Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me.”<sup>10</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. 1 Nephi 10:7.
2. Mark 6:20.
3. John 1:26–27.
4. Matthew 11:11.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 35:4.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 84:107.
9. Personal correspondence.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 35:4.

# The Greatest among You

*God's greatest reward goes to those who serve without expectation of reward.*

My dear brothers, dear friends, how grateful I am to be with you in this inspiring worldwide priesthood meeting. President Monson, thank you for your message and blessing. We will always take to heart your words of direction, counsel, and wisdom. We love and sustain you, and we always pray for you. You are indeed the Lord's prophet. You are our President. We sustain, we love, you.

Almost two decades ago, the Madrid Spain Temple was dedicated and

began its service as a sacred house of the Lord. Harriet and I remember it well because I was serving in the Europe Area Presidency at the time. Along with many others, we spent countless hours attending to the details of planning and organizing the events leading up to the dedication.

As the date of the dedication approached, I noticed that I had not yet received an invitation to attend. This was a bit unexpected. After all, in my responsibility as the Area President,





I had been greatly involved in this temple project and felt a small amount of ownership for it.

I asked Harriet if she had seen an invitation. She had not.

Days passed and my anxiety increased. I wondered if our invitation had gotten lost—perhaps it was buried between the cushions of our sofa. Maybe it had been mixed up with junk mail and thrown away. The neighbors had an inquisitive cat, and I even began to look suspiciously at him.

Finally I was forced to accept the fact: I had not been invited.

But how was that possible? Had I done something to offend? Did someone just assume it was too far for us to travel? Had I been forgotten?

Eventually, I realized that this line of thinking led to a place in which I did not wish to take up residence.

Harriet and I reminded ourselves that the temple dedication was not about *us*. It wasn't about who deserved to be invited or who did not. And it wasn't about our feelings or our sense of entitlement.

It was about dedicating a holy edifice, a temple of the Most High God. It was a day of rejoicing for the members of the Church in Spain.

Had I been invited to attend, I would have done so gladly. But if I were not invited, my joy would not be any less profound. Harriet and I would rejoice with our friends, our beloved brothers and sisters, from afar. We would praise God for this wonderful blessing just as enthusiastically from our home in Frankfurt as we would from Madrid.

#### Sons of Thunder

Among the Twelve whom Jesus called and ordained were two brothers, James and John. Do you remember the nickname He gave them?



#### Sons of Thunder (Boanerges).<sup>1</sup>

You don't get a nickname like that without an intriguing backstory. Unfortunately, the scriptures don't provide much explanation about the nickname's origin. However, we do get brief glimpses into the character of James and John. These were the same brothers who suggested calling down fire from heaven on a village in Samaria over not being invited into town.<sup>2</sup>

James and John were fishermen—probably a little rough around the edges—but I guess they knew a lot about the elements of nature. Certainly, they were men of action.

On one occasion, as the Savior prepared to make His final journey to Jerusalem, James and John approached Him with a special request—one perhaps worthy of their nickname.

"We want you to do for us whatever we ask," they said.

I can imagine Jesus smiling at them as He responded, "What do you want?"

"Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."

The Savior now challenged them to think a little more deeply about what they were asking and said, "To sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."<sup>3</sup>

In other words, you can't get honor in the kingdom of heaven by campaigning for it. Nor can you "power lunch" your way to eternal glory.

When the other ten Apostles heard about this request from the Sons of Thunder, they weren't especially happy. Jesus knew His time was short, and seeing contention among those who would carry on His work must have troubled Him.

He talked to the Twelve about the nature of power and how it affects those who seek and hold it. "The people of influence in the world," He said, "use their position of authority to exercise power over others."

I can almost see the Savior, looking with infinite love into the faces of those faithful and believing disciples. I can almost hear His pleading voice: "This is not the way it shall be among you. Instead, whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."<sup>4</sup>

In God's kingdom, greatness and leadership means seeing others as they truly are—as God sees them—and then reaching out and ministering to them. It means rejoicing with those who are happy, weeping with those who grieve, lifting up those in distress, and loving our neighbor as Christ loves us. The Savior loves all of God's children



regardless of their socioeconomic circumstance, race, religion, language, political orientation, nationality, or any other grouping. And so should we!

God's greatest reward goes to those who serve without expectation of reward. It goes to those who serve without fanfare; those who quietly go about seeking ways to help others; those who minister to others simply because they love God and God's children.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Don't Inhale**

Shortly after my call as a new General Authority, I had the privilege to accompany President James E. Faust for a stake reorganization. As I drove the car to our assignment in beautiful Southern Utah, President Faust was kind enough to use the time to instruct and teach me. One lesson I will never forget. Said he, "The members of the Church are gracious to the General Authorities. They will treat you kindly and say nice things about you." Then he briefly paused and said, "Dieter, *always* be thankful for this, but don't you ever inhale it."

This important lesson about Church service applies to every priesthood holder in every quorum of the Church.

It applies to all of us in this Church.

When President J. Reuben Clark Jr. counseled those called to positions of authority in the Church, he would tell them not to forget rule number six.

Inevitably, the person would ask, "What is rule number six?"

"Don't take yourself too darn seriously," he would say.

Of course, this led to a follow-up question: "What are the other five rules?"

With a twinkle in his eye, President Clark would say, "There aren't any."<sup>6</sup>

To be effective Church leaders, we must learn this critical lesson: leadership in the Church is not so much about directing others as it is about our willingness to be directed by God.

#### **Callings as Opportunities for Service**

As Saints of the Most High God, we are to "remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple."<sup>7</sup> Opportunities to go about doing good and to serve others are limitless. We can find them in our communities, in our wards and branches, and certainly in our homes.

In addition, every member of the Church is given specific formal opportunities to serve. We refer to these opportunities as "callings"—a term that should remind us of who it is that calls us to serve. If we approach our callings as opportunities to serve God and minister to others with faith and humility, every act of service will be a step on the path of discipleship. In this way, God not only builds up His Church but also builds up His servants. The Church is designed to help us become true and faithful disciples of Christ, good and noble sons and daughters of God. This happens not just when we go to meetings and listen to talks but also when

we get outside ourselves and serve. This is how we become "great" in the kingdom of God.

We accept callings with grace, humility, and gratitude. When we are released from these callings, we accept the change with the same grace, humility, and gratitude.

In the eyes of God, there is no calling in the kingdom that is more important than another. Our service—whether great or small—refines our spirits, opens the windows of heaven, and releases God's blessings not only upon those we serve but upon us as well. When we reach out to others, we can know with humble confidence that God acknowledges our service with approval and approbation. He smiles upon us as we offer these heartfelt acts of compassion, especially acts that are unseen and unnoticed by others.<sup>8</sup>

Each time we give of ourselves to others, we take a step closer to becoming good and true disciples of the One who gave His all for us: our Savior.

#### **From Presiding to the Parade**

During the 150th anniversary of the pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Brother Myron Richins was serving as a stake president in Henefer, Utah. The celebration included a reenactment of the pioneers' passage through his town.

President Richins was heavily involved with the plans for the celebration, and he attended many meetings with General Authorities and others to discuss the events. He was fully engaged.

Just before the actual celebration, President Richins's stake was reorganized, and he was released as president. On a subsequent Sunday, he was attending his ward priesthood meeting when the leaders asked for volunteers to help with the celebration. President



Richins, along with others, raised his hand and was given instructions to dress in work clothes and to bring his truck and a shovel.

Finally, the morning of the big event came, and President Richins reported to volunteer duty.

Only a few weeks before, he had been an influential contributor to the planning and supervision of this major event. On that day, however, his job was to follow the horses in the parade and clean up after them.

President Richins did so gladly and joyfully.

He understood that one kind of service is not above another.

He knew and put into practice the words of the Savior: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”<sup>9</sup>

#### Doing Discipleship Right

Sometimes, like the Sons of Thunder, we desire positions of prominence. We strive for recognition. We seek to lead and to make a memorable contribution.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to serve the Lord, but when we seek to gain influence in the Church for our own sake—in order to receive

the praise and admiration of men—we have our reward. When we “inhale” the praise of others, that praise will be our compensation.

What is the most important calling in the Church? It is the one you currently have. No matter how humble or prominent it may seem to be, the calling you have right now is the one that will allow you not only to lift others but also to become the man of God you were created to be.

My dear friends and brethren in the priesthood, lift where you stand!

Paul taught the Philippians, “Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself.”<sup>10</sup>

#### Serving with Honor

Seeking honor and celebrity in the Church at the expense of true and humble service toward others is the trade of Esau.<sup>11</sup> We may receive an earthly reward, but it comes at great cost—the loss of heavenly approbation.

Let us follow the example of our Savior, who was meek and lowly, who sought not the praise of men but to do the will of His Father.<sup>12</sup>

Let us serve others humbly—with energy, gratitude, and honor. Even though our acts of service may seem lowly, modest, or of little value, those who reach out in kindness and compassion to others will one day know the value of their service by the eternal and blessed grace of Almighty God.<sup>13</sup>

My dear brethren, dear friends, may we meditate upon, understand, and live this paramount lesson of Church leadership and priesthood governance: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” This is my prayer and blessing in the sacred name of our Master, our Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Mark 3:17.
2. See Luke 9:54.
3. See Mark 10:35–40, New International Version (2011) and King James Version.
4. See Mark 10:42–44.
5. See Matthew 6:4.
6. See John E. Lewis, “The Gospel and a Sense of Humor, Too,” *Ensign*, June 1974, 24.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
8. See Matthew 6:1–2.
9. Matthew 23:11.
10. Philippians 2:3, New English Translation (2005).
11. See Genesis 25:33.
12. See John 5:41; 6:38.
13. See Matthew 25:31–46.



By President Henry B. Eyring  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

## “Walk with Me”

*Our ordination to the priesthood is an invitation from the Lord to walk with Him, to do what He does, to serve the way He serves.*

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, my purpose today is both to reassure you and to invigorate you in your priesthood service. In some ways, it is similar to the purpose I imagine the Savior had when He met a rich young man who asked, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Perhaps you have come to this conference, as this young man went to the Savior, wondering whether your service has been acceptable. And at the same time, you may sense that there is more to do—perhaps much more! I pray that I may be able to convey the Lord’s loving approval for what you have already done, while also offering an encouraging glimpse of what you may, with His help, yet achieve as a holder of His holy priesthood.

The rich young man was asked to sell everything he had and give to the poor and follow the Savior; your future progress may not require that, but it will require a measure of sacrifice. Either way, I hope my message does not cause you to “[go] away sorrowful,” as the young man did. (See Matthew 19:20–22.) Rather, I trust that you will “go on your way rejoicing” (D&C 84:105) because you want to improve and you think you can.

Even so, it’s natural to feel some inadequacy when we consider what the Lord has called us to do. In fact, if you told me that you feel perfectly capable of fulfilling your priesthood duties, I might worry that you do not understand them. On the other hand, if you told me that you feel like giving up because the task is too far beyond your abilities, then I would want to help you understand how the Lord magnifies and strengthens the holders of His priesthood to do things they never could have done alone.

This is just as true for me in my calling as it is for you in yours. None of us can do the work of the priesthood, and do it well, relying solely on our own wisdom and talents. That is because this is not our work—it is the Lord’s. So the only way to succeed is to rely on Him, whether you are a newly called deacon trusted with the task to bring a measure of spiritual power to the ordinance of the sacrament; or a young home teacher assigned by the Lord to love and minister to a family you don’t know and who seems not to want your love or your ministering; or a father who knows you are to preside over your home in righteousness, but perhaps you’re unsure how to do it, and time seems to be running out,

because those children are growing up quickly and the world seems so harsh and hostile.

So if you feel a little overwhelmed, take that as a good sign. It indicates that you can sense the magnitude of the trust God has placed in you. It means that you have some small understanding of what the priesthood really is.

There are very few people in the world who have that understanding. Even those who can recite a reasonable definition may not truly understand it. There are some scriptures that, through the power of the Spirit they carry, can deepen our sense of awe regarding the holy priesthood. Here are some of those scriptures:

“The power and authority of the . . . Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

“To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.





“The power and authority of the . . . Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels” (D&C 107:18–20).

“In the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest. . . .

“For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live” (D&C 84:20, 22).

“This high priesthood [is] after the order of [God’s] Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things” (Alma 13:7).

“Every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;

“To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence

of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:30–31 [in the Bible appendix]).

One way to respond to such awe-inspiring descriptions of the power of the priesthood is to assume that they do not apply to us. Another way to respond is with soul-searching questions, asked in our own hearts, such as these: Have I ever felt that the heavens have been opened to me? Would anyone use the phrase “ministering of angels” to describe my priesthood service? Do I bring the “power of godliness” into the lives of those I serve? Have I ever broken a mountain, defied an army, broken someone’s bands, or subdued worldly powers—even if only figuratively—in order to accomplish God’s will?

Such introspection always brings a feeling that we could be doing

more in the service of the Lord. I hope it also brings you a feeling that you *want* to do more—a longing to participate more fully in the Lord’s miraculous work. Such feelings are the first step toward becoming the kind of men that priesthood service is meant to produce.

The next step is described in an interaction between Jehovah and Enoch. We know Enoch as a mighty prophet who established Zion in the midst of great wickedness. But before he was a mighty prophet, Enoch saw himself as “but a lad, . . . slow of speech,” and hated by all the people (Moses 6:31). Listen to the words the Lord used to encourage Enoch. They are also His words to you who are called to minister to others as a priesthood holder:

“And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all



flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good. . . .

“Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me” (Moses 6:32, 34).

Brethren, our ordination to the priesthood is an invitation from the Lord to walk with Him. And what does it mean to walk with the Lord? It means to do what He does, to serve the way He serves. He sacrificed His own comforts to bless those in need, so that’s what we try to do. He seemed to take particular notice of people who were overlooked and even shunned by society, so we should try to do that too. He testified boldly yet lovingly of the true doctrine He received from His Father, even if it was unpopular, and so must we. He said to all, “Come unto me” (Matthew 11:28), and we say to all, “Come unto Him.” As priesthood holders, we are His representatives. We act not for ourselves but for Him. We speak not our words but His. The people we serve come to know Him better because of our service.

As soon as we accept the Lord’s invitation “Walk with me,” the nature of our priesthood service changes. It becomes all at once higher and nobler but also more achievable, because we know that we are not alone. I felt

this most powerfully when President Thomas S. Monson laid his hands on my head nine years ago and blessed me as I began my service in my current calling. In that blessing, he recited these words of the Savior: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88).

I have relied upon that promise many times, and I have seen it fulfilled in many ways throughout my 72 years of priesthood service. It happened when I was a new Aaronic Priesthood holder with an assignment to pass the sacrament. Terrified that I would make a mistake, I went outside the chapel before the meeting started and prayed in desperation that God would help me. An answer came. I felt that the Lord was with me. I felt His confidence in me, and so I felt confidence in my part in His work.

It happened again while I was serving as a bishop. I received a phone call from a woman who had made a serious mistake and now faced a difficult, life-changing decision. As I visited with her, I felt I knew the answer to her problem, but I also felt strongly that *I* should not give her that answer—she needed to obtain it for herself. My words to her were “I believe God will tell you what to do if you would ask Him.” She later reported that she did ask Him and He did tell her.

On another occasion a phone call came when I was a bishop—this time from the police. I was told that a drunk driver had crashed his car through the glass into the lobby of a bank. When the bewildered driver saw the security guard with his weapon

brandished, he cried, “Don’t shoot! I’m a Mormon!”

The inebriated driver was discovered to be a member of my ward, baptized only recently. As I waited to speak to him in the bishop’s office, I planned what I would say to make him feel remorseful for the way he had broken his covenants and embarrassed the Church. But as I sat looking at him, I heard a voice in my mind say, just as clearly as if someone were speaking to me, “I’m going to let you see him as I see him.” And then, for a brief moment, his whole appearance changed to me. I saw not a dazed young man but a bright, noble son of God. I suddenly felt the Lord’s love for him. That vision changed our conversation. It also changed me.

I learned important lessons from these experiences walking with the Lord in doing His work. I would like to share with you three of them. The first is that God notices and will support even the newest and youngest deacon. You need never feel that you are too small or too insignificant for Him to take notice of you and the service you are giving in His name.

The second lesson is that the Lord’s work is not just to solve problems; it is to build people. So as you walk with Him in priesthood service, you may find that sometimes what seems like the most efficient solution is not the Lord’s preferred solution because it does not allow people to grow. If you listen, He will teach you His ways. Remember that God’s work and glory is not simply to run an effective organization; it is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). This is, after all, why He gives His priesthood authority to flawed mortals like you and me and invites us to participate in His work. Our progress *is* His work!

Now the third lesson: Walking with the Savior in priesthood service will change the way you look at others. He will teach you to see them through His eyes, which means seeing past an outward appearance and into the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7). This is how the Savior was able to see Simon not as an impulsive fisherman but as Peter, the rock-solid future leader of His Church (see Luke 5:1–11). This is how He was able to see Zacchaeus not as the corrupt tax collector others saw but as an honest, upright son of Abraham (see Luke 19:1–9). If you walk with the Savior long enough, you will learn to see everyone as a child of God with limitless potential, regardless of what his or her past may have been. And if you continue walking with the Savior, you will develop another gift He has—the ability to help people see that potential in themselves and so repent.

My dear brethren of the priesthood, in many ways, we are like the two disciples who walked the road to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday. It was Resurrection morning, but they were not yet sure there was a resurrection or what resurrection even meant. They had “trusted that [Jesus of Nazareth] should have redeemed Israel,” but they were “slow of heart to believe” everything the scriptures taught about resurrection. As they walked along and tried to reason it out together, “Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.” (See Luke 24:13–32.)

I testify that when we walk the path of priesthood service, the Savior Jesus Christ goes with us, for it is His path, His way. His light goes before us, and His angels are round about us. We may lack a full understanding of what the priesthood is or how to exercise it as He does. But if we pay close attention



to those moments when our hearts “burn within us” (Luke 24:32), our eyes can be opened and we will see His hand in our lives and in our service. I testify that we come to know Him best by working with Him and serving Him in the great work of bringing salvation to God’s children. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). Jesus Christ is our Master. This is His Church. It is His priesthood which we hold. May we each choose to walk with Him and to recognize how He walks with us.

I give you my solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ, our resurrected Lord. I bear you my testimony that the priesthood He has trusted us with is the power to speak and to act in His name. We are children of a loving Heavenly Father who answers our prayers and sends the Holy Ghost to strengthen us in every priesthood responsibility we are blessed to receive. Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. He received the keys of the priesthood, which have been passed on to President Thomas S. Monson, who exercises them today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By President Thomas S. Monson

# The Power of the Book of Mormon

*I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, I greet you most warmly as we are met again in a great general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Before I begin my formal message today, I would like to announce five

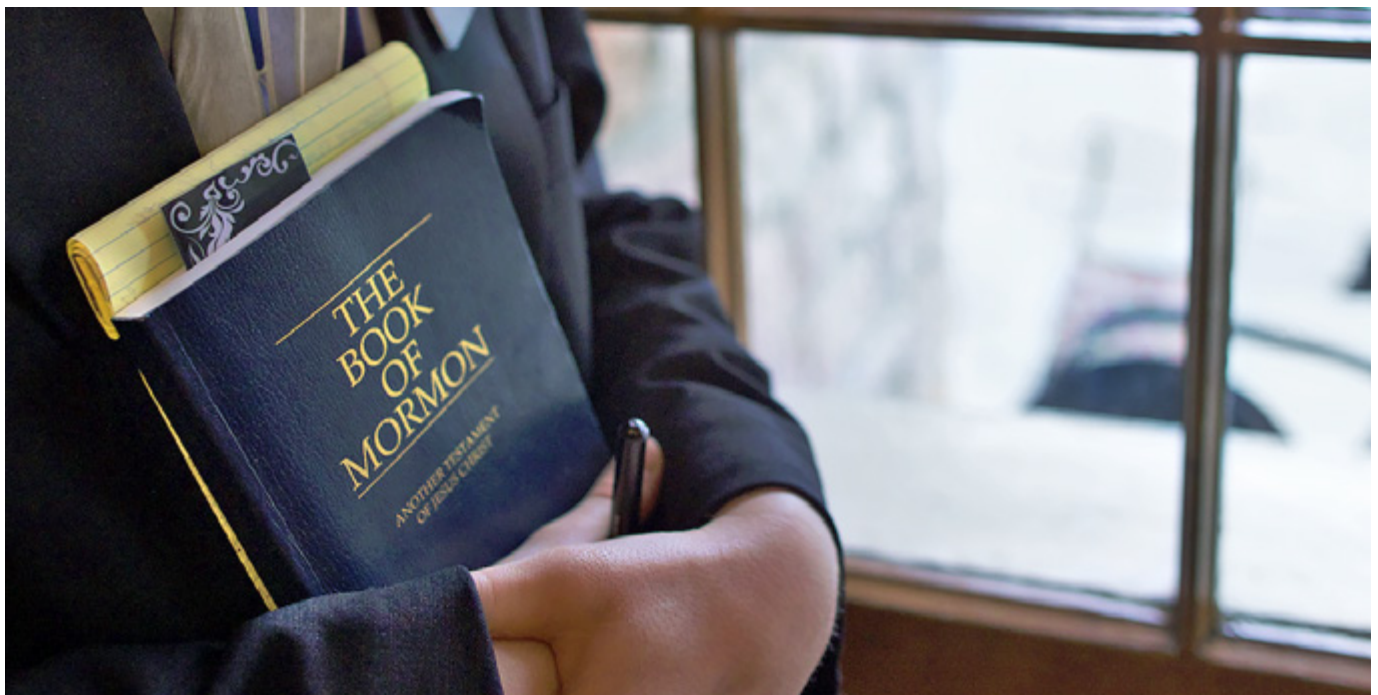
new temples which will be built in the following locations: Brasília, Brazil; greater Manila, Philippines, area; Nairobi, Kenya; Pocatello, Idaho, USA; and Saratoga Springs, Utah, USA.

This morning I speak about the power of the Book of Mormon and

the critical need we have as members of this Church to study, ponder, and apply its teachings in our lives. The importance of having a firm and sure testimony of the Book of Mormon cannot be overstated.

We live in a time of great trouble and wickedness. What will protect us from the sin and evil so prevalent in the world today? I maintain that a strong testimony of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His gospel will help see us through to safety. If you are not reading the Book of Mormon each day, please do so. If you will read it prayerfully and with a sincere desire to know the truth, the Holy Ghost will manifest its truth to you. If it is true—and I solemnly testify that it *is*—then Joseph Smith was a prophet who saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Because the Book of Mormon is true, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church







**By Joy D. Jones**  
Primary General President

on the earth, and the holy priesthood of God has been restored for the benefit and blessing of His children.

If you do not have a firm testimony of these things, do that which is necessary to obtain one. It is essential for you to have your own testimony in these difficult times, for the testimonies of others will carry you only so far. However, once obtained, a testimony needs to be kept vital and alive through continued obedience to the commandments of God and through daily prayer and scripture study.

My dear associates in the work of the Lord, I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven's help in our lives. I so testify with all my heart in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## A Sin-Resistant Generation

*As you teach, lead, and love children, you can receive personal revelation that will aid you in creating and arming valiant, sin-resistant children.*

A year and a half ago, President Russell M. Nelson spoke of the need “to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation.”<sup>1</sup> That phrase—“a sin-resistant generation”—struck a deep spiritual chord within me.

We honor children who strive to live pure and obedient lives. I have witnessed the strength of many children throughout the world. They stand resilient, “steadfast and immovable”<sup>2</sup> in a variety of challenging circumstances and environments. These children understand their divine identity, feel Heavenly Father's love for them, and seek to obey His will.

However, there are children who struggle to stand “steadfast and immovable” and whose delicate minds are being wounded.<sup>3</sup> They are being attacked on every side by “the fiery darts of the adversary”<sup>4</sup> and are in need of reinforcement and support. They are an overwhelming motivation for us to step up and wage a war against sin in our effort to bring our children unto Christ.

Listen to the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie nearly 43 years ago:

“As members of the Church, we are engaged in a mighty conflict. We are at war. We have enlisted in the cause of Christ to fight against Lucifer. . . .

“The great war that rages on every side and which unfortunately is resulting in many casualties, some fatal, is no new thing. . . .



“Now there neither are nor can be any neutrals in this war.”<sup>5</sup>

Today the war continues with increased intensity. The battle touches us all, and our children are on the front lines facing the opposing forces. Thus, the need intensifies for us to strengthen our spiritual strategies.

Fortifying children to become sin-resistant is a task and a blessing for parents, grandparents, family members, teachers, and leaders. We each bear responsibility to help. However, the Lord has specifically instructed *parents* to teach their children “to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost” and “to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

How to “bring up [our] children in light and truth”<sup>7</sup> may be a challenging question since it is individualized for each family and each child, but Heavenly Father has given universal guidelines that will help us. The Spirit will inspire us in the most effective ways we can spiritually inoculate our children.

To begin, having a vision of the importance of this responsibility is essential. We must understand our—and their—divine identity and purpose before we can help our children see *who* they are and *why* they are here. We must help them know without question that they are sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father and that He has divine expectations of them.

Second, understanding the doctrine of repentance is essential for becoming resistant to sin. Being sin-resistant doesn’t mean being sinless, but it does imply being continually repentant, vigilant, and valiant. Perhaps being sin-resistant comes as a blessing from repeatedly resisting sin. As James said, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”<sup>8</sup>

The stripling warriors “were exceedingly valiant for courage . . . ; but behold, this was not all—they were . . . true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. Yea, . . . they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him.”<sup>9</sup> These young men went to war carrying Christlike virtues as weapons against their adversaries. President Thomas S. Monson reminded us that “the call for courage comes constantly to each of us. Every day of our lives courage is needed—not just for the momentous events but more often as we make decisions or respond

to circumstances around us.”<sup>10</sup>

Our children don spiritual armor as they establish patterns of personal daily discipleship. Perhaps we underestimate the abilities of children to grasp the concept of daily discipleship. President Henry B. Eyring counseled us to “start early and be steady.”<sup>11</sup> So a third key to helping children become sin-resistant is to begin at very early ages to lovingly infuse them with basic gospel doctrines and principles—from the scriptures, the Articles of Faith, the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet, Primary songs, hymns, and our own personal testimonies—that will lead children to the Savior.



Creating consistent habits of prayer, scripture study, family home evening, and Sabbath worship leads to wholeness, internal consistency, and strong moral values—in other words, spiritual integrity. In today's world where integrity has all but disappeared, our children deserve to understand what true integrity is and why it is so important—especially as we prepare them to make and keep sacred covenants at baptism and in the temple. As *Preach My Gospel* teaches, “Keeping commitments prepares people [including very young people] to make and keep sacred covenants.”<sup>12</sup>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught, “When we talk about covenant keeping, we are talking about the heart and soul of our purpose in mortality.”<sup>13</sup> There is unusual power in making and keeping covenants with our Heavenly Father. The adversary knows this, so he has obscured the concept of covenant making.<sup>14</sup> Helping children understand, make, and keep sacred covenants is another key in creating a sin-resistant generation.

How do we prepare our children to make and keep sacred covenants as they enter and progress along the covenant path? Teaching children to keep simple promises when they are young will empower them to keep holy covenants later in life.

Let me share a simple example: In family home evening, a father asked, “How are we getting along as a family?” Five-year-old Lizzie complained that her big brother, Kevin, was teasing her too much and hurting her feelings. Kevin reluctantly admitted that Lizzie was right. Kevin's mother asked him what he could do to get along better with his sister. Kevin thought and decided he would promise Lizzie that he would go one whole day without teasing her.



At the end of the next day as everyone gathered for family prayer, Kevin's dad asked Kevin how he had done.

Kevin's response was “Dad, I kept my promise!” Lizzie happily agreed, and the family congratulated Kevin.

Kevin's mother then suggested that if he could keep his promise for one day, why couldn't he do it for two days? Kevin agreed to try it again. Two days passed, Kevin was successful in keeping his promise, and Lizzie was even more thankful! When his father asked why he was keeping his promises so well, Kevin said, “I kept my promise because I said I would.”

A succession of small, successfully kept promises leads to integrity. The consistent practice of promise keeping is spiritual preparation for children to receive their first covenant of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, wherein they covenant to serve God and keep His commandments.<sup>15</sup> Promises and covenants are inseparable.

In the book of Daniel, we learn of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's idol.<sup>16</sup> The king warned them that they would be cast into a burning fiery furnace if they didn't comply. They refused and said:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. . . .

“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.”<sup>17</sup>

“But if not.” Consider the meaning of these three words and how they relate to keeping covenants. These three young men were not basing their obedience upon being delivered. Even if they were not delivered, they would keep their promise to the Lord because they said they would. Keeping our covenants is always independent of our situation. These three young men, just as the stripling warriors, are wonderful examples of sin-resistance for our children.

How do these examples apply in our homes and to our families? “Line upon line, precept upon precept,”<sup>18</sup> we help children taste success in small bites. As they keep their promises, they feel the Spirit in their lives. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught that “the consummate reward of integrity is the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>19</sup> Then shall our children's “confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”<sup>20</sup> Out of the well of integrity springs an empowered, sin-resistant generation.

Brothers and sisters, hold your little ones close—so close that they see your daily religious behavior and watch you keeping your promises and covenants. “Children are great imitators, so give them something great to imitate.”<sup>21</sup>



By Elder Yoon Hwan Choi  
Of the Seventy

We are indeed helping to teach and raise a sin-resistant generation unto the Lord promise by promise and covenant by covenant.

I testify that Jesus Christ leads this Church. As you teach, lead, and love children in the Savior's way, you can receive personal revelation that will aid you in creating and arming valiant, sin-resistant children. My prayer is that our children will echo the words of Nephi: "Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?"<sup>22</sup> I testify that our Savior atoned for the sins of the world<sup>23</sup>—because He said He would—and that He loves us more than we mere mortals can even comprehend<sup>24</sup>—because He said He would. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97.
2. Mosiah 5:15.
3. See Jacob 2:9.
4. 1 Nephi 15:24; see also Helaman 5:12.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, "Be Valiant in the Fight of Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 33, 34.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25, 28.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
8. James 4:7; see also Alma 19:33.
9. Alma 53:20–21.
10. Thomas S. Monson, "Be Strong and of a Good Courage," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 67.
11. Henry B. Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 37.
12. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 196.
13. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission," *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 2.
14. See 1 Nephi 13:26–28.
15. See Mosiah 18:10.
16. See Daniel 3.
17. Daniel 3:17–18.
18. 2 Nephi 28:30.
19. Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Personal Integrity," *Ensign*, May 1990, 33.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
21. Anonymous.
22. 2 Nephi 4:31.
23. See 3 Nephi 27:14–15.
24. See John 15:13.

## Don't Look Around, Look Up!

*Inviting others to come unto Christ is our purpose, and we can fulfill this purpose by looking up to Jesus Christ.*

**M**y purpose is to "invite others to come unto Christ."<sup>1</sup> This is your purpose too. We can fulfill this purpose by looking up to Jesus Christ.

I was baptized with my parents when I was 16 years old. My younger brother, Kyung-Hwan, who was 14 years old, joined the Church through my uncle, Young Jik Lee, and invited us to his church. Each of the 10 members in our family belonged to a different church, so we were happy to find the truth and wanted to share that happiness we found in the gospel of Jesus Christ after we were baptized.

My father was the most excited among us to learn and share the truth. He used to wake up early in the morning to study the scriptures for over two hours every day. After work he went with the missionaries to visit our family, friends, and neighbors nearly every day. Seven months after we were baptized, 23 of my family and relatives became members of the Church. That was followed by the miracle of seeing 130 people baptized in the following year through my father's member missionary work.

Family history was also important to him, and he completed eight generations of our ancestors. From that time on, the fruits of our family conversion, started by my 14-year-old brother, have increased in countless ways not only among the living but also among the dead. Building upon the work of my father and others, our family tree now spans to 32 generations, and we are now completing temple work for many branches. Today I am amazed and feel great joy linking our ancestors and our descendants.

President Gordon B. Hinckley recorded a similar experience in the Columbus Ohio Temple:

"Reflecting on the lives of [my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father] while I was seated in the temple, I looked down at my daughter, at her daughter, . . . and at her children, my great-grandchildren. I suddenly realized that I stood right in the middle of these seven generations—three before me and three after me.

"In that sacred and hallowed house there passed through my mind a sense of the tremendous obligation that was mine to pass on all that I had received as an inheritance from my forebears to

the generations who have now come after me.”<sup>2</sup>

All of us are in the middle of an eternal family. Our role can be a turning point at which significant changes can occur in positive or negative ways. President Hinckley continued, “Never *permit yourself* to become a weak link in the chain of your generations.”<sup>3</sup> Your faithfulness in the gospel will strengthen your family. How can we ensure we will be a strong link in our eternal family?

One day, a few months after my baptism, I heard some members criticizing each other in church. I was very disappointed. I went home and told my father that maybe I should not go to church anymore. It was difficult to see members criticize others like that. After listening, my father taught me that the gospel had been restored and it is perfect but members are not yet, neither himself nor me. He firmly said, “Do not lose your faith because of the

people around you, but build a strong relationship with Jesus Christ. Don’t look around, look up!”

Look up to Jesus Christ—the wise advice of my father—strengthens my faith whenever I face challenges in life. He taught me how to apply the teachings of Christ, as in these words: “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”<sup>4</sup>

When I was presiding over the Washington Seattle Mission, it rained many days of the year. Still, our missionaries were instructed to go out and proselyte in the rain. I used to tell them, “Go out in the rain, look up to heaven, open your mouth, and drink it! When you look up, you will be strengthened to open your mouth to everyone without any fear.” It was a symbolic lesson for them to look up when they faced challenges even after their mission. Please don’t try this in polluted areas.

While still serving in the Seattle mission, I received a phone call from my oldest son, Sunbeam, who is a pianist. He said he would have the privilege of performing at Carnegie Hall in New York because he won an international competition. We were so happy and very thrilled for him. However, that evening, while praying with gratitude, my wife recognized that we could not join him for his performance and said to Heavenly Father something like this: “Heavenly Father, I am grateful for the blessing Thou hast given to Sunbeam. By the way, I am sorry that I cannot go there. I could have gone if Thou had given this blessing either before or after this mission. I am not complaining, but I have a little feeling of sorry.”

As soon as she finished this prayer, she heard a clear voice: “Because you cannot go, your son has been given this privilege. Would you rather trade?”





My wife was surprised. She knew children would be blessed through their parents' faithful work in the Lord's kingdom, but it was the first time she understood her role with such clarity. She replied to Him right away: "No, no, it is OK for me not to go. Let him have that honor."

Dear brothers and sisters, it is not easy for us to recognize the love of Heavenly Father when we look around with our temporal eyes, because we see inconvenience, loss, burdens, or loneliness first. On the other hand, we can see the blessings beyond when we look up. The Lord has revealed, "When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."<sup>5</sup> To all those who embark in *any* service of God, know that you are a solid connection for powerful blessings to those before you and to generations after you.

Today I am grateful to see that many of our family members are faithful on the covenant path but am saddened to imagine any empty seats next to us. Elder M. Russell Ballard said: "If you

choose to become inactive or to leave the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where will you go? What will you do? The decision to 'walk no more' with Church members and the Lord's chosen leaders will have a long-term impact that cannot always be seen right now."<sup>6</sup> President Thomas S. Monson encouraged us, "May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong."<sup>7</sup>

It is never too late to look up to Jesus Christ. His arms are always open to you. There are generations before us and after us depending on us to follow Christ so that we can be an eternal family of God.

When I was released from my calling as a stake president, my sons were excited about spending more time with me. Three weeks later I was called as a Seventy. At first I thought they might be disappointed, but my youngest son's humble response was "Daddy, don't worry. We are an eternal family." What a simple and clear truth it was! I worried a little because I looked around at this mortal life first, but my son was happy because he did not look around but

looked up with eyes toward eternity and the purposes of the Lord.

It's not always easy to look up when your parents are opposed to the gospel, when you are a member of a small Church unit, when your spouse is not a member, when you are still single although you did your best to marry, when a child has strayed, when you find yourself a single parent, when you are physically or emotionally challenged, when you are a victim in a disaster, and so on. Hold on to your faith in those hard times. Look up to Christ for strength, balance, and healing. Through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, "all things shall work together for [your] good."<sup>8</sup>

I bear witness of Jesus Christ, that He is our Savior and Redeemer. When we follow our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, we look up to Jesus Christ. As we pray and study the scriptures every day and partake sincerely of the sacrament every week, we gain the strength to *always* look up to Him. I am happy to be a member of this Church and to be a part of an eternal family. I love to share this great gospel with others. Inviting others to come unto Christ is our purpose, and we can fulfill this purpose by looking up to Jesus Christ. I humbly testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 1.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 82.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Keep the Chain Unbroken" (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 30, 1999), 3, speeches.byu.edu; emphasis added.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
6. M. Russell Ballard, "To Whom Shall We Go?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 91.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "Choices," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 86.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 100:15.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Let the Holy Spirit Guide

*By divine assignment, the Holy Ghost inspires, testifies, teaches, and prompts us to walk in the light of the Lord.*

Brothers and sisters, I, like all of you, recognize we are seeing the hastening of the Lord's work through President Thomas S. Monson and his message this morning. President Monson, we love you, sustain you, and ever pray for you, "our prophet dear."<sup>1</sup>

We have felt an outpouring of the Spirit this weekend. Whether you are here in this great hall or watching from homes or gathered in meetinghouses in distant parts of the world, you have had the opportunity to feel the Spirit of the Lord. That Spirit confirms to your hearts and minds the truths taught at this conference.

Consider the words of this familiar hymn:

*Let the Holy Spirit guide;  
Let him teach us what is true.  
He will testify of Christ,  
Light our minds with heaven's view.<sup>2</sup>*

From latter-day revelation we know that the Godhead is comprised of three distinct and separate beings: our Father in Heaven; His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. We

know that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us."<sup>3</sup>

My message today focuses on the importance of the Holy Ghost in our lives. Our Father in Heaven knew that in mortality we would face challenges, tribulation, and turmoil; He knew we would wrestle with questions, disappointments, temptations, and

weaknesses. To give us mortal strength and divine guidance, He provided the Holy Spirit, another name for the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost binds us to the Lord. By divine assignment, He inspires, testifies, teaches, and prompts us to walk in the light of the Lord. We have the sacred responsibility to learn to recognize His influence in our lives and respond.

Remember the Lord's promise: "I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy."<sup>4</sup> I love that assurance. Joy that fills our souls brings with it an eternal perspective in contrast to day-to-day living. That joy comes as peace amidst hardship or heartache. It provides comfort and courage, unfolds the truths of the gospel, and expands our love for the Lord and all God's children. Although the need for such blessings is so great, in many ways the world has forgotten and forsaken them.

Each week as we partake of the holy sacrament, we make a covenant to "always remember him," the Lord Jesus Christ, and His atoning sacrifice. When we keep this sacred covenant, the





promise is given that we “may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>5</sup>

How do we do that?

**First**, we strive to live worthy of the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost accompanies those who are “strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day.”<sup>6</sup> As the Lord counseled, we must “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better,”<sup>7</sup> for “the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples.”<sup>8</sup> We must always try to obey God’s laws, study the scriptures, pray, attend the temple, and live true to the thirteenth article of faith, “being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and . . . doing good to all men.”

**Second**, we must be willing to receive the Spirit.

The Lord has promised, “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.”<sup>9</sup> I began to understand this as a young missionary in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. One hot July morning

my companion and I felt prompted to look up a Temple Square referral. We knocked on the door of the Elwood Schaffer home. Mrs. Schaffer politely turned us away.

As she began to shut the door, I felt to do something I had never done before and have never done since! I stuck my foot in the door, and I asked, “Is there anyone else who might be interested in our message?” Her 16-year-old daughter, Marti, did have an interest and had fervently prayed for guidance just the day before. Marti met with us, and in time her mother participated in the discussions. Both of them joined the Church.

Resulting from Marti’s baptism, 136 people, including many of her own family, have been baptized and made gospel covenants. How grateful I am that I listened to the Spirit and stuck my foot in the door on that hot July day. Marti and a number of her dear family members are here today.

**Third**, we must recognize the Spirit when it comes.

My experience has been that the Spirit most often communicates as a feeling. You feel it in words that are familiar to you, that make sense to you, that prompt you. Consider the response of the Nephites as they listened to the Lord pray for them: “And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed.”<sup>10</sup> They felt in their hearts the words of His prayer. The voice of the Holy Spirit is still and small.

In the Old Testament, Elijah contended with the priests of Baal. The priests expected the “voice” of Baal to come down as thunder and light their sacrifice with fire. But there was no voice, and there was no fire.<sup>11</sup>

On a later occasion, Elijah prayed. “And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”<sup>12</sup>

Do you know that voice?

President Monson has taught, “As we pursue the journey of life, let us learn the language of the Spirit.”<sup>13</sup> The Spirit speaks words that we feel. These feelings are gentle, a nudge to act, to do something, to say something, to respond in a certain way. If we are casual or complacent in our worship, drawn off and desensitized by worldly pursuits, we find ourselves diminished in our ability to feel. Nephi said to Laman and Lemuel, “Ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel [the] words.”<sup>14</sup>



Last June, I was on an assignment to South America. We were on a tight 10-day schedule visiting Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. An enormous earthquake had killed hundreds, injured tens of thousands, damaged and destroyed homes and communities in the Ecuadorian cities of Portoviejo and Manta. I felt prompted to add to our schedule a visit to members living in those cities. With damage to the roads, we weren't sure we could get there. In fact, we had been told we could not get there, but the prompting would not go away. Consequently, we were blessed and were able to visit both cities.

With such short notice, I expected that only a few local priesthood leaders

would attend the hastily organized gatherings. However, we arrived at each stake center to find the chapels filled all the way back to the stage. Some who attended were the stalwarts of the region, the pioneers who had held fast to the Church, encouraging others to join them in worship and to feel the Spirit in their lives. Sitting on the front rows were the members who had lost loved ones and neighbors in the earthquake. I felt prompted to bestow an apostolic blessing upon all who were in attendance, one of my very first given. Though I was standing at the front of that room, it was as if my hands were on each of their heads, and I felt the words of the Lord pouring forth.

It didn't end there. I felt prompted to speak to them just as Jesus Christ had done when visiting the people in the Americas. "He took their little children . . . and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them."<sup>15</sup> We were in Ecuador, we were about our Father's business, and these were His children.

**Fourth**, we must act on the *first* prompting.

Remember the words of Nephi. "I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do. Nevertheless," he said, "I went forth."<sup>16</sup>

And so must we. We must be confident in our first promptings. Sometimes we rationalize; we wonder if we are





feeling a spiritual impression or if it is just our own thoughts. When we begin to second-guess, even third-guess, our feelings—and we all have—we are dismissing the Spirit; we are questioning divine counsel. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that if you will listen to the first promptings, you will get it right nine times out of ten.<sup>17</sup>

Now a caution: don't expect fireworks because you responded to the Holy Ghost. Remember, you are about the work of the still, small voice.

While serving as a mission president in New York City, I was with some of our missionaries in a restaurant in the Bronx. A young family came in and sat near us. They appeared golden for the gospel. I watched our missionaries as they continued to visit with me, then noticed as the family concluded their meal and slipped out the door. Then I said, "Elders, there's a lesson here today. You saw a lovely family come into this restaurant. What should we have done?"

One of the elders spoke up quickly: "I thought about getting up and going over to talk to them. I felt the nudge, but I didn't respond."

"Elders," I said, "we must always act on our first prompting. That nudge you felt was the Holy Ghost!"

First promptings are pure inspiration from heaven. When they confirm or testify to us, we need to recognize them for what they are and never let them slip past. So often, it is the Spirit inspiring us to reach out to someone in need, family and friends in particular. "Thus . . . the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things,"<sup>18</sup> points us to opportunities to teach the gospel, to bear testimony of the Restoration and Jesus Christ, to offer support and concern, and to rescue one of God's precious children.

Think of it as being what is called a first responder. In most communities the first responders to a tragedy, disaster, or calamity are firefighters, police officers, paramedics. They arrive with lights flashing, and may I add, we are so incredibly grateful for them. The Lord's way is less obvious but requires just as immediate a response. The Lord knows the needs of all His children—and He knows who is prepared to

help. If we let the Lord know in our morning prayers that we are ready, He will call on us to respond. If we respond, He will call on us time and time again and we will find ourselves on what President Monson calls "the Lord's errand."<sup>19</sup> We will become spiritual first responders bringing help from on high.

If we pay attention to the promptings that come to us, we will grow in the spirit of revelation and receive more and more Spirit-driven insight and direction. The Lord has said, "Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good."<sup>20</sup>

May we take seriously the Lord's call to "be of good cheer, for I will lead you along."<sup>21</sup> He leads us by the Holy Ghost. May we live close to the Spirit, acting quickly upon our first promptings, knowing they come from God. I bear witness of the power of the Holy Ghost to guide us, guard us, and ever be with us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. "God Bless Our Prophet Dear," *Hymns*, no. 24.
2. "Let the Holy Spirit Guide," *Hymns*, no. 143.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
6. Alma 58:40.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
8. Helaman 4:24.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
10. 3 Nephi 19:33.
11. See 1 Kings 18:17–29.
12. 1 Kings 19:11–12.
13. Thomas S. Monson, "The Spirit Giveth Life," *Ensign*, May 1985, 70.
14. 1 Nephi 17:45.
15. 3 Nephi 17:21.
16. 1 Nephi 4:6–7.
17. See Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1989), 103.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 85:6.
19. Thomas S. Monson, "To Learn, to Do, to Be," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 62.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18.



By Elder L. Whitney Clayton  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Whatsoever He Saith unto You, Do It

*When we decide to do “whatsoever [God] saith unto” us, we earnestly commit to align our everyday behavior with God’s will.*

The Savior performed His first recorded miracle at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Mary, His mother, and His disciples were there as well. Mary apparently felt some responsibility for the success of the feast. During the celebration, a problem arose—the wedding hosts ran out of wine. Mary was concerned and went to Jesus. They spoke briefly; then Mary turned to the servants and said:

“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

“And there were set there six waterpots of stone. . . . [These waterpots weren’t used to store drinking water but were used for ceremonial washings under the law of Moses.]

“Jesus saith unto [the servants], Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

“And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

“[Then] the ruler of the feast . . . tasted the water that was made wine” and expressed surprise that the best wine was served so late in the feast.<sup>1</sup>

We usually remember this event because transforming water to wine was a demonstration of the power

of God—it was a miracle. That is an important message, but there is another important message in John’s account.

Mary was “a precious and chosen vessel,”<sup>2</sup> called by God to give birth to, nurture, and raise the very Son of God. She knew more about Him than anyone else on earth. She knew the truth of His miraculous birth. She knew that He was sinless and that He “spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him.”<sup>3</sup> Mary knew of His extraordinary capacity to solve problems, including



one as personal as providing wine for a wedding feast. She had unshakable confidence in Him and in His divine power. Her simple, straightforward instruction to the servants had no caveats, no qualifications, no limitations: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

Mary had been a young woman when the angel Gabriel appeared unto her. At first she had been “troubled” by being called “highly favoured” and “blessed . . . among women . . . and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.” Gabriel reassured her that she had nothing to fear—the news he brought was good. She would “conceive in [her] womb . . . the Son of the Highest” and “bring forth a son . . . [who] shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.”

Mary wondered aloud, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

The angel explained but only briefly, affirming to her that “with God nothing [is] impossible.”

Mary humbly responded that she would do what God asked, without demanding to know specifics and undoubtedly in spite of having countless questions about the implications for her life. She committed herself without exactly understanding why He was asking that of her or how things would work out. She accepted God’s word unconditionally and in advance,<sup>4</sup> with little knowledge of what lay ahead. With simple trust in God, Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”<sup>5</sup>

When we decide to do “whatsoever [God] saith unto” us, we earnestly commit to align our everyday behavior with God’s will. Such simple acts of faith as studying the scriptures daily, fasting regularly, and praying with real intent deepen our well of spiritual capacity to meet the demands of mortality. Over



time, simple habits of belief lead to miraculous results. They transform our faith from a seedling into a dynamic power for good in our lives. Then, when challenges come our way, our rootedness in Christ provides steadfastness for our souls. God shores up our weaknesses, increases our joys, and causes “all things [to] work together for [our] good.”<sup>6</sup>

A few years ago, I spoke with a young bishop who was spending hours each week counseling with members of his ward. He made a striking observation. The problems that members of his ward faced, he said, were those faced by Church members everywhere—issues such as how to establish a happy marriage; struggles with balancing work, family, and Church duties; challenges with the Word of Wisdom, with employment, or with pornography; or trouble gaining peace about a Church policy or historical question they didn’t understand.

His counsel to ward members very often included getting back to simple practices of faith, such as studying the Book of Mormon—as we were counseled by President Thomas S.

Monson to do—paying tithing, and serving in the Church with devotion. Frequently, however, their response to him was one of skepticism: “I don’t agree with you, Bishop. We *all* know those are good things to do. We talk about those things *all the time* in the Church. But I’m not sure you’re understanding me. What does doing any of *those* things have to do with the issues *I’m* facing?”

It’s a fair question. Over time, that young bishop and I have observed that those who are deliberate about doing the “small and simple things”<sup>7</sup>—obeying in seemingly little ways—are blessed with faith and strength that go far beyond the actual acts of obedience themselves and, in fact, may seem totally unrelated to them. It may seem hard to draw a connection between the basic daily acts of obedience and solutions to the big, complicated problems we face. But they *are* related. In my experience, getting the little daily habits of faith right is the single best way to fortify ourselves against the troubles of life, whatever they may be. Small acts of faith, even when they seem insignificant or entirely disconnected from the

specific problems that vex us, bless us in *all* we do.

Consider Naaman, a “captain of the host of . . . Syria, . . . a mighty man in valour,” and a leper. A servant girl told of a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman, and so he traveled with an escort of servants, soldiers, and gifts to Israel, eventually arriving at Elisha’s house. Elisha’s servant, not Elisha himself, informed Naaman that the Lord’s command was to “go and wash in [the river] Jordan seven times.” A simple thing. Perhaps this simple prescription struck the mighty warrior as so illogical, simplistic, or beneath his dignity that he found the mere suggestion offensive. At the very least, Elisha’s instruction didn’t make sense to Naaman, “so he turned and went away in a rage.”

But Naaman’s servants gently approached him and observed that he would have done “some great thing” if Elisha had asked it of him. They noted that since he was asked to do only a small task, shouldn’t he do it, even if he didn’t understand why? Naaman reconsidered his reaction and perhaps skeptically, but obediently, “went . . . down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan” and was miraculously healed.<sup>8</sup>

Some rewards of obedience do come quickly; others come only after we are tested. In the Pearl of Great Price, we read about Adam’s tireless diligence in keeping the commandment to offer sacrifices. When the angel asked Adam why he was offering sacrifices, he answered, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.” The angel explained that his sacrifices were “a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father.” But that explanation came only after Adam had demonstrated his commitment to obeying the Lord for “many days” without

knowing *why* he was supposed to offer those sacrifices.<sup>9</sup>

God will always bless us for our steadfast obedience to His gospel and loyalty to His Church, but He rarely shows us His timetable for doing so in advance. He doesn't show us the whole picture from the outset. That is where faith, hope, and trusting in the Lord come in.

God asks us to bear with Him—to trust Him and to follow Him. He pleads with us to “dispute not because ye see

not.” He cautions us that we shouldn't expect easy answers or quick fixes from heaven. Things work out when we stand firm during the “trial of [our] faith,” however hard that test may be to endure or slow the answer may be in coming.<sup>10</sup> I am not speaking of “blind obedience”<sup>11</sup> but of thoughtful confidence in the perfect love and the perfect timing of the Lord.

The trial of our faith will *always* involve staying true to simple, daily practices of faith. Then, and only then,

does He promise that we will receive the divine response for which we long. Only once we have proven our willingness to do what He asks without demanding to know the whens, the whys, and the hows do we “reap the rewards of [our] faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering.”<sup>12</sup> Real obedience accepts God's commandments unconditionally and in advance.<sup>13</sup>

Every day, consciously or otherwise, we all choose “whom [we] will serve.”<sup>14</sup> We demonstrate our determination to serve the Lord by faithfully engaging in daily acts of devotion. The Lord promises to direct our paths,<sup>15</sup> but for Him to do that, we have to walk, trusting that He knows the way because He *is* “the way.”<sup>16</sup> We must fill our own waterpots up to the brim. When we trust and follow Him, our lives, like water to wine, are transformed. We become something more and better than we ever otherwise could be. Trust in the Lord, and “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 2:5–9; see also John 2:10.
2. Alma 7:10.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:25 (in the Bible appendix).
4. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 18.
5. See Luke 1:26–38.
6. Romans 8:28; Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
7. Alma 37:6.
8. See 2 Kings 5:1–14.
9. See Moses 5:5–11.
10. See Ether 12:6.
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “Agency and Control,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 66–68; Robert C. Oaks, “Believe All Things,” *Ensign*, July 2005, 30–33.
12. Alma 32:43.
13. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 18.
14. Joshua 24:15.
15. See Proverbs 3:6.
16. John 14:6.





By Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Godhead and the Plan of Salvation

*Because we have the truth about the Godhead and our relationship to Them, we have the ultimate road map for our journey through mortality.*

I. Our first article of faith declares, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.” We join other Christians in this belief in a Father and a Son and a

Holy Ghost, but what we believe about Them is different from the beliefs of others. We do not believe in what the Christian world calls the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In his First Vision, Joseph Smith saw two distinct personages, two



beings, thus clarifying that the then-prevailing beliefs concerning God and the Godhead were not true.

In contrast to the belief that God is an incomprehensible and unknowable mystery is the truth that the nature of God and our relationship to Him is knowable and is the key to everything else in our doctrine. The Bible records Jesus’s great Intercessory Prayer, where He declared that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

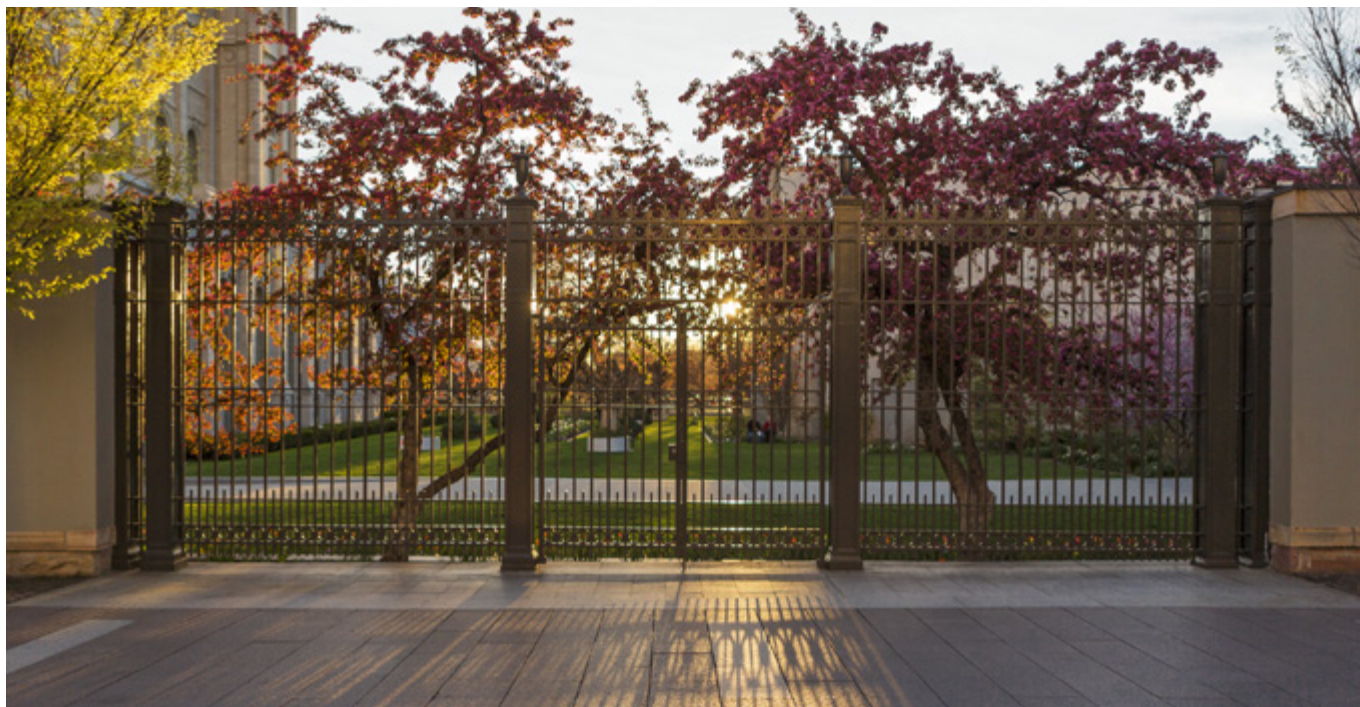
The effort to know God and His work began before mortality and will not be concluded here. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “It will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned . . . all the principles of exaltation.”<sup>1</sup> We build on the knowledge we acquired in the premortal spirit world. Thus, in trying to teach Israelites the nature of God and His relationship to His children, the prophet Isaiah declared, as recorded in the Bible:

“To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? . . .

“Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?” (Isaiah 40:18, 21).

We know that the three members of the Godhead are separate and distinct beings. We know this from instruction given by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22).

As to the supreme position of God the Father within the Godhead, as well



as the respective roles each personage performs, the Prophet Joseph explained:

“Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all. . . .

“ . . . These personages . . . are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the Witness or Testator.

“[It is] the province of the Father to preside as the Chief or President, Jesus as the Mediator, and the Holy Ghost as the Testator or Witness.”<sup>2</sup>

## II. The Plan

We understand our relationship to the members of the Godhead from what is revealed about the plan of salvation.

Questions like “Where did we come from?” “Why are we here?” and “Where are we going?” are answered in what the scriptures call the “plan of salvation,” the “great plan of happiness,” or the “plan of redemption” (Alma 42:5, 8, 11). The gospel of Jesus Christ is central to this plan.

As spirit children of God, in an existence prior to mortality, we desired a destiny of eternal life but had

progressed as far as we could without a mortal experience in a physical body. To provide that opportunity, our Heavenly Father presided over the Creation of this world, where, deprived of our memory of what preceded our mortal birth, we could prove our willingness to keep His commandments and experience and grow through the other challenges of mortal life. But in the course of that mortal experience, and as a result of the Fall of our first parents, we would suffer spiritual death by being cut off from the presence of God, be soiled by sin, and become subject to physical death. The Father’s plan anticipated and provided ways to overcome all of those barriers.

## III. The Godhead

Knowing the purpose of God’s great plan, we now consider the respective roles of the three members of the Godhead in that plan.

We begin with a teaching from the Bible. In concluding his second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul makes this almost offhand reference to the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [or fellowship<sup>3</sup>] of the Holy

Ghost, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

This biblical scripture represents the Godhead and references the all-defining and motivating love of God the Father, the merciful and saving mission of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

### *God the Father*

It all begins with God the Father. While we know comparatively little about Him, what we know is decisive in understanding His supreme position, our relationship to Him, and His superintending role in the plan of salvation, the Creation, and all else that followed.

As Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote just before his death: “In the ultimate and final sense of the word, there is only one true and living God. He is the Father, the Almighty Elohim, the Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the universe.”<sup>4</sup> He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, as well as of all of us. President David O. McKay taught that “the first fundamental truth advocated by Jesus Christ was this, that behind, above and over all there is God the Father, Lord of heaven and earth.”<sup>5</sup>

What we know of the nature of God the Father is mostly what we can

learn from the ministry and teachings of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught, one of the paramount purposes of Jesus's ministry was to reveal to mortals "what God our Eternal Father is like, . . . to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven."<sup>6</sup> The Bible contains an apostolic witness that Jesus was "the express image" of His Father's person (Hebrews 1:3), which merely elaborates Jesus's own teaching that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

God the Father is the Father of our spirits. We are His children. He loves us, and all that He does is for our eternal benefit. He is the author of the plan of salvation, and it is by His power that His plan achieves its purposes for the ultimate glory of His children.

### *The Son*

To mortals, the most visible member of the Godhead is Jesus Christ. A great doctrinal statement by the First Presidency in 1909 declares Him to be "the firstborn among all the sons of God—the first begotten in the spirit, and the only begotten in the flesh."<sup>7</sup> The Son, the greatest of all, was chosen by the Father to carry out the Father's plan—to exercise the Father's power to create worlds without number (see Moses 1:33) and to save the children of God from death by His Resurrection and from sin by His Atonement. This supernal sacrifice is truly called "the central act of all human history."<sup>8</sup>

On those unique and sacred occasions when God the Father personally introduced the Son, He has said, "This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; see also 3 Nephi 11:7;

Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Thus, it is Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, who speaks to and through the prophets.<sup>9</sup> So it is that when Jesus appeared to the Nephites after His Resurrection, He introduced Himself as "the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 11:14). So it is that Jesus often speaks to the prophets of the Book of Mormon and to the Latter-day Saints as "the Father and the Son," a title explained in the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve's inspired doctrinal exposition just 100 years ago.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Holy Ghost*

The third member of the Godhead is the Holy Ghost, also referred to as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Comforter. He is the member of the Godhead who is the agent of personal revelation. As a personage of spirit (see D&C 130:22), He can dwell in us and perform the essential role of communicator between the Father and the Son and the children of God on earth. Many scriptures teach that His mission is to testify of the Father and the Son (see John 15:26; 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 42:17). The Savior promised that the Comforter will teach us all things, bring all things to our remembrance, and guide us into all truth (see John 14:26; 16:13). Thus, the Holy Ghost helps us discern between truth and falsehood, guides us in our major decisions, and helps us through the challenges of mortality.<sup>11</sup> He is also the means by which we are sanctified, that is, cleansed and purified from sin (see 2 Nephi 31:17; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 6:4).

### IV.

So, how does understanding this heavenly revealed doctrine about the Godhead and the plan of salvation help us with our challenges today?





Because we have the truth about the Godhead and our relationship to Them, the purpose of life, and the nature of our eternal destiny, we have the ultimate road map and assurance for our journey through mortality. We know whom we worship and why we worship. We know who we are and what we can become (see D&C 93:19). We know who makes it all possible, and we know what we must do to enjoy the ultimate blessings that come through God's plan of salvation. How do we know all of this? We know by the revelations of God to His prophets and to each of us individually.

Attaining what the Apostle Paul described as “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the plan of salvation and the gospel of Jesus Christ challenge us to *become* something.

As President Thomas S. Monson taught us in our last general conference:

“Essential to the plan [of salvation] is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His atoning sacrifice, all would be lost. It is not enough, however, merely to believe in Him and His mission. We need to work and learn, search and pray, repent and improve. We need to know God's laws and live them. We need to receive His saving ordinances. Only by so doing will we obtain true, eternal happiness. . . .

“From the depths of my soul and in all humility,” President Monson declared, “I testify of the great gift which is our Father's plan for us. It is the one perfect path to peace and happiness both here and in the world to come.”<sup>12</sup>



I add my testimony to that of our beloved prophet-president. I testify that we have a Heavenly Father, who loves us. I testify that we have a Holy Ghost, who guides us. And I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who makes it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 268.
2. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 42.
3. This was a common meaning of *communion* when that word was chosen by the King James translators (see *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 3rd ed., rev. [1955], 352).
4. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (1985), 51.

5. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1935, 100.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70.
7. First Presidency, “The Origin of Man,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 26, 29.
8. See, for example, Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 40; “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2.
9. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1954), 1:27.
10. See First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Father and the Son,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 13–18.
11. See Robert D. Hales, “The Holy Ghost,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 105–7.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “The Perfect Path to Happiness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 80–81.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear

*Let us set aside our fears and live instead with joy, humility, hope, and a bold confidence that the Lord is with us.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, dear friends, what a privilege and joy it is to meet as a worldwide Church united in our faith and love for God and His children.

I am especially grateful for the presence of our beloved prophet, Thomas S. Monson. President, we will always take to heart your words of direction, counsel, and wisdom. We love you, President Monson, and we always pray for you.

Years ago, when I was serving as stake president in Frankfurt, Germany,

a dear but unhappy sister approached me at the end of one of our stake meetings.

“Isn’t it terrible?” she said. “There must have been four or five people sound asleep during your talk!”

I thought for a moment and answered, “I am pretty sure that church sleep is among the healthiest of all sleeps.”

My wonderful wife, Harriet, overheard this casual exchange and later mentioned that it was one of the nicest answers I had ever given.

## The Great Awakening

A few hundred years ago in North America, a movement called the “Great Awakening” spread across the countryside. One of its primary objectives was to awaken the people who appeared to be asleep regarding spiritual matters.

Young Joseph Smith was influenced by the things he heard from preachers who were part of this religious awakening. It is one of the reasons he decided to seek earnestly the will of the Lord in private prayer.

These preachers had a dramatic, emotional preaching style, with sermons that were known for their heavy emphasis on the fiery terrors of hell that await the sinner.<sup>1</sup> Their speeches didn’t put people to sleep—but they may have caused a few nightmares. Their purpose and pattern seemed to be to frighten people into church.

## Fear as Manipulation

Historically, fear has often been used as a means to get people to take action. Parents have used it with their children, employers with employees, and politicians with voters.

Experts in marketing understand the power of fear and often employ it. This is why some advertisements seem to carry the implicit message that if we fail to buy their breakfast cereal or miss out on the newest video game or cell phone, we run the risk of living a miserable life, dying alone and unhappy.

We smile at this and think we would never fall for such manipulation, but we sometimes do. Worse, we sometimes use similar methods to get others to do what we want.

My message has two purposes today: The first is to urge us to contemplate and consider the extent to which *we* use fear to motivate



others—including ourselves. The second is to suggest a better way.

### The Problem with Fear

First, let us address the problem with fear. After all, who among us has never been compelled by fear to eat better, wear a seat belt, exercise more, save money, or even repent of sin?

It is true that fear can have a powerful influence over our actions and behavior. But that influence tends to be temporary and shallow. Fear rarely has the power to change our hearts, and it will never transform us into people who love what is right and who want to obey Heavenly Father.

People who are fearful may *say* and do the right things, but they do not *feel* the right things. They often feel helpless and resentful, even angry. Over time these feelings lead to mistrust, defiance, even rebellion.

Unfortunately, this misguided approach to life and leadership is not limited to the secular world. It grieves me to hear of Church members who exercise unrighteous dominion—whether in their homes, in their Church callings, at work, or in their daily interactions with others.

Often, people may condemn bullying in others, yet they cannot see it in themselves. They demand compliance with their own arbitrary rules, but when others don't follow these random rules, they chasten them verbally, emotionally, and sometimes even physically.

The Lord has said that “when we . . . exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, . . . the heavens withdraw themselves [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”<sup>2</sup>

There may be moments when we are tempted to justify our actions by



believing that the end justifies the means. We might even think that to be controlling, manipulative, and harsh will be for the good of others. Not so, for the Lord has made it clear that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”<sup>3</sup>

### A Better Way

The more I come to know my Heavenly Father, the more I see how He inspires and leads His children. He is not angry, vengeful, or retaliatory.<sup>4</sup> His very purpose—His work and His glory—is to mentor us, exalt us, and lead us to His fulness.<sup>5</sup>

God described Himself to Moses as “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”<sup>6</sup>

Our Father in Heaven’s love for us, His children, surpasses by far our ability to comprehend.<sup>7</sup>

Does this mean that God condones or overlooks behaviors that run contrary to His commands? No, definitely not!

But He wants to change more than just our behaviors. He wants to change our very natures. He wants to change our hearts.

He wants us to reach out and take firm hold of the iron rod, confront our

fears, and bravely step forward and upward along the strait and narrow path. He wants this for us because He loves us and because this is the way to happiness.

So, how does God motivate His children to follow Him in our day?

He sent His Son!

God sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to show us the right way.

God motivates through persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned.<sup>8</sup> God is on our side. He loves us, and when we stumble, He wants us to rise up, try again, and become stronger.

He is our mentor.

He is our great and cherished hope.

He desires to stimulate us with faith.

He trusts us to learn from our missteps and make correct choices.

This is the better way!<sup>9</sup>

### What of the Evils of the World?

One of the ways Satan wants us to manipulate others is by dwelling upon and even exaggerating the evil in the world.

Certainly our world has always been, and will continue to be, imperfect. Far too many innocent people suffer because of circumstances of nature

as well as from man's inhumanity. The corruption and wickedness in our day are unique and alarming.

But in spite of all this, I wouldn't trade living in this time with any other time in the history of the world. We are blessed beyond measure to live in a day of unparalleled prosperity, enlightenment, and advantage. Most of all, we are blessed to have the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives us a unique perspective on the world's dangers and shows us how to either avoid these dangers or deal with them.

When I think of these blessings, I want to fall to my knees and offer praises to our Heavenly Father for His never-ending love for all of His children.

I don't believe God wants His children to be fearful or dwell on the evils of the world. "For God hath not given

us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."<sup>10</sup>

He has given us an abundance of reasons to rejoice. We just need to find and to recognize them. The Lord often reminds us to "be not afraid," to "be of good cheer,"<sup>11</sup> and to "fear not, little flock."<sup>12</sup>

#### The Lord Will Fight Our Battles

Brothers and sisters, we are the Lord's "little flock." We are the Saints of the latter days. Inherent in our name is the commitment to look forward to the Savior's return and prepare ourselves and the world to receive Him. Therefore, let us serve God and love our fellowmen. Let us do this with a natural confidence, with humility, never looking down on any other religion or group of people. Brothers and sisters, we are charged with studying the word

of God and heeding the voice of the Spirit, that we may "know the signs of the times, and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man."<sup>13</sup>

We are, therefore, not ignorant of the challenges of the world, nor are we unaware of the difficulties of our times. But this does not mean that we should burden ourselves or others with constant fear. Rather than dwelling on the immensity of our challenges, would it not be better to focus on the infinite greatness, goodness, and absolute power of our God, trusting Him and preparing with a joyful heart for the return of Jesus the Christ?

As His covenant people, we need not be paralyzed by fear because bad things might happen. Instead, we can move forward with faith, courage, determination, and trust in God as we approach the challenges and opportunities ahead.<sup>14</sup>

We do not walk the path of discipleship alone. "The Lord thy God . . . doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."<sup>15</sup>

"The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."<sup>16</sup>

In the face of fear, let us find our courage, muster our faith, and have confidence in the promise that "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."<sup>17</sup>

Do we live in a time of peril and turmoil? Of course we do.

God Himself has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."<sup>18</sup>

Can we exercise the faith to believe and to act accordingly? Can we live up to our commitments and sacred covenants? Can we keep the commandments of God even in challenging circumstances? Of course we can!

We can because God has promised, "All things shall work together for





your good, if [you] walk uprightly.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, let us set aside our fears and live instead with joy, humility, hope, and a bold confidence that the Lord is with us.

#### Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear

My beloved friends, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we ever find ourselves living in fear or anxiety, or if we ever find that our own words, attitudes, or actions are causing fear in others, I pray with all the strength of my soul that we may become liberated from this fear by the divinely appointed antidote to fear: the pure love of Christ, for “perfect love casteth out fear.”<sup>20</sup>

Christ’s perfect love overcomes temptations to harm, coerce, bully, or oppress.

Christ’s perfect love allows us to walk with humility, dignity, and a bold confidence as followers of our beloved Savior. Christ’s perfect love gives us the confidence to press through our fears and place our complete trust in the power and goodness of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In our homes, in our places of business, in our Church callings, in our hearts, let us replace fear with Christ’s perfect love. Christ’s love will replace fear with faith!

His love will enable us to recognize, trust, and have faith in our Heavenly Father’s goodness, His divine plan, His gospel, and His commandments.<sup>21</sup> Loving God and our fellowmen will turn our obedience to God’s commandments

into a blessing rather than a burden. Christ’s love will help us become a little kinder, more forgiving, more caring, and more dedicated to His work.

As we fill our hearts with the love of Christ, we will awaken with a renewed spiritual freshness and we will walk joyfully, confidently, awake, and alive in the light and glory of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ.

I testify, with the Apostle John, “There is no fear in [Christ’s] love.”<sup>22</sup> Brothers and sisters, dear friends, God knows you perfectly. He loves you perfectly. He knows what your future holds. He wants you to “be not afraid, only believe”<sup>23</sup> and “abide in his [perfect] love.”<sup>24</sup> This is my prayer and blessing in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards are two prominent examples of this kind of preacher.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
3. Galatians 5:22–23.
4. On one occasion, the Savior wanted to enter a village of the Samaritans, but the people rejected Jesus and would not receive Him into their village. Two of His disciples were deeply offended by this and asked, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Jesus answered with this caution: “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (see Luke 9:51–56, New King James Version [1982]).
5. See Moses 1:39; see also Ephesians 3:19.
6. Exodus 34:6.
7. See Ephesians 3:19.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41. Surely if God expects us, His mortal children, to behave this way toward each other, He—a perfect being possessed of every virtue—

would be the model for such behavior.

9. The premortal Council in Heaven is an excellent case study that demonstrates the character of God. There our Heavenly Father presented His plan for our eternal progression. Key elements of that plan included agency, obedience, and salvation through the Atonement of Christ. Lucifer, however, proposed a different approach. He guaranteed that all would obey—none would be lost. The only way to accomplish this would be through tyranny and force. But our loving Heavenly Father would not permit such a plan. He valued the agency of His children. He knew that we must make mistakes along the way if we are to truly learn. And that is why He provided a Savior, whose eternal sacrifice could cleanse us of sin and permit our entry back into the kingdom of God.

When our Father in Heaven saw that many of His beloved children were seduced by Lucifer, did He force them to follow His plan? Did He intimidate or threaten those who were making such a terrible choice? No. Our all-powerful God could surely have stopped this rebellion. He could have forced His will upon the dissenters and made them comply. But instead, He allowed His children to choose for themselves.

10. 2 Timothy 1:7.
11. See, for example, Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:13; Luke 12:32; John 16:33; 1 Peter 3:14; Doctrine and Covenants 6:36; 50:41; 61:36; 78:18.
12. Luke 12:32.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 68:11.
14. Moses’s counsel to the people of his day still applies: “Do not be afraid. . . . See the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today” (Exodus 14:13, New King James Version).
15. Deuteronomy 31:6.
16. Exodus 14:14, New King James Version.
17. Isaiah 54:17.
18. John 16:33.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24; see also 2 Corinthians 2:14; Doctrine and Covenants 105:14.
20. 1 John 4:18.
21. Let us remember that the Savior came not “into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). In fact, “he doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him” (2 Nephi 26:24).
22. 1 John 4:18; see also 1 John 4:16.
23. Mark 5:36.
24. John 15:10.



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Voice of Warning

*While the duty to warn is felt especially keenly by prophets, it is a duty shared by others as well.*

The prophet Ezekiel was born about two decades before Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. In 597 BC, at age 25, Ezekiel was one of the many carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and as best we can tell, he spent the rest of his life there.<sup>1</sup> He was of the Aaronic priestly lineage, and when he was 30, he became a prophet.<sup>2</sup>

In commissioning Ezekiel, Jehovah used the metaphor of a watchman.

“If when [the watchman] seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

“Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, “if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, . . . his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand.”<sup>4</sup>

Then speaking directly to Ezekiel, Jehovah declared, “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them [for] me.”<sup>5</sup> The warning was to turn away from sin.

“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

“Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. . . .

“Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; . . .

“None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.”<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, this warning also applies to the righteous. “When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his [righteous deeds] shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.”<sup>7</sup>

Pleading with His children, God tells Ezekiel, “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from

your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”<sup>8</sup>

Far from being anxious to condemn, our Heavenly Father and our Savior seek our happiness and plead with us to repent, knowing full well that “wickedness never was [and never will be] happiness.”<sup>9</sup> So Ezekiel and every prophet before and since, speaking the word of God out of a full heart, have warned all who will to turn away from Satan, the enemy of their souls, and “choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men.”<sup>10</sup>

While the duty to warn is felt especially keenly by prophets, it is a duty shared by others as well. In fact, “it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.”<sup>11</sup> We who have received a knowledge of the great plan of happiness—and its implementing commandments—should feel a desire to share that knowledge since it makes all the difference here and in eternity. And if we ask, “Who is my





neighbor that I should warn?” surely the answer will be found in a parable that begins, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves,”<sup>12</sup> and so forth.

Considering the parable of the good Samaritan in this context reminds us that the question “Who is my neighbor?” was tied to the two great commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>13</sup> The motivation for raising the warning voice is love—love of God and love of fellowman. To warn is to care. The Lord instructs that it is to be done “in mildness and in meekness”<sup>14</sup> and “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness . . . , and by love unfeigned.”<sup>15</sup> It can be urgent, as when we warn a child not to put his or her hand in a fire. It must be clear and sometimes firm. On occasion, warning may take the form of reproof “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,”<sup>16</sup> but always it is rooted in love. Witness, for example, the love that motivates the service and sacrifices of our missionaries.

Surely love would compel parents to warn their closest “neighbors”—their own children. This means teaching and

testifying of gospel truths. It means teaching children the doctrine of Christ: faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>17</sup> The Lord reminds parents, “I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.”<sup>18</sup>

A crucial element of the parental duty to warn is to point not only the demoralizing consequences of sin but also the joy of walking in obedience to the commandments. Recall the words of Enos about what led him to seek God, receive a remission of sins, and become converted:

“Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, *and the joy of the saints*, sunk deep into my heart.

“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication.”<sup>19</sup>

Because of His incomparable love and concern for others and their happiness, Jesus was not hesitant to warn. At the outset of His ministry, “Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”<sup>20</sup> Because He knows that not just any path leads to heaven, He commanded:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”<sup>21</sup>

He devoted time to sinners, saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”<sup>22</sup>

As for the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus was uncompromising in condemning their hypocrisy. His warnings and commandments were direct: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”<sup>23</sup> Surely no one would accuse the Savior of not loving these scribes and Pharisees—after all, He suffered and died to save them too. But loving them, He could not let them go on in sin without clearly correcting them. One observer noted, “Jesus taught his followers to do as he did: to welcome everyone but also to teach about sin, since love demands warning people about what can hurt them.”<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes those who raise a warning voice are dismissed as judgmental. Paradoxically, however, those who claim truth is relative and moral standards are a matter of personal preference are often the same ones who most harshly criticize people who don't accept the current norm of "correct thinking." One writer referred to this as the "shame culture":

"In a guilt culture you know you are good or bad by what your conscience feels. In a shame culture you know you are good or bad by what your community says about you, by whether it honors or excludes you. . . . [In the shame culture,] moral life is not built on the continuum of right and wrong; it's built on the continuum of inclusion and exclusion. . . .

". . . Everybody is perpetually insecure in a moral system based on inclusion and exclusion. There are no permanent standards, just the shifting judgment of the crowd. It is a culture of oversensitivity, overreaction and frequent moral panics, during which everybody feels compelled to go along. . . .

"The guilt culture could be harsh, but at least you could hate the sin and still love the sinner. The modern shame culture allegedly values inclusion and tolerance, but it can be strangely unmerciful to those who disagree and to those who don't fit in."<sup>25</sup>

Contrasted to this is "the rock of our Redeemer,"<sup>26</sup> a stable and permanent foundation of justice and virtue. How much better it is to have the unchanging law of God by which we may act to choose our destiny rather than being hostage to the unpredictable rules and wrath of the social media mob. How much better it is to know the truth than to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."<sup>27</sup> How much better to repent and rise



to the gospel standard than to pretend there is no right or wrong and languish in sin and regret.

The Lord has declared, "The voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days."<sup>28</sup> As watchmen and disciples, we cannot be neutral about this "more excellent way."<sup>29</sup> As Ezekiel, we cannot see the sword coming upon the land "and blow not the trumpet."<sup>30</sup> This is not to say that we should bang on our neighbor's door or stand in the public square shouting, "Repent!" Truly, when you think about it, we have in the restored gospel what people, deep down, really

want. So the warning voice is generally not only civil, but in the Psalmist's phrase, it is a "joyful noise."<sup>31</sup>

*Deseret News* opinion editor Hal Boyd cited one example of the disservice inherent in staying silent. He noted that while the idea of marriage is still a matter of "intellectual debate" among elites in American society, marriage itself is not a matter of debate for them in practice. "Elites get and stay married and make sure their kids enjoy the benefits of stable marriage.' . . . The problem, however, is that [they] tend not to preach what they practice." They don't want to "impose" on those who really could use their moral leadership,



but “it is perhaps time for those with education and strong families to stop feigning neutrality and start preaching what they practice pertaining to marriage and parenting . . . [and] help their fellow Americans embrace it.”<sup>32</sup>

We trust that especially you of the rising generation, youth and young adults on whom the Lord must rely for the success of His work in future years, will sustain the teachings of the gospel and the standards of the Church in public as well as in private. Do not abandon those who would welcome truth to floundering and failing in ignorance. Do not succumb to false notions of tolerance or to fear—fear of inconvenience, disapproval, or even suffering. Remember the Savior’s promise:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”<sup>33</sup>

Ultimately, we are all accountable to God for our choices and the lives we live. The Savior declared, “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.”<sup>34</sup>

Recognizing this, the Lord’s supremacy, I plead in the words of Alma:

“And now, my brethren [and sisters], I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would . . . cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance;



“But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit . . . ;

“Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.”<sup>35</sup>

May we each be able to say to the Lord with David: “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord.”<sup>36</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament* (2009), 344.
2. See Ezekiel 1–3; Holzapfel, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament*, 344.
3. Ezekiel 33:3–4.
4. Ezekiel 33:6.
5. Ezekiel 33:7.
6. Ezekiel 33:8–9, 14, 16.
7. Ezekiel 33:13.
8. Ezekiel 33:11.
9. Alma 41:10.
10. 2 Nephi 2:27.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:81.
12. Luke 10:30.
13. Luke 10:27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 38:41.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.

19. Enos 1:3–4; emphasis added. As President Russell M. Nelson expressed it in general conference six months ago: “My dear brothers and sisters, the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives. . . . Joy comes from and because of [Jesus Christ]. He is the source of all joy” (“Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82).

20. Matthew 4:17.

21. Matthew 7:13–14.

22. Luke 5:32.

23. Matthew 23:23.

24. Chris Stefanick, *Absolute Relativism: The New Dictatorship and What to Do about It* (2011), 33.

25. David Brooks, “The Shame Culture,” *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 2016, A29.

26. Helaman 5:12.

27. Ephesians 4:14. We should bear in mind that some we seek to warn may not realize their plight. The Lord speaks of many in our day when He says:

“Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest [truly] see” (Revelation 3:17–18).

28. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4; see also Doctrine and Covenants 1:5.

29. 1 Corinthians 12:31.

30. Ezekiel 33:6.

31. Psalm 66:1; 98:4.

32. Hal Boyd, “Hey Progressive Elites! It’s Time to Preach What You Practice,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 20, 2016, [deseretnews.com](http://deseretnews.com). He is also quoting University of Virginia sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox.

33. Matthew 5:11–12.

34. 3 Nephi 27:14.

35. Alma 13:27–29.

36. Psalm 40:10–11.



By Elder Joaquin E. Costa  
Of the Seventy

# To the Friends and Investigators of the Church

*If you pay the price of revelation, humble yourself, read, pray, and repent, the heavens will open and you will know that Jesus is the Christ.*

On a Friday afternoon, September 16, 1988, in the Vicente López Ward meeting-house in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A very good friend, Alin Spannaus, baptized me that day, and I felt happy, lighter, eager to learn more.

Today, I would like to share some lessons I learned on my path to baptism—lessons that I hope may help those of you listening who are not members of the Church yet. I pray that your hearts may be touched by the Spirit, as was mine.

## First, Meeting the Missionaries

Why would a person without compelling challenges, needs, or questions be interested in meeting the missionaries and listening to their lessons? Well, in my case it was love—love for a girl, a girl named Renee. I fell in love with her, and I wanted to marry her. She was different and had standards different from most young women I

knew. But I fell for her and asked her to marry me—and she said no!

I was confused. I thought I was quite a catch! I was handsome, 24 years old, and a college graduate with a great job. She spoke of her goals—of marrying only someone who could take her to the temple, of having an eternal

family—and she declined my offer. I wanted to continue the relationship, so I agreed to listen to the missionaries. Is this a good reason to meet with the missionaries? Well, it was for me.

When I first met with the missionaries, I did not understand much of what they said, and to tell you the truth, I may not have paid much attention to them. My heart was closed to a new religion. I wanted only to prove they were wrong and to gain time to convince Renee to marry me anyway.

Today my children have served and are serving missions, and I understand the sacrifices that these young men and young women make to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I wish I had paid more attention to Elder Richardson, Elder Farrell, and Elder Hyland, the wonderful missionaries who taught me.

So, from my first lesson, I say to you friends and investigators of the Church: *once you meet the missionaries, please take them seriously; they are giving up important years of their lives just for you.*



## Second, Going to Church

The first time I attended a Church meeting, I heard many words that didn't make sense to me. Who were the Beehives? What was the Aaronic Priesthood? the Relief Society?

If this is the first time you have attended a Church meeting and you are feeling confused by something you don't understand, do not worry! I was clueless too. But I still remember the impressions, the new feelings of peace and joy I experienced. I did not know it then, but the Holy Ghost was whispering to my ears and to my heart, "This is right."

So let me put this lesson in one sentence: *if you are confused, don't worry—remember the feelings you have experienced; they come from God.*

## Third, Reading the Book of Mormon

After several meetings with the missionaries, I was not making much progress. I felt I had not received a confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel.

One day, Renee asked me, "Are you reading the Book of Mormon?"

I replied, "No." I was listening to the missionaries—wasn't that enough?

With tears in her eyes, Renee assured me that she knew the Book of Mormon is true and explained that if I wanted to know if it is true, the only way is—guess what—to read it! And then ask!

Read, ponder in your hearts, and "ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, . . . with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moroni 10:4) if the Book of Mormon is true, if this is the true Church.

So the third lesson, in one sentence: *when you receive these things—the Book of Mormon—and you are*



*exhorted to read and ask God if they are true, please just do it!*

## Last, Repenting

The final experience I'd like to share is about repentance. After I had finished taking all the missionary lessons, I was still not convinced I needed to change anything in my life. It was Elder Cutler, a young, confident missionary with limited Spanish, who one day said, "Joaquin, let's read together Alma 42, and we will include your name as we read it."

I thought it was silly, but I did as Elder Cutler asked and read in verse 1: "And now, my son [Joaquin], I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand." Oh! The book was speaking to me.

And we read in verse 2: "Now behold, my son [Joaquin], I will explain this thing unto thee," and then the Fall of Adam was described.

And then in verse 4: "And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto [Joaquin] to repent."

We continued reading slowly, verse by verse, until we reached the last three verses. Then I was struck by a powerful force. The book spoke *directly* to me, and I started to cry as I read, "And now, [Joaquin,] my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you . . . unto repentance" (verse 29).

I realize now that I had expected to receive revelation without paying the price. Until then I had never truly spoken to God, and the idea of speaking to someone who wasn't present seemed foolish. I had to humble myself and do what I was being asked to do even if, in my worldly mind, it sounded silly.

That day I opened my heart to the Spirit, desired to repent, and wanted to be baptized! Before that moment, I had thought of repentance as something negative, associated only with sin and wrongdoing, but suddenly I saw it in a different light—as something positive that cleared the path to growth and happiness.

Elder Cutler is here today, and I want to thank him for opening my eyes. Every decision I have made in my life since then has been influenced by that moment when I humbled myself and prayed for forgiveness, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ on my behalf became part of my life.

So the last lesson, in one statement: *experience repentance; nothing draws you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ than a desire to change.*

My dear investigator, friend of the Church, if you are listening today, you are very close to reaching the greatest joy. You are close!

Let me invite you, with all the energy of my heart and from the depths of my soul: go and be baptized! It is the best thing you will ever do. It will change not only your life but also the lives of your children and grandchildren.

The Lord has blessed me with a family. I married Renee, and we have four beautiful children. And because of my baptism, I can, like the prophet Lehi of old, invite them to partake of the fruit of the tree of life, which is the love of God (see 1 Nephi 8:15; 11:25). I can help them come unto Christ.

So please consider my experiences, and (1) take the missionaries very seriously, (2) go to church and remember spiritual feelings, (3) read the Book of Mormon and ask the Lord if it is true, and (4) experience repentance and be baptized.

I testify to you that if you pay the price of revelation, humble yourself, read, pray, and repent, the heavens will open and you will know, as I know, that Jesus is the Christ, He is my Savior, and He is yours. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder S. Mark Palmer  
Of the Seventy

## Then Jesus Beholding Him Loved Him

*Anytime you feel you are being asked to do something hard, think of the Lord beholding you, loving you, and inviting you to follow Him.*

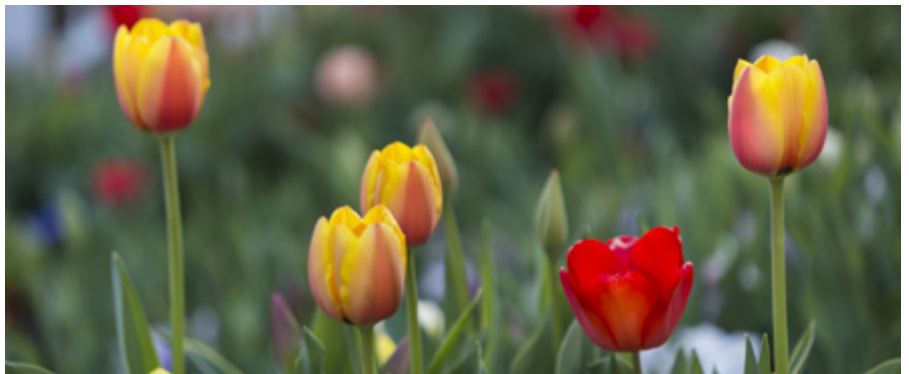
Some years ago I was called, with my wife, Jacqui, to preside over the Washington Spokane Mission. We arrived in the mission field with a mix of fear and excitement at the responsibility of working with so many remarkable young missionaries. They came from many different backgrounds and quickly became like our own sons and daughters.

Although most were doing wonderfully well, a few were struggling with the high expectations of their calling. I remember one missionary telling me, “President, I just don’t like people.” Several told me they lacked the desire to follow the rather strict missionary

rules. I worried and wondered what we could do to change the hearts of those few missionaries who had not yet learned the joy of being obedient.

One day while driving through the beautiful rolling wheat fields on the Washington-Idaho border, I was listening to a recording of the New Testament. As I listened to the familiar account of the rich young man coming to the Savior to ask what he might do to have eternal life, I received an unexpected but profound personal revelation that is now a sacred memory.

After hearing Jesus recite the commandments and the young man reply that he had observed all these since





his youth, I listened for the Savior's gentle correction: "One thing thou lackest: . . . sell whatsoever thou hast, and . . . come, . . . follow me."<sup>1</sup> But to my astonishment, I instead heard six words before that part of the verse that I seemed never to have heard or read before. It was as if they had been added to the scriptures. I marveled at the inspired understanding which then unfolded.

What were these six words that had such a profound effect? Listen to see if you can recognize these seemingly ordinary words, not found in the other Gospel accounts but found only in the Gospel of Mark:

"There came one running . . . and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

"And Jesus said unto him, . . .

"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

"And he answered . . . , Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

"*Then Jesus beholding him loved him*, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."<sup>2</sup>

"*Then Jesus beholding him loved him.*"

As I heard these words, a vivid image filled my mind of our Lord pausing and *beholding* this young man. *Beholding*—as in looking deeply and penetratingly into his soul, recognizing his goodness and also his potential, as well as discerning his greatest need.

Then the simple words—Jesus *loved him*. He felt an overwhelming love and compassion for this good young man, and *because* of this love and *with* this love, Jesus asked even more of him. I pictured what it must have felt like for this young man to be enveloped by such love even

while being asked to do something so supremely hard as selling all he owned and giving it to the poor.

In that moment, I knew it was not just the hearts of some of our missionaries that needed changing. It was my heart as well. The question no longer was "How does a frustrated mission president get a struggling missionary to behave better?" Instead, the question was "How can I be filled with Christlike love so a missionary can feel the love of God through me and desire to change?" How can I *behold* him or her in the same way the Lord beheld the rich young man, seeing them for who they really are and who they can become, rather than just for what they are doing or not doing? How can I be more like the Savior?

"*Then Jesus beholding him loved him.*"

From that time forward, as I sat knee to knee with a young missionary struggling with some aspect of obedience, within my heart I now saw a faithful young man or young woman who had acted on the desire to come on a mission. Then I was able to say with all the feeling like that of a tender parent:<sup>3</sup> "Elder or Sister, if I didn't love you, I wouldn't care what happens on your mission. But I do love you, and because I love you, I care about who you become. So I invite you to change those things that are hard for you and become who the Lord wants you to be."

Each time I went to interview missionaries, I first prayed for the gift of charity and that I could see each elder and sister as the Lord sees him or her.

Before zone conferences, as Sister Palmer and I greeted each missionary one by one, I would pause and look deeply into their eyes, *beholding* them—an interview without words—and then without fail, I was filled with

great *love* for these precious sons and daughters of God.

I have learned many life-changing lessons from this deeply personal experience with Mark chapter 10. Here are four of these lessons I believe will help each of us:

1. **As we learn to see others as the Lord sees them rather than with our own eyes, our love for them will grow and so will our desire to help them.** We will see potential within others they likely do not see in themselves. With Christlike love we will not be afraid to speak with boldness, for “perfect love casteth

out fear.”<sup>4</sup> And we will never give up, remembering that those who are hardest to love need love the most.

2. **No true teaching or learning will ever occur when done in frustration or anger, and hearts will not change where love is not present.** Whether we act in our roles as parents, teachers, or leaders, true teaching will happen only in an atmosphere of trust rather than condemnation. Our homes should always be safe havens for our children—not hostile environments.
3. **Love should never be withdrawn when a child, friend, or family member fails to live up to our**

**expectations.** We don’t know what happened to the rich young man after he went away sorrowful, but I am confident Jesus still loved him perfectly even if he chose the easier path. Perhaps later in life, as he found his great possessions hollow, he remembered and acted on the singular experience of His Lord beholding him, loving him, and inviting him to follow Him.

4. **Because He loves us, the Lord expects much of us.** If we are humble, we will welcome the Lord’s invitations to repent, to sacrifice, and to serve as evidence of His perfect love for us. After all, an invitation to repent is also an invitation to receive the wonderful gift of forgiveness and peace. Therefore, “despise not . . . the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”<sup>5</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, now anytime you feel you are being asked to do something hard—give up a poor habit or an addiction, put aside worldly pursuits, sacrifice a favorite activity because it is the Sabbath, forgive someone who has wronged you—think of the Lord *beholding* you, *loving* you, and inviting you to let it go and *follow Him*. And thank Him for loving you enough to invite you to do more.

I testify of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and look forward to the day when He will put His arms around each of us, *beholding* us and encircling us with His perfect *love*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mark 10:21.
2. Mark 10:17–21; emphasis added.
3. See 1 Nephi 8:37.
4. 1 John 4:18.
5. Hebrews 12:5–6.





By Elder Gary E. Stevenson  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# How Does the Holy Ghost Help You?

*The Holy Ghost warns, the Holy Ghost comforts, and the Holy Ghost testifies.*

On a Monday evening not long ago, my wife, Lesa, and I stopped by the home of a young family in our neighborhood. While we were there, the family invited us to stay for family home evening, telling us their nine-year-old son had prepared the lesson. Of course we stayed!

Following the opening song, prayer, and family business, the nine-year-old began by reading an insightful question included in his handwritten lesson: “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” This question began a meaningful family discussion as everyone shared ideas and insights. I was impressed by our teacher’s lesson preparation and his very good question, which stirred in me over and over again.

Since then, I have continued to ask myself, “How does the Holy Ghost help you?”—a question especially relevant for Primary children turning eight and preparing for baptism and for those children who have recently been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is also relevant for the thousands of recent converts.

I invite each of us, especially Primary children, to consider, “How

does the Holy Ghost help you?” As I pondered this question, I immediately reflected upon an experience from my youth. This is a story I related to Elder Robert D. Hales shortly after my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and which he included in a Church magazine article he wrote about my life.<sup>1</sup> Some of you may have heard this story, but many may not have.

When I was about 11 years old, my father and I went hiking on a hot summer day in the mountains near our home. As Dad hiked up the steep trail, I jumped from one large

rock to another along the sides of the trail. Intending to climb one of the large rocks, I began to clamber to the top of it. As I did so, I was surprised when my dad grabbed me by my belt and quickly pulled me down, saying, “Don’t climb on that rock. Let’s just keep on the trail.”

Minutes later, as we looked down from higher up the trail, we were stunned as we saw a big rattlesnake basking in the sun on top of the very rock I had intended to climb.

Later, as we were driving home, I knew Dad was waiting for me to ask, “How did you know the snake was there?” So I asked, and my question led to a discussion about the Holy Ghost and how the Holy Ghost can help us. I have never forgotten what I learned that day.

Can you see how the Holy Ghost helped me? I am forever grateful that my father listened to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, as it may have saved my life.

## What We Know about the Holy Ghost

Before we further consider the question “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” let’s review some of what the Lord has revealed about the Holy



Ghost. There are many eternal truths we could look at, but today I will highlight just three.

First, the Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. We learn this truth in the first article of faith: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup>

Second, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, as described in modern scripture: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”<sup>3</sup> This means that the Holy Ghost has a spirit body, unlike God the Father and Jesus Christ, who have physical bodies. This truth clarifies other names given to the Holy Ghost and familiar to us, including Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Holy Spirit of Promise, and Comforter.<sup>4</sup>

Third, the gift of the Holy Ghost comes by the laying on of hands. This ordinance, following baptism, qualifies us for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.<sup>5</sup> To perform this ordinance, worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands upon the head of the individual,<sup>6</sup> call him or her by name, state their priesthood authority, and in the name of Jesus Christ, confirm him or her a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and utter the important phrase “Receive the Holy Ghost.”

#### How Does the Holy Ghost Help You?

With that simple review of three key truths about the Holy Ghost, we return to our first question: “How does the Holy Ghost help you?”

#### *The Holy Ghost Warns*

As I described in my childhood experience, the Holy Ghost can help you by warning you in advance of physical and spiritual dangers. I learned again of the important warning role of the Holy Ghost while I served in the Area Presidency in Japan.

During this time, I worked closely with President Reid Tateoka of the Japan Sendai Mission. As part of his usual mission routine, President Tateoka planned a meeting for missionary leaders in the southern portion of his mission. A few days prior to the meeting, President Tateoka had an

impression, a feeling in his heart, to invite *all* missionaries of that zone to the leadership meeting, instead of the prescribed small number of elder and sister leaders.

When he announced his intention, he was reminded that this meeting was not designed for all missionaries but only for mission leaders. However, setting convention aside in order to follow the prompting he had received, he invited all missionaries serving in several coastal cities, including the city of Fukushima, to the meeting. On the appointed day, March 11, 2011, the missionaries gathered together for





the expanded mission meeting in the inland city of Koriyama.

During this meeting a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and tsunami struck the region of Japan where the Japan Sendai Mission is located. Tragically, many coastal cities—including those from which the missionaries had been gathered—were devastated and suffered great loss of life. And the city of Fukushima suffered a subsequent nuclear event.

Although the meetinghouse where the missionaries were meeting that day was damaged by the earthquake, through following the promptings of the Holy Ghost, President and Sister Tateoka and all missionaries were safely assembled. They were out of harm's way and miles from the devastation of the tsunami and the nuclear fallout.

As you heed promptings from the Holy Ghost—impressions most often quiet and still—you may be removed, without ever knowing, from spiritual and temporal danger.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Ghost will help you by warning you, as He did my father and President Tateoka.

#### *The Holy Ghost Comforts*

To continue answering the question “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” let's now explore His role as Comforter. Unexpected events in all our lives cause sadness, pain, and disappointment. Yet, amid these trials, the Holy Ghost serves us in one of His important roles—as Comforter, which is actually one of His names. These peaceful, reassuring words from Jesus Christ describe this sacred role: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”<sup>7</sup>

To illustrate this further, I share the true account of a family with five



sons who moved from Los Angeles, California, USA, to a small community some years ago. The two oldest sons began playing high school sports and associating with friends, leaders, and coaches—many of whom were faithful members of the Church. These relationships helped lead to the baptism of Fernando, the oldest, and his next younger brother.

Fernando later moved away from home, where he continued his education and played college football. He married his high school sweetheart, Bayley, in the temple. As Fernando and Bayley finished their schooling, they eagerly anticipated the birth of their first child—a baby girl. But during the process of their families helping to move Fernando and Bayley back home, Bayley and her sister were driving on the freeway and were in a tragic accident involving many vehicles. Bayley and her unborn daughter lost their lives.

Yet as deep as was Fernando's pain, as well as that of Bayley's parents and siblings, so too was the depth of contrasting peace and comfort that distilled upon them almost immediately. The Holy Ghost in His role as Comforter truly sustained Fernando through this incomprehensible affliction. The Spirit communicated an abiding peace that led Fernando to an attitude of forgiveness and love toward everyone involved in the tragic crash.

Bayley's parents called her brother who was serving as a missionary at the time of the accident. He described in a letter his feelings upon hearing the difficult news of his beloved sister: “It was amazing to hear your voices so calm in the midst of a tempest. I did not know what to say. . . . All I could think of is my sister may not be there when I come home. . . . I was comforted by your infallible testimonies of the Savior and His plan. The same sweet spirit that brings me to the verge of tears as I study and teach filled my heart. I was then comforted and reminded of the things that I know.”<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Ghost will help you by comforting you, as He did Fernando and Bayley's family.

#### *The Holy Ghost Testifies*

The Holy Ghost also testifies and bears witness of the Father and the Son and of all truth.<sup>9</sup> The Lord, speaking to His disciples, said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, . . . he shall testify of me.”<sup>10</sup>

In order to describe the valuable role of the Holy Ghost as witness, I will continue the story of Fernando and Bayley. If you remember, I shared that Fernando and his brother had been baptized, but his parents and three younger brothers had not. And, despite receiving numerous invitations to meet



with the missionaries over the years, each time the family declined.

Upon the painful passing of Bayley and her baby daughter, Fernando's family was inconsolable. Unlike Fernando and unlike Bayley's family, they found no comfort or peace. They could not understand how their own son, along with Bayley's family, could bear their heavy burden.

Eventually, they concluded that what their son possessed and they did not was the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and this must be his source of peace and comfort. Following this realization, they invited the missionaries to teach their family the gospel. As a result, they received their own witness and testimony of the great plan of happiness, which brought them the sweet peace and calming comfort they were desperately seeking.

Two months after the loss of Bayley and their unborn granddaughter, Fernando's parents as well as two of his younger brothers were baptized and confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Fernando's youngest brother looks forward to his baptism when he turns eight. They each testify that the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, bore witness of the truthfulness of the

gospel, leading them to a desire to be baptized and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Ghost will help you by testifying to you as He did to Fernando's family.

#### Summary

Let's now summarize. We have identified three revealed truths that bring us to a knowledge of the Holy Ghost. These are that the Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, and the gift of the Holy Ghost comes by the laying on of hands. We also identified three answers to the question "How does the Holy Ghost help you?" The Holy Ghost warns, the Holy Ghost comforts, and the Holy Ghost testifies.

#### Worthiness to Keep the Gift

For those of you who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed, those who recently have been, or even those who were a long time ago, it is vital to our physical and spiritual safety that we keep the gift of the Holy Ghost. We begin to do so by striving to keep the commandments, having individual and family prayer, reading the scriptures,

and seeking loving and forgiving relationships with family and loved ones. We should keep our thoughts, actions, and language virtuous. We should worship our Heavenly Father in our homes, at church, and, whenever possible, in the holy temple. Stay close to the Spirit, and the Spirit will stay close to you.

#### Testimony

I now close with an invitation and my sure testimony. I invite you to more fully live the words sung so often by our Primary children, words I am sure they recognize: "Listen, listen. The Holy Ghost will whisper. Listen, listen to the still small voice."<sup>11</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, old and young, I offer my witness of the glorious existence of the divine beings who constitute the Godhead: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. I bear testimony that one of the privileges we enjoy as Latter-day Saints living in the fulness of times is the gift of the Holy Ghost. I know that the Holy Ghost *does and will* help you. I also add my special witness of Jesus Christ and His role as our Savior and Redeemer and of God as our Heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Robert D. Hales, "Elder Gary E. Stevenson: An Understanding Heart," *Ensign*, June 2015, 26; *Liahona*, June 2015, 14.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
4. See Mosiah 18:13; Alma 5:46; 9:21; Doctrine and Covenants 88:3.
5. See 1 Nephi 13:37; 2 Nephi 31:12; Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:33.
7. John 14:16.
8. Personal correspondence, Dec. 18, 2016.
9. See Hebrews 10:15; 2 Nephi 31:18; Jacob 4:13.
10. John 15:26.
11. "The Still Small Voice," *Children's Songbook*, 107.



By Elder C. Scott Grow  
Of the Seventy

# And This Is Life Eternal

*God knows you and invites you to know Him.*

I speak to you, the rising generation—youth and young adults, single or married—you who are the future leaders of this, the Lord’s Church. With all the wickedness, chaos, fear, and confusion in the world today, I speak to you with clarity about the majesty and blessing of coming to know God.

Jesus Christ taught many truths that explain Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness and your place in it. I’ll focus on two of these to help you understand your *identity* as a child of God and know your *purpose* in life.

First: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>1</sup>

Second: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup>

Please keep these truths in mind—they teach *why*—as I seek to describe *how* you and all of us can come to know God.

### Know Him through Prayer

My young friends, we can begin to know God through prayer.

On April 7, 1829, 22-year-old Oliver Cowdery began his labors as scribe for 23-year-old Joseph Smith. They were young—just like you. Oliver asked for a confirmation from God regarding

the Restoration and his work in it. In response, he received the following revelation:

“Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind. . . .

“Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. . . .

“. . . If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart. . . .

“Did I not speak peace to your mind . . . ? What greater witness can you have than from God?”<sup>3</sup>

When *you* pray with faith, you will feel God’s love as His Spirit speaks to *your* soul. No matter how alone or uncertain you may feel at times, you are not alone in this world. God knows *you*, personally. As you pray, you will come to know *Him*.

### Know Him through Scripture Study

As you study the scriptures, you not only learn *about* the Savior, but you can actually come to *know* the Savior.

In April 1985, Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke in general conference—just 13 days before he died. He concluded with this testimony:

“I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

“But I shall not *know* any better than I *know* now that he is God’s Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way.”<sup>4</sup>

Those of us who heard Elder McConkie speak that day have never



forgotten how we felt. As he began his talk, he revealed *why* his witness was so powerful. He said:

“In speaking of these wondrous things I shall use my own words, though you may think they are the words of scripture. . . .

“True it is they were first proclaimed by others, but *they are now mine*, for the Holy Spirit of God has borne witness to me that they are true, and it is now as though the Lord had revealed them to me in the first instance. I have thereby *heard* his voice and *know* his word.”<sup>5</sup>

As you study and ponder the scriptures, you too will hear God’s voice, know His words, and come to know Him. God will reveal His eternal truths to you, personally. These doctrines and principles will become part of who you are and will emanate from your very soul.

In addition to individual study, studying the scriptures as a family is important.

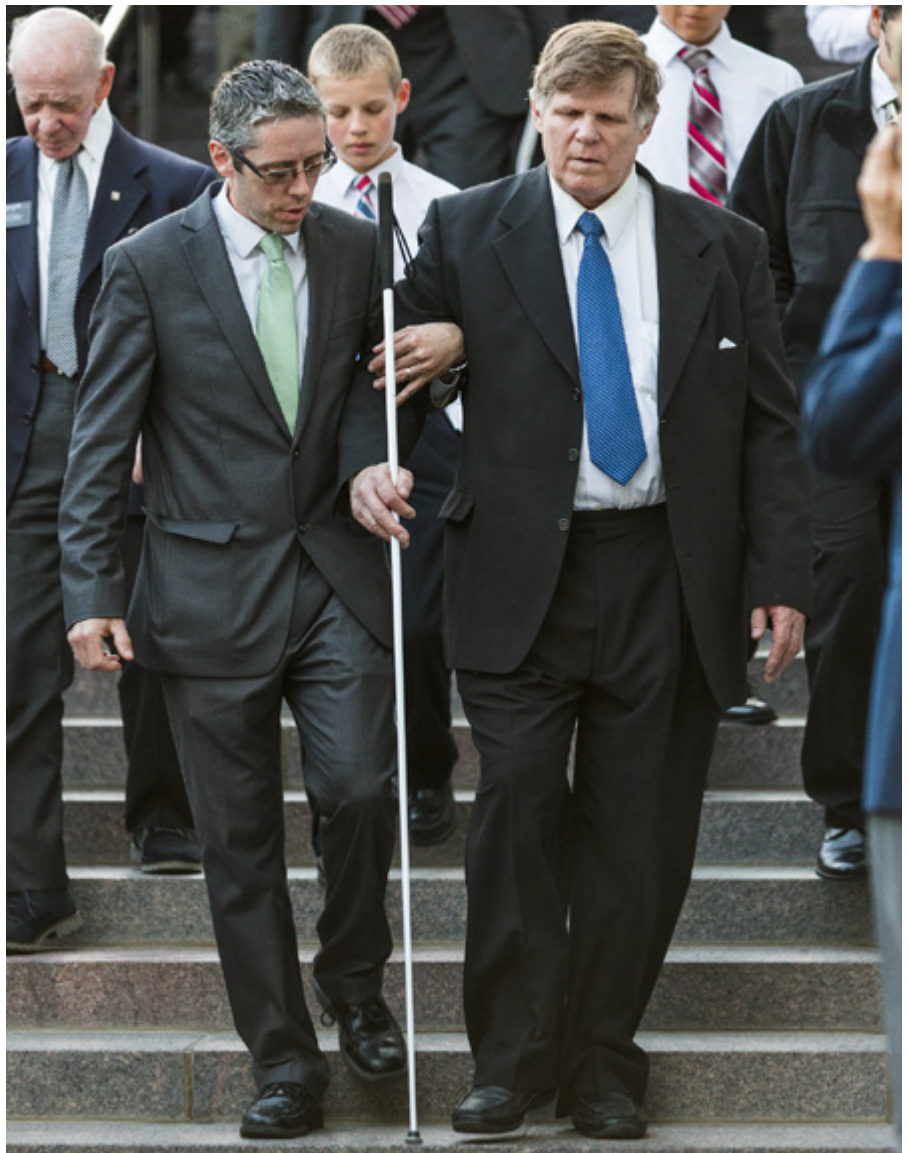
In our home we wanted our children to learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit. We believe that happened as we studied the Book of Mormon each day as a family. Our testimonies were strengthened as we talked about sacred truths.

Scripture study becomes the channel for the Spirit to give each of us a customized tutorial. As you study the scriptures each day, alone, and with your family, *you* will learn to recognize the voice of the Spirit and will come to know God.

#### Know Him by Doing His Will

In addition to our praying and studying the scriptures, we need to do God’s will.

The Savior is our perfect example. He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”<sup>6</sup>



When the resurrected Savior appeared to the Nephites, He said, “Behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered *the will* of the Father *in all things* from the beginning.”<sup>7</sup>

*You and I* do the will of the Father by honoring our covenants, keeping the commandments, and serving God and our fellowmen.

My wife, Rhonda, and I have parents who are just regular people—probably a lot like your parents. But one thing I love about our parents is that they

dedicated their lives to serving God, and they taught us to do the same.

When Rhonda’s parents had been married for just a couple of years, her 23-year-old dad was called to serve a full-time mission. He left behind his young wife and their 2-year-old daughter. Then his wife was called to serve with him during the last seven months of his mission—leaving their daughter in the care of relatives.

A few years later, now with *four* children, they moved to Missoula, Montana, so her dad could attend the university. However, they had been there only a few months when President Spencer W. Kimball and Elder Mark E. Petersen extended a call to my

father-in-law to be the first president of the newly created Missoula stake. He was only 34. Thoughts of the university were left behind as he sought to do the *Lord's* will—not his own.

*My* parents have served in the temple for more than 30 years—Dad as a sealer, Mom as an ordinance worker. They also served five full-time missions together—in Riverside, California; Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Nairobi, Kenya; the Nauvoo Illinois Temple; and the Monterrey Mexico Temple. In Mexico they worked hard to learn a new language, which wasn't easy at 80 years of age. But they sought to do the will of the Lord rather than to pursue their own desires in life.

To them, and to all such dedicated Latter-day Saints throughout the world, I echo the words spoken by the Lord to the prophet Nephi, the son of Helaman: "Blessed art thou, . . . for those things which thou hast done . . . with unweariness . . . [for thou] hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments."<sup>8</sup>

As *we* seek to do God's will by faithfully serving Him and our fellowmen, we feel His approval and truly come to know Him.

#### Know Him by Becoming like Him

The Savior tells us that the very best way to know God is to become *like* Him. He taught: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am."<sup>9</sup>

Worthiness is essential to becoming like Him. He commanded, "Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands . . . that I may make you clean."<sup>10</sup> Starting on the road to becoming like Him, we repent and receive His forgiveness, and He cleanses our souls.

To help us as we progress toward the Father, the Lord gave us this promise: "Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and *know* that I am."<sup>11</sup>

Through our faith in His atoning sacrifice, the Savior cleanses us, heals us, and enables us to *know* Him by helping us become *like* Him. Mormon taught, "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, . . . that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be *like* him."<sup>12</sup> As we strive to become like God, He can make of us more than we could ever make of ourselves.

#### Know Him by Following Mentors

To help us in our striving, God has given us role models and mentors. I want to share my feelings about one of mine, Elder Neal A. Maxwell. He constantly sought to submit his will to the will of the Father in his effort to become like God.

More than 20 years ago, he shared his feelings with me after he had just

been diagnosed with cancer. He told me, "I want to be on the team, on this side [of the veil] or that side. I don't want to sit on the sidelines. I want to play in the game."<sup>13</sup>

Over the next few weeks, he was reluctant to ask God to heal him; he just wanted to do God's will. His wife, Colleen, pointed out that Jesus's first cry in the Garden of Gethsemane was "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Only then did the Savior say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as *thou wilt*."<sup>14</sup> She encouraged Elder Maxwell to follow the Savior's example, to ask for relief and *then* submit his will to God's will, which he did.<sup>15</sup>

After suffering through extensive, debilitating treatments for nearly a year, he was totally and completely back "in the game." He served for seven more years.

I had several assignments with him during those subsequent years. I felt his kindness, compassion, and love. I witnessed his increased spiritual refinement through his ongoing suffering and his continued service as he strove to become like the Savior.





By Elder Benjamín De Hoyos  
Of the Seventy

The *ultimate* role model and mentor, available to all of us, is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”<sup>16</sup> “Come and follow me.”<sup>17</sup>

My young brothers and sisters, knowing God is the quest of a lifetime. “And this *is* life eternal, that [we] might know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [the Father] hast sent.”<sup>18</sup>

“Shall we not go on in so great a cause? . . . Courage, [my young friends]; and on, on to the victory!”<sup>19</sup>

God knows *you* and invites *you* to know *Him*. Pray to the Father, study the scriptures, seek to do God’s will, strive to become like the Savior, and follow righteous mentors. As you do, *you* will come to *know* God and Jesus Christ, and you will inherit eternal life. This is my invitation to you as an ordained special witness of Them. They live. They love you. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. John 3:16.
2. John 17:3.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 6:15–16, 22–23.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 11; emphasis added.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” 9; emphasis added.
6. John 6:38.
7. 3 Nephi 11:11; emphasis added.
8. Helaman 10:4.
9. 3 Nephi 27:27.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:74.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1; emphasis added.
12. Moroni 7:48; emphasis added.
13. See similar statements in Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (2002), 19.
14. Matthew 26:39; emphasis added.
15. See Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 15.
16. John 14:6.
17. Matthew 19:21.
18. John 17:3; emphasis added.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.

# That Our Light May Be a Standard for the Nations

*The Savior’s gospel and His restored Church give us many opportunities for our light to be a part of the great standard for the nations.*

Years ago, while I was serving as a seminary teacher, I heard one of my coworkers ask his students to reflect on the following question: If you had lived in the Savior’s day, why do you think that you would have followed Him as one of His disciples? They reached the conclusion that those who follow the Savior in the present day and strive to be His disciples would probably also have done so back then.

Since then, I have reflected on that question and their conclusion.

I often wonder how I would have felt hearing the Savior Himself when He said the following in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).





Can you imagine how you would have felt hearing the Savior's voice? In fact, we do not have to imagine. It has become a constant experience for us to hear the voice of the Lord because when we hear the voice of His servants, it is the same.

In 1838, in a message similar to that given in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord declared the following through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:4–5).

Our days are so extraordinary that they were even shown in a vision to the prophet Isaiah; he too saw and prophesied of this day of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ and of its purpose, saying, “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:12).

In a scriptural context an ensign, or a standard, is a flag around which people would gather in a unity of purpose. In ancient times a standard served as a rallying point for soldiers in battle. Symbolically speaking, the Book of Mormon and the restored Church of Jesus Christ are standards to all nations. (See Guide to the Scriptures, “Ensign,” scriptures.lds.org.)

Without a doubt, one of the great standards of these latter days is this magnificent general conference, where the great work and plan of our Heavenly Father “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39) is continually proclaimed.

The continual holding of general conference is one of the greatest testimonies to the fact that we as Latter-day Saints “believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

What, then, has the Lord revealed through President Thomas S. Monson that we need to continue doing so our light can be a standard for the nations? What are some of the important things to be done in this brilliant moment of building up Zion and of gathering Israel?

The Lord has always revealed His will to us “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30). Therefore, we should not be surprised by what may seem like small things because of their simple and repetitive nature, for the Lord has already counseled us, telling us that “blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more” (2 Nephi 28:30).

I testify that by learning “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” and by hearkening to our leaders' counsel, we will have oil for our lamps that will enable us to give light unto others as the Lord commanded us.



While there are many things we can do to be a light and an ensign to others, I would like to focus on the following three: observing the Sabbath day, hastening the work of salvation on both sides of the veil, and teaching in the Savior's way.

The light that we are talking about comes from the devotion that we give to Sabbath day observance, in the Church as well as in the home; it is the light that grows as we keep ourselves unspotted from the world; it is the light that comes from offering up our sacraments on His holy day and from paying our devotions to the Most High—all of which enable us to always have His Spirit with us. It is that light that grows and becomes visible when we return home with the feeling of forgiveness that President Henry B. Eyring spoke about in this past October general conference when he said: "Of all the blessings we can count, the greatest by far is the feeling of forgiveness that comes as we partake of the sacrament. We

will feel greater love and appreciation for the Savior, whose infinite sacrifice made possible our being cleansed from sin" ("Gratitude on the Sabbath Day," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 100).

As we keep the Sabbath day holy and partake of the sacrament, we are not only cleansed, but our light also grows brighter.

Our light also grows as we dedicate and consecrate time to finding the names of our ancestors, taking their names to the temple, and teaching our family and others to do the same.

This sacred temple and family history work that we share with the Saints on both sides of the veil is moving forward more than ever as the Lord's temples are being built. Now that the temples have special schedules for family groups who come with their own family name cards, my wife and I have had delightful experiences as we have served in the temple together with our children and our grandchildren.

When we find and take names to the temple and teach others how to as well, together we shine as an ensign or standard.

Learning to teach as the Savior taught is another way we can rise and shine. I rejoice along with everyone who is learning how to teach in the Savior's way. Allow me to read from the cover of the new teaching manual: "The goal of every gospel teacher—every parent, every formally called teacher, every home teacher and visiting teacher, and every follower of Christ—is to teach the pure doctrine of the gospel, by the Spirit, . . . to help God's children build their faith in the Savior and become more like Him" (*Teaching in the Savior's Way* [2016]).

Right now, thousands of our faithful teachers hold up a light as they learn how to teach in the Savior's way. In this context the new teacher council meeting is a way to rise and shine as the students meet around the standard of the doctrine of Christ, for "the key to teaching as the Savior taught is to live as the Savior lived" (*Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 4).

As we all teach and learn in His way and become more like Him, our light shines brighter and cannot be hid and becomes a standard to those who are looking for the Savior's light.

My dear brothers and sisters, we should not and must not hide our light. Our Savior commanded us to let our light shine like a city on a hill or like a light from a candlestick. As we do so, we will glorify our Father in Heaven. The Savior's gospel and His restored Church give us many opportunities for our light to be a part of the great standard for the nations.

I testify that Jesus Christ is the light that we must reflect, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■





By Elder Quentin L. Cook  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Foundations of Faith

*My plea is that we will make the sacrifices and have the humility necessary to strengthen the foundations of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This has been a magnificent general conference. We have truly been edified. If there is one preeminent objective of general conference, it is to build faith in God the Father and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

My remarks address the foundations of that faith.

Personal foundations, like many worthwhile pursuits, are usually built slowly—one layer, one experience, one challenge, one setback, and one success at a time. A most cherished physical experience is a baby's first steps. It is magnificent to behold. The precious look on the face—a combination of determination, joy, surprise, and accomplishment—is truly a seminal event.

In our family, there is one event of a similar nature that stands out. When our youngest son was about four years old, he came into the house and gleefully announced to the family with great pride: "I can do everything now. I can tie, I can ride, and I can zip." We understood he was telling us that he could tie his shoes, he could ride his Big Wheel tricycle, and he could zip his coat. We all laughed but realized that for him they were monumental

achievements. He thought he had truly arrived and was grown up.

Physical, mental, and spiritual development have much in common. Physical development is fairly easy to see. We begin with baby steps and progress day by day, year by year, growing and developing to attain our ultimate physical stature. Development is different for each person.

When we watch a great athletic or musical performance, we often say that the person is very gifted, which is usually true. But the performance is based upon years of preparation and practice. One well-known writer, Malcolm Gladwell, has called this the 10,000-hour rule. Researchers have determined that this amount of practice is necessary in athletics, musical performance, academic proficiency, specialized work skills, medical or legal expertise, and so on. One of these research experts asserts "that ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert—in anything."<sup>1</sup>

Most people recognize that to obtain peak physical and mental performance, such preparation and practice are essential.

Unfortunately, in an increasingly secular world, less emphasis is placed on the amount of spiritual growth necessary to become more Christlike





and seminary. I had read the Book of Mormon and had always prayed individually. At that time a dramatic event occurred in our family when my beloved older brother was considering a potential mission call. My wonderful father, a less-active Church member, wanted him to continue his education and not serve a mission. This became a point of contention.

In a remarkable discussion with my brother, who was five years older and led the discussion, we concluded that his decision on whether to serve a mission depended on three issues: (1) Was Jesus Christ divine? (2) Was the Book of Mormon true? (3) Was Joseph Smith the prophet of the Restoration?

As I prayed sincerely that night, the Spirit confirmed to me the truth of all three questions. I also came to understand that almost every decision I would make for the rest of my life would be based on the answers to those three questions. I particularly realized that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was essential. In looking back, I recognize that, primarily because of my mother, the foundations were in place for me to receive the spiritual confirmation that evening. My brother, who already had a testimony, made the decision to serve a mission and ultimately won our father's support.

Spiritual guidance is received when needed, in the Lord's time and according to His will.<sup>3</sup> The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is an excellent example. I recently viewed a first edition of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith completed the translation when he was 23 years old. We know something of the process and instruments he used in that translation. In that first 1830 printing, Joseph included a short preface and simply and clearly declared it was translated "by the gift

and establish the foundations that lead to enduring faith. We tend to emphasize moments of sublime spiritual understanding. These are precious instances when we know the Holy Ghost has witnessed special spiritual insights to our hearts and minds. We rejoice in these events; they should not be diminished in any way. But for enduring faith and to have the constant companionship of the Spirit, there is no substitute for the individual religious observance that is comparable to physical and mental development. We should build on these experiences, which sometimes resemble initial

baby steps. We do this by consecrated commitment to sacred sacrament meetings, scripture study, prayer, and serving as called. In one recent obituary tribute for the father of 13 children, it was reported his "loyalty to daily prayer and scripture study profoundly influenced his children, giving them an immovable foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

An experience I had when I was 15 years old was foundational for me. My faithful mother had valiantly tried to help me establish the foundations of faith in my life. I attended sacrament meeting, Primary, then Young Men

and power of God.”<sup>4</sup> What about the aids to translation—the Urim and Thummim, the seer stones? Were they essential, or were they like the training wheels on a bicycle until Joseph could exercise the faith necessary to receive more direct revelation?<sup>5</sup>

Just as repetition and consistent effort are required to gain physical or mental capacity, the same is true in spiritual matters. Remember that the Prophet Joseph received the same visitor, Moroni, with exactly the same message four times in preparation for receiving the plates. I believe that weekly participation in sacred sacrament meetings has spiritual implications we do not fully understand. Pondering the scriptures regularly—rather than reading them occasionally—can substitute a superficial understanding for a sublime, life-changing enhancement of our faith.

Faith is a principle of power. Let me illustrate: When I was a young missionary, a great mission president<sup>6</sup> introduced me in a profound way to the scriptural account found in Luke 8 of the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years and had spent everything she had on physicians who could not heal her. It has remained to this day one of my favorite scriptures.

You will remember that she had faith that if she could but touch the border of the Savior’s garment, she would be healed. When she did so, she was healed immediately. The Savior, who was walking along with His disciples, said, “Who touched me?”

Peter’s answer was that all of them, walking together, were pressing against Him.

“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.”

The root word for *virtue* could easily be interpreted as “power.” In Spanish and



Portuguese, it is translated as “power.” But regardless, the Savior did not see her; He had not focused on her need. But her faith was such that touching the border of the garment drew upon the healing power of the Son of God.

As the Savior said to her, “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”<sup>7</sup>

I have contemplated this account all my adult life. I realize that our personal prayers and supplications to a loving Father in Heaven in the name of Jesus Christ can bring blessings into our lives beyond our ability to comprehend. The foundations of faith, the kind of faith that this woman demonstrated, should be the great desire of our hearts.

However, initial foundations of faith, even with spiritual confirmation, do not mean that we will not face challenges. Conversion to the gospel does not mean all our problems will be solved.

Early Church history and recorded revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants contain excellent examples

of establishing foundations of faith and dealing with the vicissitudes and challenges that everyone faces.

The completion of the Kirtland Temple was foundational for the entire Church. It was accompanied by spiritual outpourings, doctrinal revelations, and restoration of essential keys for the continuing establishment of the Church. Like the ancient Apostles on the day of Pentecost, many members experienced marvelous spiritual experiences in connection with the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.<sup>8</sup> But, as in our own lives, this did not mean they wouldn’t face challenges or hardships going forward. Little did these early members know they would be faced with a United States financial crisis—the panic of 1837—that would test their very souls.<sup>9</sup>

One example of the challenges related to this financial crisis was experienced by Elder Parley P. Pratt, one of the great leaders of the Restoration. He was an original member of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles. In the early part of 1837, his dear wife, Thankful, died after delivering their first child. Parley and Thankful had been married almost 10 years, and her death devastated him.

A few months later, Elder Pratt found himself in one of the most difficult times the Church has experienced. In the midst of the national crisis, local economic issues—including land speculation and the struggles of a financial institution founded by Joseph Smith and other Church members—created discord and contention in Kirtland. Church leaders did not always make wise temporal decisions in their own lives. Parley suffered significant financial losses and for a time became disaffected with the Prophet Joseph.<sup>10</sup> He wrote a stinging criticism to Joseph and spoke

in opposition of him from the pulpit. At the same time, Parley said he continued to believe in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>11</sup>

Elder Pratt had lost his wife, his land, and his home. Parley, without telling Joseph, left for Missouri. On the road there, he unexpectedly met fellow Apostles Thomas B. Marsh and David Patten returning to Kirtland. They felt a great need to have harmony restored to the Quorum and persuaded Parley to return with them. He realized that no one had lost more than Joseph Smith and his family.

Parley sought out the Prophet, wept, and confessed that what he had done was wrong. In the months after his wife, Thankful's, death, Parley had been "under a dark cloud" and had been overcome by fears and

frustrations.<sup>12</sup> Joseph, knowing what it was like to struggle against opposition and temptation, "frankly forgave" Parley, praying for him and blessing him.<sup>13</sup> Parley and others who remained faithful benefited from the Kirtland challenges. They increased in wisdom and became more noble and virtuous. The experience became part of their foundations of faith.

Adversity should not be viewed as either disfavor from the Lord or a withdrawal of His blessings. Opposition in all things is part of the refiner's fire to prepare us for an eternal celestial destiny.<sup>14</sup> When the Prophet Joseph was in Liberty Jail, the words of the Lord to him described all manner of challenges—including tribulations and false accusations—and conclude:

"If the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

"The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?"<sup>15</sup>

The Lord, in this instruction to Joseph Smith, also made it clear that his days were known and would not be numbered less. The Lord concluded, "Fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever."<sup>16</sup>

What, then, are the blessings of faith? What does faith accomplish? The list is almost endless:

Our sins can be forgiven because of faith in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

As many as have faith have communion with the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

Salvation comes through faith on Christ's name.<sup>19</sup>

We receive strength according to our faith in Christ.<sup>20</sup>





None enter the Lord's rest save those who wash their garments in Christ's blood because of their faith.<sup>21</sup>

Prayers are answered according to faith.<sup>22</sup>

Without faith among men, God can do no miracle among them.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, our faith in Jesus Christ is the essential foundation for our eternal salvation and exaltation. As Helaman taught his sons, "Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation . . . , which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall."<sup>24</sup>

I am grateful for the fortification of the foundations of faith that has come from this conference. My plea is that we will make the sacrifices and have the humility necessary to strengthen the foundations of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him I bear my sure witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), 40. He is quoting neurologist Daniel Levitin.
2. Obituary of Bryant Hinckley Wadsworth, *Deseret News*, Jan. 15, 2017, [legacy.com/obituaries/deseretnews](http://legacy.com/obituaries/deseretnews).

3. See 2 Nephi 28:30. We don't receive an entire body of knowledge about the matter or all the principles related to it. They come when they are needed: line upon line and precept upon precept.

4. In the first edition of the Book of Mormon, printed in 1830, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God" (see preface to the Book of Mormon [1830]). Subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon include a similar statement: "The plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who translated them by the gift and power of God" (see introduction to the Book of Mormon [2013]).

5. Orson Pratt recalled that he had been present on many occasions when Joseph Smith was translating the New Testament and had wondered why he had not used an instrument in that process. "Joseph, as if he read his thoughts, looked up and explained that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit, and did not need the assistance of that instrument" ("Two Days' Meeting at Brigham City, June 27 and 28, 1874," *Millennial Star*, Aug. 11, 1874, 499; see also Richard E. Turley Jr., Robin S. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Joseph the Seer," *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 48–55; *Liahona*, Oct. 2015, 10–17).

6. The mission president was Elder Marion D. Hanks, who was also a General Authority.

7. See Luke 8:43–48.

8. See Acts 2.

9. See Mosiah 2:36–37; see also Henry B.

Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 38: "So, the great test of life is to see whether we will hearken to and obey God's commands in the midst of the storms of life. It is not to endure storms, but to choose the right while they rage. And the tragedy of life is to fail in that test and so fail to qualify to return in glory to our heavenly home."

10. See Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (2011), 91–98; volume introduction and introduction to part 5, *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, ed. Brent M. Rogers and others (2017), xxviii–xxxii, 285–93.

11. See "Letter from Parley P. Pratt, 23 May 1837," in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, 386–91.

12. See "History of John Taylor by Himself," 15, in *Histories of the Twelve, 1856–1858, 1861*, Church History Library; Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 101–2.

13. See *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1874), 183–84.

14. See 2 Nephi 2:11.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7–8.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9.

17. See Enos 1:5–8.

18. See Jarom 1:4.

19. See Moroni 7:26, 38.

20. See Alma 14:26.

21. See 3 Nephi 27:19.

22. See Moroni 7:26.

23. See Ether 12:12.

24. Helaman 5:12.



## Making Conference Part of Our Lives

Consider using some of these activities and questions as a starting point for personal or family study.

### For Children

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson invited us to read the Book of Mormon every day, promising, “The Holy Ghost will manifest its truth to you.” In addition to your own study, you can make a habit of studying the Book of Mormon daily with your family. You could also act out scenes or play games to help remember important verses and stories. Go to [friend.lds.org](http://friend.lds.org) and look at the 2016 *Liahona* and *Friend* magazines for Book of Mormon stories, reading charts, and more.
- Page 117: Elder Gary E. Stevenson told how his dad listened to the Holy Ghost and saved him from a snake. Ask your parents if you can have a family discussion on the question, How does the Holy Ghost help you? Share times when the Holy Ghost has warned, comforted,

or testified to you. You could even write them down and make a book.

- Page 87: Sister Joy D. Jones taught that you can prepare to make holy covenants later by learning to keep promises now. Set a goal and promise to follow it. Ask a buddy to check up on you and make sure you’re keeping your promise.
- Page 90: Elder Yoon Hwan Choi shared some advice from his father: “Don’t look around, look up!” Sometimes we get distracted and forget to focus on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. So remind yourself to look up! You could hang a picture of Jesus in your room. Go outside and look at the sky. Take a quiet moment every day to think about Heavenly Father and Jesus and feel the Spirit.

*Note: Conference messages for children can be found in this month’s Friend magazine.*

### For Youth

- Pages 93 and 117: Have you asked yourself: How can I always have the Holy Ghost with me? How can I recognize the Holy Ghost? How does the Holy Ghost help me? Elders Ronald A. Rasband and Gary E. Stevenson answered these and many other questions. “We have the sacred responsibility to learn to recognize His influence in our lives and respond,” Elder Rasband said. How can you meet that responsibility?
- Page 33: Elder Ulisses Soares quoted part of the Mutual theme scripture: “Ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). How do you keep from wavering? Start by strengthening your faith in Jesus Christ. Study more about Him. Remember the times you have felt His love and peace.
- Pages 86 and 9: President Thomas S. Monson invited us, “If you are not reading the Book of Mormon each day, please do so.” And Sister Carol F. McConkie asked: “Do we set aside the phone, the never-ending to-do list, and the cares



of worldliness? Prayer, study, and heeding the word of God invite His cleansing and healing love into our souls.” Plan a time every day to read the Book of Mormon and put a reminder in your planner or on your phone.

*Note: Conference messages for youth can be found in this month’s New Era magazine.*

#### For Young Adults

- Page 62: What goals do you have for your life? Goals for your career, family, and even sports and hobbies are good, but “our greatest and most overriding goals should fit into Heavenly Father’s eternal plan,” taught Elder M. Russell Ballard. How do your plans align with Heavenly Father’s plan for you? How can you be more focused on the goal of living eternally with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?
- Page 39: Earlier this year, President Russell M. Nelson invited young adults to “consecrate a portion of [their] time each week to studying *everything* Jesus said and did as recorded in the [standard works]” (“Prophets, Leadership, and Divine Law” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2017], broadcasts.lds.org). He repeated this invitation at general conference as one of four key elements in drawing the Savior’s power into our lives. Study President Nelson’s talk to learn how you can access “power sufficient to deal with the burdens, obstacles, and temptations of our day.”
- Pages 100 and 26: Would you like a road map for your life? Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “Because we have the truth about the Godhead and our relationship to Them, the purpose of life, and the nature of our eternal destiny, we have the



ultimate road map and assurance for our journey through mortality.” Both he and Elder Weatherford T. Clayton taught that knowledge of the plan of salvation can help with our challenges today. Study their messages and ask Heavenly Father how eternal truths can provide a road map in your life.

- Page 104: Fear can motivate, but President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught that fear “will never transform us into people who love what is right and who want to obey Heavenly Father.” How can the pure love of Christ be “the divinely appointed antidote” to your fears?

#### For Adults

- Page 86: As we prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day, President Thomas S. Monson said, “we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven’s help in our lives.” Personally and as a family, set a goal to read the Book of Mormon every day.
- Page 39: Take part in the challenge President Russell M. Nelson gave to young adults (see above “For Young Adults”). How can you adapt this challenge to yourself and to your

family? Discuss the blessings that come from learning more about the Savior.

- Pages 93 and 117: As you read the talks by Elder Ronald A. Rasband and Elder Gary E. Stevenson, look for ways to always have the Spirit and how the Spirit helps you. Identify ways to increase His influence in your life.
- Pages 39 and 62: President Russell M. Nelson and Elder M. Russell Ballard encouraged members to study “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles” (see inside front cover). Elder Ballard said, “Place a copy where you can see it, and take time to review each of the statements found in this inspired testimony of Christ.” As a family, read “The Living Christ” and discuss what you learn.
- Pages 127 and 97: Elder Quentin L. Cook taught that our foundation of faith is built “slowly—one layer, one experience, one challenge, one setback, and one success at a time.” Elder L. Whitney Clayton said, “Getting the little daily habits of faith right is the single best way to fortify ourselves against the troubles of life, whatever they may be.” What can you do each day to strengthen your foundation of faith? ■

These selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

Speaker	Story
<b>Neil L. Andersen</b>	(58) In vision President David O. McKay sees the Savior and those “who have overcome the world.” Elder Bruce D. Porter suffers kidney problems but overcomes the world through his love for the Savior.
<b>David A. Bednar</b>	(67) David A. Bednar helps a disappointed returned missionary.
<b>Mark A. Bragg</b>	(36) Firefighters save paintings of Jesus Christ from a burning stake center.
<b>M. Joseph Brough</b>	(23) M. Joseph Brough’s father hears wise guidance from his mother. As a young man, M. Joseph Brough seeks Heavenly Father’s will as he prepares to give away his dog. In the temple, M. Joseph Brough learns that Heavenly Father cares about him.
<b>Linda K. Burton</b>	(12) After her husband is paralyzed, Drusilla Hendricks provides for her family. A Relief Society president serves others while battling cancer.
<b>Gérald Caussé</b>	(75) Because of seminary, 30-year-old Gérald Caussé is promoted. Ward members find ways for a young man to serve.
<b>Yoon Hwan Choi</b>	(90) Yoon Hwan Choi’s father teaches him, “Don’t look around, look up.” Sunbeam Choi was blessed while his parents were serving a mission. Yoon Hwan Choi’s call to the Seventy means less time for his family, but his son is happy because they “are an eternal family.”
<b>L. Whitney Clayton</b>	(97) A young bishop counsels troubled ward members to engage in basic practices of faith.
<b>Weatherford T. Clayton</b>	(26) Weatherford T. Clayton sees the joy a newborn baby brings the mother. After their mother dies, two daughters find comfort through their faith in the Savior.
<b>Quentin L. Cook</b>	(127) The four-year-old son of Quentin L. Cook “can do everything now.” As a young man, Quentin L. Cook receives a spiritual confirmation of the restored gospel. By remaining faithful despite adversity, Parley P. Pratt increases in wisdom and virtue.
<b>Bonnie H. Cordon</b>	(6) Bonnie H. Cordon’s young grandson asks to read more scriptures. The peace she feels from her mother’s prayer gives Bonnie H. Cordon courage to trust in the Lord. By serving others, a cancer patient receives strength and courage to withstand her illness.
<b>Valeri V. Córdón</b>	(55) As a young man, Valeri V. Córdón sees his family blessed for paying tithing.
<b>Joaquin E. Costa</b>	(112) While taking the missionary discussions, Joaquin E. Costa humbles himself and sees repentance as the path to growth and happiness.
<b>Henry B. Eyring</b>	(15) Humble members in Austria allow the Holy Ghost to lighten the shed where they held sacrament meeting. The Holy Ghost allows Henry B. Eyring to see his rambunctious young son as God sees him. (19) Even the best technology is no substitute for personal revelation. (82) Henry B. Eyring relies on the promise that the Spirit will be in his heart and angels will bear him up as he renders priesthood service.
<b>C. Scott Grow</b>	(121) C. Scott Grow’s parents and in-laws serve missions. C. Scott Grow witnesses Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s spiritual refinement.
<b>Joy D. Jones</b>	(87) A big brother keeps his promise to his parents not to tease his five-year-old sister.
<b>Carol F. McConkie</b>	(9) A 13-year-old Beehive class president in Ghana helps her friends do their household chores so they can attend church.
<b>Russell M. Nelson</b>	(39) A Laurel keeps her commitment to participate in a stake Relief Society meeting despite being disqualified from a statewide competition.
<b>S. Mark Palmer</b>	(114) As a mission president, S. Mark Palmer learns to “behold” missionaries and love them as the Father and Son love them.
<b>Ronald A. Rasband</b>	(93) As a full-time missionary, Ronald A. Rasband uses his foot to stop a door from closing. Elder Ronald A. Rasband feels prompted to visit and bless Church members in Ecuador following an earthquake there. As a mission president, Ronald A. Rasband encourages missionaries to act on first promptings.
<b>Dale G. Renlund</b>	(29) In <i>Les Misérables</i> , a bishop’s compassion motivates Jean Valjean to change his life. As a teenager in Europe, Dale G. Renlund is bullied and persecuted.
<b>Gary B. Sabin</b>	(52) A Boy Scout spends a night in the cold. An inflatable punching bag bounces back because “he’s standing up on the inside.” Gary B. Sabin’s father teaches two shipmates who are impressed by his righteous example.
<b>Ulisses Soares</b>	(33) A full-time missionary renews his commitment to diligently serve God after he learns that his sister has died.
<b>Gary E. Stevenson</b>	(117) Gary E. Stevenson is impressed by a nine-year-old boy’s family home evening lesson. A prompting keeps young Gary E. Stevenson safe from a rattlesnake. A mission president’s prompting keeps missionaries safe during an earthquake in Japan. Family members receive comfort from the Holy Ghost following a tragic car accident.
<b>Dieter F. Uchtdorf</b>	(104) Dieter F. Uchtdorf rejoices over the completion of the Madrid Spain Temple despite not being invited to the dedication. President James E. Faust tells Dieter F. Uchtdorf not to “inhale” the praise of Church members. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. counsels new leaders to follow rule number six. A former stake president volunteers to clean up after horses in the city parade.





**Elder Taylor G. Godoy**

*General Authority Seventy*

Several years into his profession, Elder Taylor G. Godoy found himself at a crossroads.

He was working as a dentist, establishing a practice, and anticipating a future in academics teaching dental surgery. But a beloved and trusted priesthood leader invited him to work for Seminaries and Institutes.

Leaving a burgeoning career was an interesting choice for the young dentist, who was sustained on April 1, 2017, as a General Authority Seventy. Many of his colleagues wondered how he could walk away from the profession.

“But I knew it was the right choice,” he said. Such faithful certainty defines the Church convert. Helping others discover and come to love the gospel has proven to be a life-defining opportunity and blessing.

During his Church education career, Elder Godoy worked as an institute teacher, coordinator, director, and country director. Most recently, he was the South America Northwest Seminaries and Institutes area director.

Taylor Guillermo Godoy Atanacio was born in Lima, Peru, in 1968, to Taylor Godoy and Adalzahinda Atanacio. His father died when he was a young boy, and his beloved stepfather, Elias Rebaza, raised him. Elder Godoy joined the Church when he was 17.

After serving in the Peru Lima North Mission, he returned to his hometown of Arequipa. There he developed a friendship with a young woman named Carol Pacheco. The fellow converts were married on May 31, 1994, in the Lima Peru Temple. They are the parents of two children.

Elder Godoy earned a bachelor’s degree in dentistry from the Catholic University of Santa Maria in 1993 and a master’s degree in administration from the Technical University of Madrid in 2006.

He has served as bishop, high councilor, stake president, area public affairs director, and Area Seventy. ■



**Elder Joni L. Koch**

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Joni Luiz Koch is a second-generation member of the Church from Brazil. His parents, Luiz and Etelca Gascho Koch, visited a variety of local churches in the early years of their marriage to find spiritual truth.

Hours after his mother had offered a heartfelt prayer and promised to follow God, missionaries arrived at his parents’ door. In less than six months, they were baptized.

Born in 1962, Elder Koch grew up in Joinville, Santa Catarina, Brazil. The influence of Church leaders, such as a dedicated Primary teacher, a fatherly bishop, and a valiant stake president, helped him commit to live the gospel.

After completing a full-time mission in the Brazil São Paulo North Mission, Elder Koch studied statistics at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA. “On a trip back to Brazil, I visited the ward of a friend, where I met my future wife,” said Elder Koch. “She walked up to me and asked me if I was married.” After an eight-month, long-distance courtship—and only 15 actual days together—he married Liliane Michele Ludwig on April 26, 1988, in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They have two children.

After graduating from BYU and earning an executive master of business administration degree, Elder Koch worked in international logistics. Over the span of 25 years, he worked for a variety of companies until called to serve full-time for the Church.

Elder Koch has served as bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. He was serving as president of the Mozambique Maputo Mission at the time of his call as a General Authority Seventy.

“My testimony was built gradually over time through spiritual experiences received through gospel living,” said Elder Koch. “The Book of Mormon is one of the main elements in the strength of my testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Church, and the Prophet Joseph Smith.” ■



**Elder Adilson  
de Paula Parrella**

*General Authority Seventy*

When Elder Adilson de Paula Parrella was eight years old, the missionaries began teaching his family about the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Restoration of the gospel.

“Even as a child, I had no question that Joseph Smith had in fact seen God and Jesus Christ,” said Elder Parrella, who was sustained on April 1, 2017, as a General Authority Seventy. “I never doubted that from then on.”

Elder Parrella was born in 1962 in Guarujá, Brazil, on the Atlantic coast near São Paulo, to Fioravante and Vany de Paula Parrella.

Each of his two older brothers served missions. Their examples and that of a loving bishop, Angelino Borges de Freitas, who mentored him in how to be an Aaronic Priesthood holder, sparked in him a desire to serve a full-time mission. Missionary service reinforced to him “the reality of God and His Son and that all of us are children of God.”

After serving in the Brazil Porto Alegre Mission, Elder Parrella attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in communication and a master of business administration degree. He worked as the managing director at Kodak Polychrome Graphics and as a partner at Korn Ferry International. Most recently he was a partner at Caldwell Partners.

He married Elaine Finholdt in December 1988 in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They are the parents of five sons.

Elder Parrella has served as branch president, bishop, high councilor, counselor in a stake presidency, Area Seventy, and president of the Brazil Belo Horizonte Mission from 2009 to 2012.

Ever since he met the missionaries, his life has been a journey to understand the feeling he experienced as an eight-year-old. Attending church, continuing to learn from the word of God, and striving to live the commandments have helped broaden his vision from the glimpse of truth he was given as a child. “This truly is the kingdom of God on the earth,” he said. ■



**Elder John C. Pingree Jr.**

*General Authority Seventy*

“My testimony has been built over time, little by little, through receiving answers to prayers, feeling the Spirit while reading scriptures, repenting, and serving the Lord,” said Elder John C. Pingree Jr., who was sustained on April 1, 2017, as a General Authority Seventy.

Born in 1966 in Salt Lake City Utah, USA, to Carmen and John C. Pingree Sr., he credits the devotion of his parents in helping to shape his life.

“The day after I was born, my father wrote me a letter,” Elder Pingree said. “He saved that letter, and later, when I left to serve a full-time mission, he mailed it to me. The letter contained several pages of his testimony and lessons he wanted me to learn during my life. As I read it, the Spirit bore witness to me that what I had been taught about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ by my parents was truth.”

Elder Pingree served in the Massachusetts Boston Mission, Spanish-speaking.

He received degrees in English and political science from the University of Utah and a master of business administration degree from Harvard Business School. He married Anne Pugsley in March 1990, and they are the parents of five children.

Much of his career focused on helping others. He was president of a medical humanitarian aid organization and a vice president at two health care companies.

He was president of the Texas Houston Mission from 2011 to 2014 and has served as an Area Seventy, stake president, bishop, elders quorum president, and institute and seminary teacher.

“The Lord says, ‘If you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation’ (D&C 11:8),” Elder Pingree said. “To me, the Lord is saying, ‘I can use you to do some good in other people’s lives, if you will let me.’ If we look for opportunities, Heavenly Father will use us to bless somebody else.” ■



## Elder Brian K. Taylor

*General Authority Seventy*

**B**rian King Taylor was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 1, 2017.

Elder Taylor was born in 1964 in Ogden, Utah, USA, to Lowell Moon and Marie King Taylor. He grew up in nearby Kaysville, the fourth in a family of five children that loved fishing and sports.

His older brother Craig had a basketball scholarship at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, and was trying to decide whether to serve a mission or continue his college career.

“One night at dinner I said [to him], ‘Hey, if you go on a mission, I’ll go on a mission,’” Elder Taylor recalled. Both brothers ended up serving, with Elder Taylor going to the Spain Seville Mission.

Before his mission, Elder Taylor played on the Brigham Young University basketball team from 1982 to 1984 with Devin G. Durrant, who is currently serving as a member of the Sunday School General Presidency. After his mission, he played two more years, from 1986 to 1988.

He also met his wife-to-be, Jill Featherstone, at BYU. She was teaching the Gospel Doctrine class in her student ward. Invited by his brother, Elder Taylor visited her class and met her. A romance blossomed, and they were married on April 30, 1987, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of seven children.

Sister Taylor is the only daughter out of seven children of Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, emeritus General Authority, and Sister Merlene Featherstone. “They were just really accepting and kind,” Elder Taylor said of his in-laws. “I felt immediately loved.”

With a bachelor’s degree from BYU, Elder Taylor has built a number of businesses, including a company that designed software to coordinate emergency calls between public safety agencies.

He has served as institute teacher, high councilor, ward Young Men president, stake president, and, at the time of his call to the Seventy, president of the Texas Dallas Mission. ■



## Elder Taniela B. Wakolo

*General Authority Seventy*

**E**lder Taniela Biu Wakolo has dedicated every day of his life since his baptism in March 1994 to serving the Lord.

Born in 1967 on the small island of Lomaloma, Lau, Fiji, to Taniela Vosa and Temalesi Buadromo Wakolo, Elder Wakolo was the youngest of six children. “I was raised in a very humble home, but we were rich in terms of the love we had for each other,” he said.

At age 12, Elder Wakolo left his parents’ home to attend boarding school with more than 500 young men, ages 12 to 19. “That was great training ground for me,” he said. “It is where I learned self-discipline.”

He dated Anita Herberta Moimoi, a recent convert, for more than a year. They married on August 22, 1987, in Suva, Fiji.

Conversion didn’t come overnight for Elder Wakolo, and over the first eight years of the couple’s marriage, he met with many missionaries. “I completed the [missionary] discussions four times in eight years,” he said. “I have 24 missionaries.”

It was a simple question from one of those missionaries about the name of the Church that changed his mind about baptism. “The Church needs to be named after its owner,” he said. “That was it for me.”

Elder Wakolo and his wife were sealed in the Nuku’alofa Tonga Temple in 1995. They are the parents of two children.

Service opportunities quickly followed his baptism. Two weeks after his baptism, he was called to the ward Young Men presidency and to co-teach seminary with his wife. After less than a year, he accepted the call to serve as branch president. He later served as counselor in a stake presidency, stake president, and Area Seventy. At the time of his call as a General Authority Seventy, he was presiding over the Arkansas Little Rock Mission.

Elder Wakolo studied management and public administration and earned a master’s degree in management. Most recently, he was the manager at the Church’s Fiji Service Center. ■



## Jean B. Bingham

*Relief Society General President*

Having lived in several locations in the United States, Sister Jean B. Bingham appreciates how the gospel provides a stable influence during changes in environment.

Born in 1952 in Provo, Utah, USA, to Robert and Edith Joy Barrus, she grew up with six sisters and two brothers. She attended elementary school in Texas and Minnesota, USA, and finished high school in New Jersey. She and her siblings were the only LDS students in their schools until they moved to New Jersey, where she was delighted to discover a girl from her new ward in her class.

After she and Bruce Bingham married in the Provo Utah Temple on December 22, 1972, they moved to Illinois to continue his schooling.

Two children were born to Brother and Sister Bingham, and they claim as their own others whom they have fostered. She earned an associate degree in family living, and when their youngest child was in high school, she returned to school and earned a master's degree in teaching.

Sister Bingham's first calling in Relief Society came shortly after the birth of her first child. "I was called to teach the mother education lessons. It was a great opportunity to learn from the examples of other sisters as well as the manual."

Sister Bingham traveled extensively during her service as a Primary general board member and as a counselor in the Primary General Presidency. She has seen the challenges and blessings of being a member of the Church in areas across the globe.

She hopes Relief Society sisters will recognize the goodness in one another. "It's a temptation to compare ourselves with others, which is counterproductive and opposite of what Heavenly Father wants for us." She says that Relief Society helps each sister develop an understanding of who she is in the eternal realm. "When we center our lives on Jesus Christ, we really know who we are," she said. ■



## Sharon Eubank

*First Counselor, Relief Society  
General Presidency*

As a new employee with LDS Humanitarian Services, Sharon Eubank witnessed misery, sadness, and grief that made it hard for her to function. Through prayer, she came to understand that although she could help the Lord take care of His children, she was not in charge of that sorrow. "Jesus Christ is in charge. He will bear this burden. They are His people, and He hears and answers their prayers." That answer changed her ability to reach out and serve.

Years later, Sister Eubank, as the director of LDS Charities—the humanitarian arm of the Church—has delivered aid and promoted self-reliance to those in need across the globe.

Sustained on April 1, 2017, to the Relief Society General Presidency, she will continue in her role as director of LDS Charities. There is a "great link" between LDS Charities and Relief Society, where members of the Relief Society General Presidency sit on the board of directors for LDS Charities, she explained. Her responsibilities with both organizations will strengthen that link.

Born in 1963 in Redding, California, USA, Sharon is the oldest of Mark and Jean Eubank's seven children. Raised in Bountiful, Utah, USA, Sister Eubank grew up on a 10-acre (4 ha) plot of land where the Eubank children picked apricots, repaired sprinklers, and had close access to Utah's mountains.

Sister Eubank received her bachelor's degree in English and history from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and served in the Finland Helsinki Mission.

In addition to her work with the Church's Welfare Department, Sister Eubank worked on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., USA, was co-owner of a small business, and lived abroad in Japan and France.

Each opportunity was a "leap of faith" that helped her learn the skills she uses today, allowed her to meet wonderful people inside and outside of the Church, and gave her a love and appreciation for many of the world's cultures, languages, and foods. ■



## Reyna I. Aburto

*Second Counselor, Relief Society  
General Presidency*

Sister Reyna I. Aburto was born in Managua, Nicaragua, to Noel Blanco and Delbi Cardoza in 1963. “My parents always worked hard so they could provide for us,” Sister Aburto said. “I had a very happy childhood.”

Just past midnight on December 23, 1972, when she was nine years old, an earthquake struck Managua. “I was saved because there was a piece of furniture behind me, but my legs were trapped.” Hearing her and her mother’s screams, neighbors came to pull them from the destroyed adobe house. In the wreckage, they found the body of her older brother in the bed next to hers. “Material possessions are just so temporary, but the important thing is our family,” she said.

When she was 21, Sister Aburto immigrated to the United States with her family. While living in San Francisco, California, she was introduced to missionaries and decided to come to church. “As soon as I stepped into that building, I could feel the Spirit. It was stake conference, and I felt that every single message was for me,” she said. She was baptized in 1989.

During this time she met Carlos Aburto, and they became friends. They continued to correspond, even when Sister Aburto moved to Orem, Utah. They married on May 8, 1993, in the Jordan River Utah Temple. They are the parents of three children.

Sister Aburto, sustained on April 1, 2017, to the Relief Society General Presidency, has worked in the translation industry for more than 25 years, including at Novell Inc. and Lemoine International. She and her husband now own a small translation agency. She studied industrial engineering at Central American University in Managua, Nicaragua, for four years and earned an associate degree in computer science from Utah Valley State College in 1997.

Sister Aburto has served in a wide variety of Church callings, including Primary general board member from 2012 to 2016. ■



## Cristina B. Franco

*Second Counselor, Primary  
General Presidency*

At a young age, Sister Cristina B. Franco learned that if she had a question, she could turn to Heavenly Father in prayer for an answer.

“I remember going to my mom when I was 11 or so and asking her a doctrinal question,” she said. “She answered my question but told me, ‘You don’t have to take my word for it.’ So I prayed and asked my Heavenly Father if it was true.”

Her prayer was answered, and from then on she knew she had a Heavenly Father who loved her and would answer her prayers.

Sustained on April 1, 2017, to the Primary General Presidency, Cristina Beatriz Fraga was born in 1958 to Hugo R. and Maria A. Godoy Fraga in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

When she was three years old, missionaries knocked on her parents’ door. After studying and attending church for about eight months, the couple joined the Church and began raising their family in the gospel. In Primary she met Rodolfo C. Franco, a child who later became her best friend.

When she was 18, Sister Franco’s family moved to Utah, USA. At that time, she and Rodolfo knew they wanted to marry, but Rodolfo was required to serve in the Argentine military for a time. The two wrote letters, and when he completed his military service, they married on December 15, 1978, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of three sons.

Following in the footsteps of Sister Franco’s father, a watchmaker, the couple worked at a watch and clock shop in Salt Lake City for nearly three decades.

Sister Franco has served in many capacities in the Church. She served on the Primary general board from 2005 to 2010 and, at the time of her call to the Primary General Presidency, was serving with her husband as he presides over the Argentina Resistencia Mission. ■



## Relief Society's Purpose

The Relief Society has updated the wording in its purpose statement. It now reads, "Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; and work in unity to help those in need."

The statement reflects additional insights that will help Latter-day Saint women understand the divine identity, eternal work, and purpose of each sister in Relief Society. ■

## New Callings Announced

During general conference, the callings of six new General Authority Seventies, a new Relief Society General Presidency, and the reorganization of the Primary General Presidency were announced.

Called to serve as General Authority Seventies were Elder Taylor G. Godoy, Elder Joni L. Koch, Elder Adilson de Paula Parrella, Elder John C. Pingree Jr., Elder Brian K. Taylor, and Elder Taniela B. Wakolo.

Jean B. Bingham will serve as Relief Society General President, with Sharon

Eubank as First Counselor and Reyna I. Aburto as Second Counselor. Prior to her call, Sister Bingham was serving as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency. Bonnie H. Cordon, who was serving as Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency, was announced as the new First Counselor, with Cristina B. Franco as Second Counselor.

Biographies are found starting on page 135. The callings of 36 Area Seventies were also announced (see page 44). ■

## Five New Temples

President Thomas S. Monson announced plans to build five additional temples, located in the following cities:

**Brasília, Brazil.** The Brasília Brazil Temple will be the 10th temple in Brazil, including six temples in operation and three others announced or under construction. Aside from the United States and Mexico, more Latter-day Saints (more than 1.3 million) live in Brazil than any other country. Brazil has a population of about 211 million.

**Greater Manila, Philippines.** This temple will be the second in Manila and the fourth in the Philippines. There are nearly 750,000 Latter-day Saints in the Philippines, which has a population of 104 million.

**Nairobi, Kenya.** The temple will serve more than 30,000 members in eastern Africa, including 13,000 members in Kenya, which has a population of 48 million. It will bring to eight the number of temples operating, under construction, or announced in Africa.

**Pocatello, Idaho, USA.** The Pocatello Idaho Temple will be the sixth temple in Idaho, a state with approximately 450,000 Latter-day Saints and a population of 1.7 million.

**Saratoga Springs, Utah, USA.** This temple will be found in one of the fastest-growing areas in Utah and will become the 18th temple in the state. Utah, where Church headquarters is located, has 2.1 million members, with a state population of about 3.1 million.

The five temples announced bring the total number of operating temples (155) and temples announced or under construction/renovation (27) to 182 temples worldwide.

Since the October 2016 general conference, the Fort Collins Colorado Temple, the Star Valley Wyoming Temple, and the Hartford Connecticut Temple in the USA have been dedicated, and the Suva Fiji Temple has been rededicated.

Future dedications are planned as indicated below:

TEMPLE	DEDICATION DATE
Paris France	May 21, 2017
Idaho Falls Idaho (USA)	June 4, 2017 (rededication)
Tucson Arizona (USA)	August 13, 2017
Meridian Idaho (USA)	November 19, 2017
Cedar City Utah (USA)	December 10, 2017

Ground has been broken for the Winnipeg Manitoba Temple (Canada), the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple, the Barranquilla Colombia Temple, the Arequipa Peru Temple, and the Rio de Janeiro Brazil Temple.

Also of note, as construction of the Rome Italy Temple continues, statues of Jesus Christ and the original Twelve Apostles were placed in the visitors' center, and a statue of the angel Moroni was placed on the spire. ■

Find updates and information at [temples.lds.org](http://temples.lds.org).

## Pathway to Education

The First Presidency has announced the creation of a new global higher education organization in the Church, called BYU-Pathway Worldwide. The new organization will begin operating on May 1, 2017. The organization will provide educational opportunities to those who would not otherwise have them.

"Pathway is a bridge to the world of online college education and a pathway to opportunities for a successful livelihood," said President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. ■

Find more information at [pathway.lds.org](http://pathway.lds.org).



## Apostles' Worldwide Ministry Continues

Prophets and apostles continue to minister throughout the world (see D&C 107:23). During the last six months:

In a Face to Face broadcast originating in **Palmyra, New York, USA**, President Henry B. Eyring and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland encouraged youth of the Church to gain a personal testimony. “Come to know for yourself that these things are true,” President Eyring said.

In **Mexico**, President Russell M. Nelson was introduced in the national Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Congress), and the Church was praised for the good it has done in defending religious freedom and in strengthening families. President Nelson also met with members and missionaries and said that members “are an active force for good in their communities.”

In **Arizona, USA**, Elder Dallin H. Oaks urged all Church members to defend religious freedom. (Find more information at [religiousfreedom.lds.org](http://religiousfreedom.lds.org).)

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf spoke to members of the Parleys Creek (Swahili) Branch in **Salt Lake City, Utah, USA**. Many of the branch members are refugees from African nations, and President Uchtdorf has twice been a refugee himself. “Always remember that wherever we are, the gospel is home,” he said.



*Clockwise, from top left: Elder Bednar visits with Church members in the Philippines; President Russell M. Nelson meets with members of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of the Mexican Congress) to discuss religious freedom; a distinguished gathering of Mormon and Jewish leaders from the USA visits Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu; Elder Stevenson greets a young adult serving as a counselor in a For the Strength of Youth conference in Uruguay; teens attend a live broadcast with Elder Holland and President Eyring in Palmyra, New York, USA; Elder and Sister Renlund greet sisters at a meeting in Tonga; and Elder Rasband visits a children's cancer hospital in Guatemala City, Guatemala.*

Elders M. Russell Ballard and D. Todd Christofferson attended the installation ceremony for the new bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City and welcomed him to the community.

In the **Holy Land**, Elder Holland and Elder Quentin L. Cook joined a delegation of Latter-day Saint leaders and Jewish dignitaries from the USA who gathered at a historic site in **Jerusalem** to mark the 175th anniversary of Elder



Orson Hyde (1805–78) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles dedicating the land as a gathering place for the Jewish people.

Elder Holland also visited with members and missionaries in **Japan, Korea, and Guam**, where “we were able to reassure them of a [bright] future,” he said. He noted that live nationwide broadcasts of devotionals “offered us the largest possible reach for our messages,” connecting with tens of thousands of members.

In **New York, USA**, Elder David A. Bednar participated in a forum on marriage, saying that one of the great tasks of our time—one on which diverse faith communities should be united—is to help people understand the true meaning and purpose of marriage.

While visiting Latter-day Saints in **Japan and Korea**, Elder Bednar said that the Church is experiencing slow but steady growth in Asia. “You can’t help but be impressed by the diligence, graciousness, and faithfulness of these Latter-day Saints,” he said. Elder Bednar also addressed thousands of Church members and taught missionaries in 7 of the Church’s 21 missions in the **Philippines**.

In **Mexico**, Elder Neil L. Andersen counseled Church members to overcome obstacles that keep them from attending the temple, observing the Sabbath, and strengthening family relationships. He invited them to bring the Savior more fully into their lives.

Elder Quentin L. Cook visited the **Philippines**, 20 years after he served there as a newly called General Authority. He said the Church in the Philippines has since doubled in size. “Where there were branches,” he said, “there are now stakes. Children we

knew then are now returned missionaries. Returned missionaries are now stake presidents. It is incredible to see the growth of the Church.”

In **Bolivia and Peru**, Elder Cook counseled members to focus on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said that youth and young single adults there are exceptional and demonstrate love for the Savior and His Atonement and Resurrection.

In the **Africa West Area**, Elder Gary E. Stevenson said his visit provided an opportunity to reflect on the love and joy Latter-day Saints find in the gospel, despite the “challenges and adversity” they face.

Later, in **Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina**, Elder Stevenson spoke at a For the Strength of Youth conference. He said that many of the youth “are making decisions to go on missions and to remain steadfast with their goal to be married in the temple and . . . [gain] higher education.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband counseled members and missionaries in the **Central America Area** to stay true to their covenants and to look to the Lord in turbulent times. He visited a children’s cancer hospital in **Guatemala**, delivered the keynote address at a Church-sponsored religious freedom symposium in **El Salvador**, and met with the president of **Nicaragua**.

In **Tonga**, Elder Dale G. Renlund met with the queen and other members of the royal family. He also visited **Australia and New Zealand**, where members asked him to convey their love to President Thomas S. Monson. ■

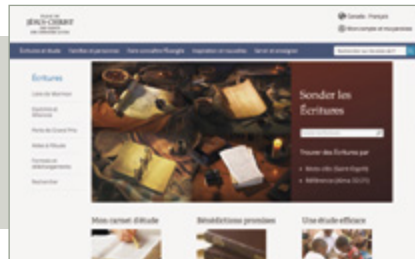
*Up-to-date information on the ministry of these Church leaders can be found on their respective Facebook pages and at [prophets.lds.org](http://prophets.lds.org).*

## Better Missionaries, Better Teachers

In a worldwide broadcast, nearly 71,000 elders and sisters in 422 missions received training in how to be better missionaries and better teachers. Changes approved by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were announced as part of the training. A new daily schedule will allow greater flexibility in how missionaries use their time and greater adaptability according to the area where they are serving.

The purpose of the more flexible schedule is to help missionaries increase daily productivity, set more inspired goals, plan more effectively, be healthier, and use their agency to make righteous decisions about how best to spend their time. It will also allow them to be out working for a longer time.

The other change announced was a reduction of the number of “key indicators” missionaries use to report progress in their work. Missionaries were reminded that all principles in *Preach My Gospel* are important and should be applied. ■



## New Products and Resources

Here is a summary of new products and resources the Church has recently made available.

**Scripture stories and coloring books.** To encourage individual and family scripture study, the Church is releasing new scripture stories resources, beginning with a series of coloring books designed for children ages 2–8. Free PDF versions are on [scripturestories.lds.org](http://scripturestories.lds.org), and printed versions can be ordered at [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org) and at Distribution Services centers.

The coloring books will be translated into languages that have LDS editions of the scriptures. Translated versions will become available throughout 2017, starting with Spanish, Portuguese, French, Japanese, Korean, Chinese (traditional), German, Russian, and Italian.

**Scriptures.** The First Presidency has announced a new translation of the triple combination of the scriptures in French, available at [ecritures.lds.org](http://ecritures.lds.org) and in the Gospel Library mobile app. The translation includes a minor wording change in one of the sacrament prayers. They also announced that a Croatian translation of the triple combination is available online. Printed editions of the triple combination in Croatian, Russian, and Icelandic have also recently been made available.

**Help for families dealing with same-sex attraction.** To help members respond sensitively and thoughtfully when they encounter same-sex attraction in their own families, among other Church members, or elsewhere, resources include the new site [mormonandgay.lds.org](http://mormonandgay.lds.org) and an updated Gospel Topic on same-sex attraction (in English), including frequently asked questions and Church teachings.

**Updated Gospel Library app.** The app, used by members worldwide to study the scriptures, conference talks, and other materials, recently released a major update for both iOS and Android. In version 4, study tools are more intuitive, features and functionality are more unified, and new video tutorials are available. Because all content is now annotatable, you can highlight, add comments to, link, tag, and organize all content into notebooks. You can annotate videos, scripture chapter headings and study helps, lists in various lesson manuals, hymns and Primary songs, and more.

**Updated LDS Tools app.** Version 3.2.0 of the LDS Tools mobile app makes it easier to attend the temple. Added features allow members to see their assigned temple, find the five nearest temples, contact a temple or learn when it is scheduled to close, and be reminded before their recommend expires. ■

## Teaching in the Savior's Way

“We all want to teach like Jesus taught,” Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said during a worldwide broadcast for teachers on November 5, 2016. “His instruction was simple and direct and powerful.”

Elder Holland said that the resource *Teaching in the Savior's Way* helps improve teaching in the Church. So do teacher council meetings and new-teacher orientation, which were discussed during the broadcast. The broadcast is available in 10 languages at [teach.lds.org](http://teach.lds.org), along with a variety of videos and other materials to strengthen teaching. ■



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# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

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### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**WE**, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. 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. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

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*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

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“We live in a time of great trouble and wickedness. What will protect us from the sin and evil so prevalent in the world today?” asked President Thomas S. Monson during the 187th Annual General Conference of the Church. “I maintain that a strong testimony of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His gospel will help see us through to safety. . . . I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, we will be in a position to hear the voice of the Spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven’s help in our lives.”

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS