

Ensign



General
Conference
Addresses



“And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more” [D&C 78:19; emphasis added].

“I have felt that transformation of growing gratitude for blessings and a love of God increasing across the Church. It seems to accelerate among members of the Church in times and places where there are trials of their faith, where they have to plead to God for help to even carry on.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Gratitude on the Sabbath Day,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 101.

Where Are the Nine? by Walter Rane

See Luke 17:11–19, where Jesus recounts that after He healed 10 lepers, only one returned to express gratitude.

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The 186th Semiannual General Conference

Saturday Evening, September 24, 2016, General Women's Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: Linda K. Burton.
Invocation: Denise Lindberg.
Benediction: Bonnie H. Cordon.
Music by a Young Women choir from stakes in Ogden, Huntsville, and Morgan, Utah; Cherylyn Worthen, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Arise, O Glorious Zion," *Hymns*, no. 40, arr. Warby, unpublished; "If I Listen with My Heart," DeFord, arr. Warby, unpublished; "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136.

Saturday Morning, October 1, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Joy D. Jones.
Benediction: Elder Marcus B. Nash.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: "Sweet Is the Work," *Hymns*, no. 147; "With Songs of Praise," *Hymns*, no. 71; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; "Take Time to Be Holy," Longstaff, arr. Longhurst, pub. by Jackman; "If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not," Sweney, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

Saturday Afternoon, October 1, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Daniel L. Johnson.
Benediction: Elder Allen D. Haynie.
Music by a combined choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center; Ryan Eggett and Elmo Keck, directors; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," *Hymns*, no. 26, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "Baptism," *Children's Songbook*, 100, arr. Gates, pub. by Jackman; "Called to Serve," *Hymns*, no. 249; "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259, arr. Schank, unpublished.

Saturday Evening, October 1, 2016, General Priesthood Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Elder Paul B. Pieper.
Benediction: Elder Bruce D. Porter.
Music by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in West Valley City and Magna, Utah; Kenny Wiser, director; Richard Elliott, organist: "Ye Elders of Israel" (Men), *Hymns*, no. 319, arr. Spiel, unpublished; "Love at Home," *Hymns*, no. 294, arr. Manookin, pub. by Jackman; "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3; "You Can Make the Pathway Bright," *Hymns*, no. 228, arr. Zabriskie, pub. by Holy Sheet Music.

Sunday Morning, October 2, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Christoffel Golden.
Benediction: Devin G. Durrant.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135; "In Hymns of Praise," *Hymns*, no. 75, arr. Wilberg; "On This Day of Joy and Gladness," *Hymns*, no. 64, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301; "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," *Children's Songbook*, 228, arr. Hofheins and Christiansen, unpublished; "Come, Ye Thankful People," *Hymns*, no. 94, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford.

Sunday Afternoon, October 2, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Elder Enrique R. Falabella.
Benediction: Elder Erich W. Kopischke.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" *Hymns*, no. 272, arr. Longhurst, pub. by Jackman; "Lead, Kindly Light," *Hymns*, no. 97, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Jackman; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5; "I'll Follow Him in Faith," Perry, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "Let Us All Press On," *Hymns*, no. 243, arr. Elliott.

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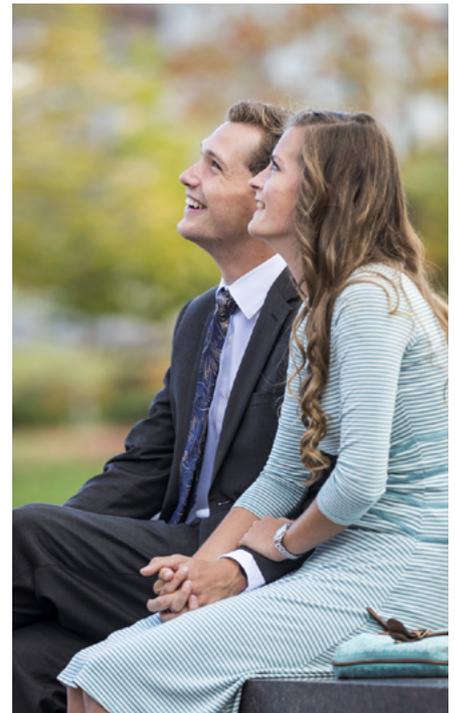
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On the Cover

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Back: Photograph by Ale Borges.

Conference Photography

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Ensign

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Highlights from the 186th Semiannual General Conference

President Thomas S. Monson shared two straightforward messages during general conference. On Sunday morning he testified of God's great plan of happiness for all people. He taught about Jesus Christ's essential part in the plan of salvation as well as our role in obtaining the happiness God intended. (See page 80.) During the general priesthood session, President Monson emphasized blessings that come from obedience to the Lord's commandments and faithful observation of the Word of Wisdom (see page 78).

Hundreds of thousands of women, young women, and girls as young as age eight gathered at the Conference Center and in locations around the world to open the six sessions of general conference with the general women's session.

During the Saturday afternoon session, four General Authority Seventies were granted emeritus status, one Area Seventy was released, and two additional Area Seventies were called (see page 39). On Sunday, Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles honored Elder Per G.



Malm, a member of the Seventy who passed away on July 26, 2016 (see page 121).

General conferences of the Church take place every six months, originating in the 21,000-seat Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, and reaching millions around the world. The conference was interpreted and made available online in more than 80 languages and was published in 34 languages in the Church magazines. ■

For a suggestion on using this issue, see the story index on page 125.





By Jean B. Bingham
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home

We can bring the light of the gospel into our homes, schools, and workplaces if we look for and share positive things about others.

In response to Sister Linda K. Burton's invitation at April's general conference,¹ many of you have been involved in thoughtful and generous acts of charity focused on meeting the needs of refugees in your local area. From simple, one-on-one efforts to community-wide programs, those acts are the result of love. As you have shared your time, talents, and resources, your—and the refugees'—hearts have been lightened. The building of hope and faith and even greater love between receiver and giver are inevitable results of true charity.

The prophet Moroni tells us that charity is an essential characteristic of those who will live with Heavenly Father in the celestial kingdom. He writes, "Except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God."²

Of course, Jesus Christ is the perfect embodiment of charity. His premortal offering to be our Savior, His interactions throughout His mortal life, His supernal gift of the Atonement,

and His continual efforts to bring us back to our Heavenly Father are the ultimate expressions of charity. He operates with a singular focus: love for His Father expressed through His love for each of us. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."³

One of the most significant ways we can develop and demonstrate love for our neighbor is through being generous in our thoughts and words. Some years ago a cherished friend noted, "The greatest form of charity may be to withhold judgment."⁴ That is still true today.

Recently, as three-year-old Alyssa watched a movie with her siblings, she remarked with a puzzled expression, "Mom, that chicken is weird!"

Her mother looked at the screen and responded with a smile, "Honey, that is a peacock."

Like that unknowing three-year-old, we sometimes look at others with an incomplete or inaccurate understanding. We may focus on the differences and perceived flaws in those around us whereas our Heavenly Father sees His children, created in His eternal image, with magnificent and glorious potential.

President James E. Faust is remembered to have said, "The older I get, the less judgmental I become."⁵ That reminds me of the Apostle Paul's observation:

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became [older], I put away childish things.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."⁶

When we see our own imperfections more clearly, we are less inclined to view others "through a glass, darkly." We want to use the light of the gospel to see others as the Savior does—with compassion, hope, and charity. The day will come when we will have a complete understanding of others' hearts and will be grateful to have mercy extended to us—just as we extend charitable thoughts and words to others during this life.

Some years ago, I went canoeing with a group of young women. The deep blue lakes surrounded by green, thickly forested hills and rocky cliffs were breathtakingly beautiful. The water sparkled on our paddles as we dipped them into the clear water, and the sun shone warmly while we moved smoothly across the lake.

However, clouds soon darkened the sky, and a stiff wind began to blow.



To make any progress at all, we had to dig deeply into the water, paddling without pausing between strokes. After a few grueling hours of backbreaking work, we finally turned the corner on the large lake and discovered to our amazement and delight that the wind was blowing in the direction we wanted to go.

Quickly, we took advantage of this gift. We pulled out a small tarp and tied two of its corners to paddle handles and the other corners to my husband's feet, which he stretched out over the gunwales of the canoe. The wind billowed the improvised sail, and we were off!

When the young women in the other canoes saw how we moved along the water with ease, they quickly improvised sails of their own. Our hearts were light with laughter and relief, grateful for the respite from the challenges of the day.

How like that glorious wind can be the sincere compliment of a friend, the cheerful greeting of a parent, the approving nod of a sibling, or the

helpful smile of a co-worker or classmate, all supplying fresh "wind in our sails" as we battle the challenges of life! President Thomas S. Monson put it this way: "We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. For maximum happiness, peace, and contentment, may we *choose* a positive attitude."⁷

Words have surprising power, both to build up and to tear down. We can all probably remember negative words that brought us low and other words spoken with love that made our spirits soar. Choosing to say only that which is positive about—and to—others lifts and strengthens those around us and helps others follow in the Savior's way.

As a young Primary girl, I worked diligently to cross-stitch a simple saying which read, "I will bring the light of the gospel into my home." One weekday afternoon as we girls pulled our needles up and down through the fabric, our teacher told us the story of a girl who lived on a hill on one side of a valley. Each late afternoon she noticed on the hill on the opposite side

of the valley a house that had shining, golden windows. Her own home was small and somewhat shabby, and the girl dreamed of living in that beautiful house with windows of gold.

One day the girl was given permission to ride her bike across the valley. She eagerly rode until she reached the house with the golden windows that she had admired for so long. But when she dismounted from her bike, she saw that the house was abandoned and dilapidated, with tall weeds in the yard and windows that were plain and dirty. Sadly, the girl turned her face toward home. To her surprise, she saw a house with shining, golden windows on the hill across the valley and soon realized it was her very own home!⁸

Sometimes, like this young girl, we look at what others might have or be and feel we are less in comparison. We become focused on the Pinterest or Instagram versions of life or caught up in our school's or workplace's preoccupation with competition. However, when we take a moment to "count [our]

many blessings,”⁹ we see with a truer perspective and recognize the goodness of God to *all* of His children.

Whether we are 8 or 108, we can bring the light of the gospel into our own environment, be it a high-rise apartment in Manhattan, a stilt house in Malaysia, or a yurt in Mongolia. We can determine to look for the good in others and in the circumstances around us. Young and not-so-young women everywhere can demonstrate charity as they choose to use words that build confidence and faith in others.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland told of a young man who was the brunt of his peers’ teasing during his school years. Some years later he moved away, joined the military, received an education, and became active in the Church.

This period of his life was marked with wonderfully successful experiences.

After several years he returned to his hometown. However, the people refused to acknowledge his growth and improvement. To them, he was still just old “so-and-so,” and they treated him that way. Eventually, this good man faded away to a shadow of his former successful self without being able to use his marvelously developed talents to bless those who derided and rejected him once again.¹⁰ What a loss, both for him and the community!

The Apostle Peter taught, “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”¹¹ *Fervent* charity, meaning “wholehearted,” is demonstrated by forgetting the mistakes and

stumbings of another rather than harboring grudges or reminding ourselves and others of imperfections in the past.

Our obligation and privilege is to embrace improvement in *everyone* as we strive to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. What a thrill it is to see light in the eyes of someone who has come to understand the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is making real changes in his or her life! Missionaries who have experienced the joy of seeing a convert enter the waters of baptism and then enter the doors of the temple are witnesses of the blessing of allowing—and encouraging—others to change. Members who welcome converts who might have been considered unlikely candidates for the kingdom find great satisfaction in helping them feel the love of the Lord. The great beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the reality of eternal progression—we are not only *allowed* to change for the better but also encouraged, and even *commanded*, to continue in the pursuit of improvement and, ultimately, perfection.

President Thomas S. Monson counseled: “In a hundred small ways, all of you wear the mantle of charity. . . . Rather than being judgmental [or] critical of [one] another, may we have the pure love of Christ for our fellow travelers in this journey through life. May we recognize that each one is doing her [or his] best to deal with the challenges which come [her or his] way, and may we strive to do *our* best to help out.”¹²

Charity, in positive terms, is patient, kind, and content. Charity puts others first, is humble, exercises self-control, looks for good in others, and rejoices when someone does well.¹³

As sisters (and brothers) in Zion, will we commit to “*all* work together . . . to



do whatsoever is gentle and human, to cheer and to bless in [the Savior's] name?"¹⁴ Can we, with love and high hopes, look for and embrace the beauties in others, allowing and encouraging progress? Can we rejoice in the accomplishments of others while continuing to work toward our own improvement?

Yes, we *can* bring the light of the gospel into our homes, schools, and workplaces if we look for and share positive things about others and let the less-than-perfect fade away. What gratitude fills my heart when I think of the repentance that our Savior, Jesus Christ, has made possible for all of us who have inevitably sinned in this imperfect and sometimes difficult world!

I bear my witness that as we follow His perfect example, we can receive the gift of charity, which will bring us great joy in this life and the promised blessing of eternal life with our Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Linda K. Burton, "I Was a Stranger," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 13–15.
2. Moroni 10:21.
3. Matthew 22:37–39.
4. Sandra Rogers, "Hearts Knit Together," in *Hearts Knit Together: Talks from the 1995 Women's Conference* (1996), 7.
5. James E. Faust, in Dallin H. Oaks, "'Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 13.
6. 1 Corinthians 13:11–12.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "Living the Abundant Life," *Ensign or Liahona*, Jan. 2012, 4.
8. Adapted from Laura E. Richards, *The Golden Windows: A Book of Fables for Young and Old* (1903), 1–6.
9. "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.
10. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Best Is Yet to Be," *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 25–26; *Liahona*, Jan. 2010, 18–19.
11. 1 Peter 4:8.
12. Thomas S. Monson, "Charity Never Faileth," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 125.
13. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–6.
14. "As Sisters in Zion," *Hymns*, no. 309; emphasis added.



By Carole M. Stephens

First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The Master Healer

You don't have to experience the sorrow caused by sin, the pain caused by others' actions, or the painful realities of mortality—alone.

One of my most rewarding opportunities is to travel—to learn from my sisters throughout the world. There's nothing like being arm in arm, face to face, and heart to heart with you.

During one such experience, a Relief Society leader asked, "Is there something specific that women should focus on?"

I answered, "Yes!" as President Russell M. Nelson's talk "A Plea to My Sisters" entered my mind. President Nelson taught, "We need women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ."¹

Nephi described the doctrine of Christ this way:

"For the gate by which ye should enter is *repentance* and *baptism* by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the *Holy Ghost*. . . .

"And now . . . I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken *faith* in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

"Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love

of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and *endure to the end*, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

". . . This is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, *this is the doctrine of Christ*."²

Why do we need a bedrock understanding of these principles?

I often meet Latter-day Saint women who are desperate for help, yet they do not turn to the One who can provide everlasting help. Too often they seek for understanding by searching "the great and spacious building."³

As we increase our understanding of the doctrine of Christ, we soon discover that we are developing a deeper understanding of "the great plan of happiness."⁴ We also recognize that our Savior, Jesus Christ, is at the very heart of the plan.

When we learn how to apply the doctrine of Christ to our individual circumstances, our love for our Savior grows. And we recognize "that regardless of perceived differences, all of us are in need of the same infinite Atonement."⁵ We realize that He is our foundation—"the rock of our



Redeemer, . . . a sure foundation . . . whereon if [we] build [we] cannot fall.”⁶

How can this doctrine bless us as we seek peace and understanding and strive to endure joyfully in our unique mortal journeys?

May I suggest that we begin, as Nephi says, “with unshaken faith in [Christ], relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.”⁷ Our faith in Jesus Christ enables us to meet any challenge.

We, in fact, often find our faith deepened and our relationship with Heavenly Father and His Son refined in adversity. Let me share three examples.

First, the Savior, the Master Healer, has the power to change our hearts and give us permanent relief from the sorrow caused by our own sin. When the Savior taught the Samaritan woman at the well, He knew about her serious sins. However, “the Lord looketh on the heart,”⁸ and He knew she had a teachable heart.

When the woman came to the well, Jesus—the embodiment of living water—said simply, “Give me to drink.” Our Savior will likewise speak to us in a voice we recognize when we come

to Him—for He knows us. He meets us where we are. And because of who He is and what He has done for us, He understands. Because He has experienced our pain, He can give us living water when we seek it. He taught this to the Samaritan woman when He said, “If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Finally understanding, the woman responded in faith and asked, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.”

After the Samaritan woman had this experience with the Savior, she “left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

“Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

She had received a witness—she had begun to partake of the living water—and she desired to witness of His divinity to others.⁹

When we come to Him with humble and teachable hearts—even if our hearts are heavy with mistakes, sins, and transgressions—He can change us, “for he is mighty to save.”¹⁰ And

with hearts changed, we can, like the Samaritan woman, go into our own cities—our homes, schools, and workplaces—to witness of Him.

Second, the Master Healer can comfort and strengthen us when we experience pain because of the unrighteous actions of others.

I have had many conversations with women weighed down under heavy burdens. Their covenant path from the temple has become a difficult journey of healing. They suffer from broken covenants, broken hearts, and lost confidence. Many are victims of adultery and verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse, often as the result of other people’s addictions.

These experiences, though no fault of their own, have left many feeling guilty and ashamed. Not understanding how to manage the powerful emotions they experience, many try to bury them, pushing them deeper into themselves.

Hope and healing are not found in the dark abyss of secrecy but in the light and love of our Savior, Jesus Christ.¹¹ Elder Richard G. Scott counseled: “If you are free [from] serious sin yourself, don’t

suffer needlessly the consequences of another's sins. . . . You can feel compassion. . . . Yet you should not take upon yourself a feeling of responsibility. . . . When you have done what is reasonable to help one you love, lay the burden at the feet of the Savior. . . . As you so act, not only will you find peace but will demonstrate your faith in the power of the Savior to lift the burden of sin from a loved one through his repentance and obedience.”

He continued: “Complete healing will come through your faith in Jesus Christ and His power and capacity, through His Atonement, to heal the scars of that which is unjust and undeserved.”¹²

If you find yourself in this situation, sisters, healing may be a long process. It will require that you prayerfully seek guidance and appropriate help, including counseling with properly ordained priesthood holders. As you learn to communicate openly, set appropriate boundaries and perhaps seek professional counseling. Maintaining spiritual health throughout the process is vital! Remember your divine identity: you are a beloved daughter of Heavenly Parents. Trust your Father's eternal plan for you. Continue daily to increase your understanding of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Exercise faith each day to drink deeply from the Savior's well of living water. Rely on the endowment of power made available to each of us through ordinances and covenants. And allow the healing power of the Savior and His Atonement into your life.

Third, the Master Healer can comfort and sustain us as we experience painful “realities of mortality,”¹³ such as disaster, mental illness, disease, chronic pain, and death. I have recently become



acquainted with a remarkable young woman named Josie who suffers from bipolar disorder. Here is just a little of her journey toward healing as she shared it with me:

“The worst of the darkness occurs on what my family and I have deemed ‘floor days.’ It begins with sensory overload and acute sensitivity and resistance to any type of sound, touch, or light. It is the apex of mental anguish. There is one day in particular that I will never forget.

“It was early in the journey, making the experience especially frightening. I can remember sobbing, tears racing down my face as I gasped for air. But even such intense suffering paled in comparison to the pain that followed as I observed panic overwhelm my mother, so desperate to help me.

“With my broken mind came her broken heart. But little did we know that despite the deepening darkness, we were just moments away from experiencing a mighty miracle.

“As a long hour continued, my mom whispered over and over and over again, ‘I would do anything to take this from you.’

“Meanwhile, the darkness intensified, and when I was convinced I could take no more, just then something marvelous occurred.

“A transcendent and wonderful power suddenly overtook my body. Then, with a ‘strength beyond my own,’¹⁴ I declared to my mom with great conviction seven life-changing words in response to her repeated desire to bear my pain. I said, ‘You don’t have to; Someone already has.’”

From the dark abyss of debilitating mental illness, Josie summoned the strength to testify of Jesus Christ and of His Atonement.

She was not healed completely that day, but she received the light of hope in a time of intense darkness. And today, supported by a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ and refreshed daily by the Savior's living water, Josie continues on her journey toward healing and exercises unshakable faith in the Master Healer. She helps others along the way. And she says, “When the darkness feels unremitting, I rely on the memory of His tender mercies. They serve as a guiding light as I navigate through hard times.”¹⁵



By **Bonnie L. Oscarson**
Young Women General President

Sisters, I testify that—
You don't have to continue to
carry the burden of sorrow caused by
sin—alone.

You don't have to carry the pain
caused by the unrighteous actions of
others—alone.

You don't have to experience the
painful realities of mortality—alone.

The Savior pleads:

“Will ye not now return unto me,
and repent of your sins, and be con-
verted, that I may heal you?

“. . . If ye will come unto me ye
shall have eternal life. Behold, mine
arm of mercy is extended towards
you, and whosoever will come . . .
will I receive.”¹⁶

“[He] would do anything to take
this from you.” In fact, “[He] already
has.” In the name of Jesus Christ, the
Master Healer, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97.
2. 2 Nephi 31:17, 19–21; emphasis added.
3. 1 Nephi 11:36.
4. Alma 42:8.
5. Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 57–58.
6. Helaman 5:12.
7. 2 Nephi 31:19.
8. 1 Samuel 16:7.
9. See John 4:5–30, 39–42.
10. Alma 34:18.
11. For additional help for individuals, spouses and families, and Church leaders, see overcomingpornography.org and mentalhealth.lds.org.
12. Richard G. Scott, “To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 88.
13. See Paul B. Pieper, “Revealed Realities of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2016, 18; *Liahona*, Jan. 2016, 44.
14. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
15. For more about Josie’s journey toward healing, see Morgan Jones, “Bipolar Disorder Can’t Stop LDS Woman from Spreading Light, Joy through the 444 Project,” *Deseret News*, Mar. 21, 2016, deseretnews.com.
16. 3 Nephi 9:13–14.

Rise Up in Strength, Sisters in Zion

To be converted covenant keepers, we need to study the essential doctrines of the gospel and have an unshakable testimony of their truthfulness.

What joy it is to be gathered in this Conference Center with the girls, young women, and women of the Church. We are also very aware that there are thousands of other groups of sisters, gathered throughout the world, watching these proceedings, and I’m grateful for the opportunity and means that allow us to join together in unity and purpose this evening.

In October 2006, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a talk entitled “Rise Up, O Men of God,” named after a hymn written in 1911.¹ It was a call to action for the men of the Church to rise up and improve themselves. That talk has echoed in my mind as I have prayed to know what to share with you.

Sisters, we live in “perilous times.”² The conditions of our day should not be a surprise to us. They have been foretold for millennia as a warning and admonition so that we can be prepared. The 8th chapter of Mormon gives a disconcertingly accurate description of the conditions of our day. In this chapter, Moroni says he has seen our day, and it includes wars and rumors of wars, great

pollutions, murders, robbing, and people who tell us that there is no right or wrong in God’s eyes. He describes people who are filled with pride, caught up in the wearing of expensive clothing, and who make fun of religion. He is shown people who are so obsessed with worldly things that they allow “the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by”³ without being noticed.

Moroni asks a soul-searching question of us—we who are living in these times. He says, “Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ?”⁴ This indictment accurately describes the increasingly secular condition of our world.

Joseph Smith—Matthew indicates that in the last days even the “very elect . . . according to the covenant”⁵ will be deceived. Those of the covenant include the girls, young women, and sisters of the Church who have been baptized and made covenants with their Heavenly Father. Even *we* are at risk of being deceived by false teachings.

Sisters, I don’t believe that conditions are going to improve going forward.



If current trends are an indication, we need to be prepared for the storms that lie ahead. It would be easy to throw our hands up in despair, but as covenant people we need never despair. As Elder Gary E. Stevenson has said, “Heavenly Father’s generous compensation for living in perilous times is that we also live in the fulness of times.”⁶ I love the comfort of that statement.

President Russell M. Nelson told us a year ago: “Attacks against the Church, its doctrine, and our way of life are going to increase. Because of this, we need women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ and who will use that understanding to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation. We need women who can detect deception in all of its forms. We need women who know how to access the power that God makes available to covenant keepers and who express their beliefs with confidence and charity. We need women who have the courage and vision of our Mother Eve.”⁷

This message reassures me that despite the conditions of our day, we have many reasons to rejoice and be optimistic. I believe with all of my heart that we sisters do have the innate strength and faith that will allow us to meet the challenges of living in the last days. Sister Sheri Dew has written, “I believe that the moment we learn to unleash the full influence of converted, covenant-keeping women, the kingdom of God will change overnight.”⁸

It will take concerted effort to be converted and to keep our covenants. To do so, we need to be girls and women who study the essential doctrines of the gospel and have an unshakable testimony of their truthfulness. There are three areas I believe are foundational to strong testimonies and that I consider to be essential to our understanding.

First, we need to acknowledge the centrality of God our Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, to our faith and salvation. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. We need to study and understand His Atonement and how to

apply it daily; repentance is one of the greatest blessings each of us has to stay on course. We need to see Jesus Christ as our primary role model and the example of who we need to become. We need to continually teach our families and classes about our Father’s great plan of salvation, which includes the doctrine of Christ.

Second, we need to understand the need for the restoration of the doctrine, organization, and keys of authority in these latter days. We need to have a witness that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely chosen and appointed by the Lord to bring about this restoration and recognize that he organized the women of the Church after the organization that existed in Christ’s Church anciently.⁹

And third, we need to study and understand temple ordinances and covenants. The temple holds a place at the very center of our most sacred beliefs, and the Lord asks that we attend, ponder, study, and find personal meaning and application individually. We will come to understand that through the ordinances of the temple, the power of godliness is manifest in our lives¹⁰ and that because of temple ordinances, we can be armed with God’s power, and His name will be upon us, His glory round about us, and His angels have charge over us.¹¹ I wonder if we are fully drawing upon the power of those promises.

Sisters, even the very youngest in this audience can rise up in faith and play a significant role in building the kingdom of God. Children begin gaining their own testimonies by reading or listening to the scriptures, praying daily, and partaking of the sacrament in a meaningful way. All children and young women can encourage family home evenings and be full participants. You can be the first one on your knees



as your family gathers for family prayer. Even if your homes are less than ideal, your personal examples of faithful gospel living can influence the lives of your family and friends.

Young women of the Church need to see themselves as essential participants in the priesthood-directed work of salvation and not just as onlookers and supporters. You hold callings and are set apart by those holding priesthood keys to function as leaders with power and authority in this work. As you magnify your callings in class presidencies and prepare spiritually, counsel together, reach out to minister to your class members, and teach one another the gospel, you are taking your place in this work and both you and your peers will be blessed.

All women need to see themselves as essential participants in the work of the priesthood. Women in this Church are presidents, counselors, teachers, members of councils, sisters, and mothers, and the kingdom of God cannot function unless we rise up and fulfill our duties with faith. Sometimes we just need to have a greater vision of what is possible.

I recently met a sister in Mexico who understands what it means to

magnify her calling with faith. Marfissa Maldonado was called to teach a youth Sunday School class three years ago. She had 7 students attending when she was called, but she now has 20 who attend regularly. I asked her, in amazement, what she had done to bring about such an increase in numbers. She modestly said, “Oh, it wasn’t just me. All the class members helped.” Together, they saw the names of the less-actives on the roll and began to go out together and invite them to come back to church. They have also had a baptism because of their efforts.

Sister Maldonado set up a social media site just for her class members called “I Am a Child of God,” and she posts inspirational thoughts and scriptures several times a week. She regularly texts her students with assignments and encouragement. She feels it is important to communicate in the ways they best relate to, and it is working. She told me simply, “I love my students.” I could feel that love as she told me of their efforts, and her example reminded me of what one person of faith and action can accomplish in this work with the help of the Lord.

Our youth are being exposed to difficult questions on a daily basis, and

many of us have loved ones who are struggling to find answers. The good news is that there *are* answers to the questions being asked. Listen to the recent messages from our leaders. We are being urged to study and understand our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness. We have been reminded of the principles in the family proclamation.¹² We are encouraged to teach and use these resources as the measuring sticks to keep us on the strait and narrow path.

About a year ago, I visited with a mother of young children who decided to take a proactive approach to inoculating her children against the many negative influences they were being exposed to online and at school. She chooses a topic each week, often one that has generated a lot of discussion online, and she initiates meaningful discussions during the week when her children can ask questions and she can make sure they’re getting a balanced and fair perspective on the often-difficult issues. She is making her home a safe place to raise questions and have meaningful gospel instruction.

I worry that we live in such an atmosphere of avoiding offense that we sometimes altogether avoid teaching correct principles. We fail to teach our young women that preparing to be a mother is of utmost importance because we don’t want to offend those who aren’t married or those who can’t have children, or to be seen as stifling future choices. On the other hand, we may also fail to emphasize the importance of education because we don’t want to send the message that it is more important than marriage. We avoid declaring that our Heavenly Father defines marriage as being between a man and woman because we don’t want to offend those who experience same-sex

attraction. And we may find it uncomfortable to discuss gender issues or healthy sexuality.

Certainly, sisters, we need to use sensitivity, but let us also use our common sense and our understanding of the plan of salvation to be bold and straightforward when it comes to teaching our children and youth the essential gospel principles they must understand to navigate the world in which they live. If we don't teach our children and youth true doctrine—and teach it clearly—the world will teach them Satan's lies.

I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I am eternally grateful for the direction, power, and daily help I receive as a covenant daughter of God. I testify that the Lord has blessed us, as women who live in these perilous times, with all of the power, gifts, and strength that are needed in order to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that we may all see our true potential and rise up to become the women of faith and courage our Father in Heaven needs us to be. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Fourth Floor, Last Door

God “rewards those who earnestly seek him,” so we need to keep knocking. Sisters, don't give up. Seek God with all your heart.

My dear sisters, dear friends, how blessed we are to assemble again in this worldwide conference under the direction and leadership of our dear prophet and President, Thomas S. Monson. President, we love you and we sustain you! We know you love the sisters of the Church.

I love attending this wonderful session of general conference devoted to the sisters of the Church.

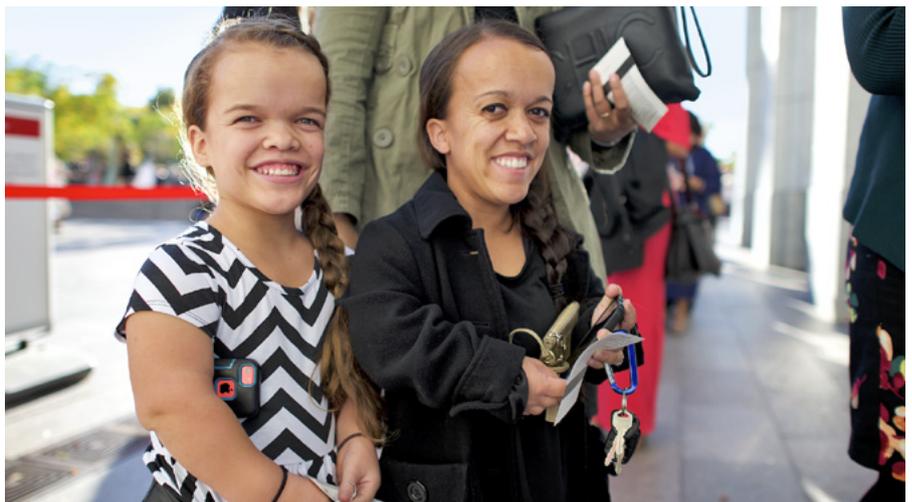
Sisters, when I see you, I cannot help but think of the women who have been so influential in my life: my grandmother and mother, who were the first to accept the invitation to come

and see what the Church is all about.¹ There is my beloved wife, Harriet, with whom I fell in love the first time I saw her. There is Harriet's mother, who joined the Church not long after losing her husband to cancer. Then my sister, my daughter, my granddaughter, and my great-granddaughter—all of these individuals have been refining influences for me. They truly bring sunshine into my life. They inspire me to become a better man and a more sensitive Church leader. How different my life would be without them!

Perhaps what humbles me most is to know that the same influence is

NOTES

1. See “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 324.
2. 2 Timothy 3:1.
3. Mormon 8:39; see also verses 26–38.
4. Mormon 8:38.
5. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
6. Gary E. Stevenson, “Plain and Precious Truths,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 92.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97.
8. Sheri Dew, *Women and the Priesthood: What One Mormon Woman Believes* (2013), 163.
9. See *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 7.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
12. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.



replicated millions of times throughout the Church through the abilities, talents, intelligence, and testimony of women of faith like you.

Now, some of you might not feel worthy of such high praise. You might think you are too insignificant to have a meaningful influence on others. Perhaps you don't even consider yourself a "woman of faith" because you sometimes struggle with doubt or fear.

Today, I wish to speak to anyone who has ever felt this way—and that probably includes all of us at one time or another. I wish to speak of faith—what it is, what it can and cannot do, and what we must do to activate the power of faith in our lives.

What Faith Is

Faith is a strong conviction about something we believe—a conviction so strong that it moves us to do things that we otherwise might not do. "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."²

While this makes sense to believing people, it is often confusing to non-believers. They shake their heads and ask, "How can anyone be certain of what they cannot see?" To them, this is evidence of the irrationality of religion.

What they fail to understand is that there are more ways to see than with our eyes, more ways to feel than with our hands, more ways to hear than with our ears.

It's something like the experience of a young girl who was walking with her grandmother. The song of the birds was glorious to the little girl, and she pointed out every sound to her grandmother.

"Do you hear that?" the little girl asked again and again. But her grandmother was hard of hearing and could not make out the sounds.



Finally, the grandmother knelt down and said, "I'm sorry, dear. Grandma doesn't hear so well."

Exasperated, the little girl took her grandmother's face in her hands, looked intently into her eyes, and said, "Grandma, listen harder!"

There are lessons in this story for both the nonbeliever and the believer. Just because we can't hear something doesn't mean there is nothing to hear. Two people can listen to the same message or read the same scripture, and one might feel the witness of the Spirit while the other doesn't.

On the other hand, in our efforts to help our loved ones experience the voice of the Spirit and the vast, eternal, and profound beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ, telling them to "listen harder" may not be the most helpful way.

Perhaps better advice—for anyone who wants to increase faith—is to listen *differently*. The Apostle Paul encourages us to seek the voice that speaks to our spirit, not just to our ears. He taught, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."³ Or perhaps we should consider the words of Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince*, who said: "One sees clearly only with the

heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes."⁴

The Power and Limits of Faith

Sometimes it's not easy to develop faith in spiritual things while living in a physical world. But it is worth the effort because the power of faith in our lives can be profound. The scriptures teach us that through faith the worlds were framed, waters were parted, dead were raised, and rivers and mountains were moved from their course.⁵

Yet some might ask, "If faith is so powerful, why can't I receive an answer to a heartfelt prayer? I don't need a sea to part or a mountain to move. I just need my illness to go away or my parents to forgive each other or an eternal companion to appear on my doorstep with a bouquet of flowers in one hand and an engagement ring in the other. Why can't my faith accomplish *that*?"

Faith *is* powerful, and often it does result in miracles. But no matter how much faith we have, there are two things faith cannot do. For one, it cannot violate another person's agency.

One woman prayed for years that her wayward daughter would return to the fold of Christ and felt discouraged that her prayers had seemingly gone unanswered. This was especially painful when she heard stories of other

prodigal children who had repented of their ways.

The problem was not a lack of prayers or a shortage of faith. She needed only to understand that, as painful as it might be for our Father in Heaven, He will not force anyone to choose the path of righteousness. God did not force His own children to follow Him in the premortal world. How much less will He force us now as we journey through this mortal life?

God will invite, persuade. God will reach out tirelessly with love and inspiration and encouragement. But God will never compel—that would undermine His great plan for our eternal growth.

The second thing faith cannot do is force our will upon God. We cannot force God to comply with our desires—no matter how right we think we are or how sincerely we pray. Consider the experience of Paul, who pleaded with the Lord multiple times for relief from a personal trial—what he called “a thorn in the flesh.” But that was not God’s will. Eventually, Paul realized that his trial was a blessing, and he thanked God for not answering his prayers the way he had hoped.⁶

Trust and Faith

No, the purpose of faith is not to *change* God’s will but to empower us to *act on* God’s will. Faith is trust—trust that God sees what we cannot and that He knows what we do not.⁷ Sometimes, trusting our own vision and judgment is not enough.

I learned this as an airline pilot on days when I had to fly into thick fog or clouds and could see only a few feet ahead. I had to rely on the instruments that told me where I was and where I was headed. I had to listen to the voice of air traffic control. I had to follow the guidance of someone with

more accurate information than I had. Someone whom I could not see but whom I had learned to trust. Someone who could see what I could not. I had to trust and act accordingly to arrive safely at my destination.

Faith means that we trust not only in God’s wisdom but that we trust also in His love. It means trusting that God loves us perfectly, that everything He does—every blessing He gives and every blessing He, for a time, withholds—is for our eternal happiness.⁸

With this kind of faith, though we may not understand why certain things happen or why certain prayers go unanswered, we can know that in the end everything will make sense. “All things [will] work together for good to them that love God.”⁹

All will be made right. All will be well.

We can be certain that answers will come, and we may be confident that we will not only be content with the answers but we will also be overwhelmed by the grace, mercy, generosity, and love of our Heavenly Father for us, His children.

Just Keep Knocking

Until then, we walk by whatever faith we have,¹⁰ seeking always to increase our faith. Sometimes this is not an easy quest. Those who are impatient, uncommitted, or careless may find faith to be elusive. Those who are easily discouraged or distracted may hardly experience it. Faith comes to the humble, the diligent, the enduring.

It comes to those who pay the price of faithfulness.

This truth is illustrated in the experience of two young missionaries serving in Europe, in an area where there were few convert baptisms. I suppose it would have been understandable for them to think that what they did

wouldn’t make much of a difference.

But these two missionaries had *faith*, and they were committed. They had the attitude that if no one listened to their message, it would not be because they had not given their best effort.

One day they had the feeling to approach the residents of a well-kept four-story apartment building. They started on the first floor and knocked on each door, presenting their saving message of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His Church.

No one on the first floor would listen to them.

How easy it would have been to say, “We tried. Let’s stop right here. Let’s go and try another building.”

But these two missionaries had *faith* and they were willing to *work*, and so they knocked on every door on the second floor.

Again, no one would listen.

The third floor was the same. And so was the fourth—that is, until they



The apartment building in Germany where two faithful missionaries knocked on every door.

knocked on the last door of the fourth floor.

When that door opened, a young girl smiled at them and asked them to wait while she spoke with her mother.

Her mother was only 36 years old, had recently lost her husband, and was in no mood to talk with Mormon missionaries. So she told her daughter to send them away.

But the daughter pleaded with her. These young men were so nice, she said. And it would take only a few minutes.

So, reluctantly, the mother agreed. The missionaries delivered their message and handed a book to the mother to read—the Book of Mormon.

After they left, the mother decided she would read at least a few pages.

She finished the entire book within a few days.

Not long after, this wonderful single-parent family entered the waters of baptism.

When the small family attended their local branch in Frankfurt, Germany, a young deacon noticed the beauty of one of the daughters and thought to himself, “These missionaries are doing a great job!”

That young deacon’s name was Dieter Uchtdorf. And the charming

young woman—the one who had pleaded with her mother to listen to the missionaries—has the beautiful name of Harriet. She is loved by all who meet her as she accompanies me in my travels. She has blessed the lives of many people through her love for the gospel and her sparkling personality. She truly is the sunshine of my life.

How often have I lifted my heart in gratitude for the two missionaries who did not stop at the first floor! How often my heart reaches out in appreciation for their *faith* and *work*. How often have I given thanks that they kept going—even to the fourth floor, last door.

It Shall Be Opened unto You

In our search for enduring faith, in our quest to connect with God and His purposes, let us remember the Lord’s promise: “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”¹¹

Will we give up after knocking on a door or two? A floor or two?

Or will we keep seeking until we have reached the fourth floor, last door?

God “rewards those who earnestly seek him,”¹² but that reward is not usually behind the first door. So we need to keep knocking. Sisters, don’t give up. Seek God with all your heart. Exercise faith. Walk in righteousness.

I promise that if you will do this—even until the fourth floor, last door—you will receive the answers you seek. You will find faith. And one day you will be filled with light that grows “brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”¹³

My beloved sisters in Christ, God is real.

He lives.

He loves you.

He knows you.

He understands you.

He knows the silent pleadings of your heart.

He has not abandoned you.

He will not forsake you.

It is my testimony and apostolic blessing to each one of you that you will feel in your heart and mind this sublime truth for yourselves. Live in faith, dear friends, dear sisters, and “the Lord [our] God [will] increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised!”¹⁴

I leave you my faith, my conviction, and my certain and unshakable witness that this is the work of God. In the sacred name of our beloved Savior, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Opportunity to Testify,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 74; *Sister Eternal* (2005).
2. Hebrews 11:1, New International Version (1984).
3. 1 Corinthians 2:14, New International Version (2011).
4. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Richard Howard (2000), 63.
5. See Hebrews 11:3, 5, 29, 35; Ether 12:30; Moses 7:13.
6. See 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.
7. See Isaiah 55:8–9.
8. See 2 Nephi 26:24.
9. See Romans 8:28.
10. See 2 Corinthians 5:7.
11. Matthew 7:7.
12. Hebrews 11:6, New International Version (1984).
13. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
14. Deuteronomy 1:11, New International Version (2011).



Sister Harriet Uchtdorf (center) as a young girl with her mother, her sister, and full-time missionaries.



Sister Uchtdorf accompanies President Uchtdorf in his travels and blesses lives while sharing her love for the gospel.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

O How Great the Plan of Our God!

We are surrounded by such an astonishing wealth of light and truth that I wonder if we truly appreciate what we have.

How blessed we are to assemble again in this worldwide conference under the direction and leadership of our dear prophet and President, Thomas S. Monson. President, we love you and we sustain you with all our hearts!

During my professional life as a pilot, I relied greatly on the precision and reliability of computer systems but rarely had to work my own personal computer. In my office work as an executive, I had assistants and secretaries who kindly helped me with the tasks.

All this changed in 1994, when I was called as a General Authority. My calling consisted of many wonderful opportunities to minister, but it also included a great deal of Church office work—more than I ever thought possible.

To my shock, the main tool to stay on top of my work was a personal computer.

For the first time in my life, I had to delve into this strange, mystifying, incomprehensible world.

From the start, the computer and I were not on the friendliest of terms.

Able tech people tried to teach me how to use the computer. They literally stood behind me, reaching over my shoulder, their fingers moving quickly and tapping a percussive symphony against the keyboard.

“See?” they would say proudly. “That’s how you do it.”

I did not see. It was a rocky transition.

My learning curve was more like a brick wall.

It took a great deal of time, repetition, patience; no small amount of

hope and faith; lots of reassurance from my wife; and many liters of a diet soda that shall remain nameless.

Now, 22 years later, I am surrounded by computer technology. I have an email address, a Twitter account, and a Facebook page. I own a smartphone, a tablet, a laptop, and a digital camera. And, while my tech skills may not quite measure up to those of a typical seven-year-old, for a septuagenarian, I do all right.

But I have noticed something interesting. The more adept I get at technology, the more I take it for granted.

For a large part of human history, communication happened at the speed of a horse. Sending a message and getting a reply could take days or even months. Today our messages travel thousands of miles into the sky or thousands of meters beneath the oceans to reach someone on the other side of the world, and if there is a delay of even a few seconds, we get frustrated and impatient.

It seems to be human nature: as we become more familiar with something, even something miraculous and





awe-inspiring, we lose our sense of awe and treat it as commonplace.

Do We Take Spiritual Truths for Granted?

Taking for granted our modern technologies and conveniences may be a relatively small matter. But, sadly, we sometimes take a similar attitude toward the eternal and soul-expanding doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Church of Jesus Christ, we have been given so much. We are surrounded by such an astonishing wealth of light and truth that I wonder if we truly appreciate what we have.

Think of those early disciples who walked and talked with the Savior during His earthly ministry. Imagine the thanksgiving and reverence that must have flooded their hearts and filled their minds when they saw Him risen from the tomb, when they felt the wounds in His hands. Their lives would never be the same!

Think of the early Saints of this dispensation who knew the Prophet Joseph Smith and heard him preach the restored gospel. Imagine how they must have felt to know that the veil between heaven and earth had parted again, shedding light and knowledge upon the world from our celestial home above.

But most of all, think of how you felt when for the first time you believed and understood that you are truly a child of God; that Jesus Christ willingly suffered for *your* sins so that you may be clean again; that priesthood power is real and can bind you to your loved ones for time and for all eternity; that there is a living prophet on the earth today. Isn't that wonderful and amazing?

Considering all of this, how could it ever be possible that we of all people would not be excited about attending our Church worship services? Or get tired of reading the holy scriptures? I suppose this could be possible only if

our hearts were *past feeling* to experience gratitude and awe for the sacred and sublime gifts God has granted us. Life-changing truths are before our eyes and at our fingertips, but sometimes we sleepwalk on the path of discipleship. Too often we let ourselves be distracted by the imperfections of our fellow members instead of following the example of our Master. We tread a path covered with diamonds, but we can scarcely distinguish them from ordinary pebbles.

A Familiar Message

When I was a young man, my friends would ask me about my religion. Often I would start to explain the differences, like the Word of Wisdom. Other times I would emphasize the similarities with other Christian religions. None of this would impress them very much. But when I talked about the great plan of happiness our Father in Heaven has for us as His children, I had their attention.

I remember trying to draw the plan of salvation on a blackboard in a classroom of our chapel in Frankfurt, Germany. I made circles that represented premortal life, mortality, and the return to our Heavenly Parents after this life.

As a teenager, how I loved to share this exciting message. When I explained these principles in my own simple words, my heart would overflow with gratitude for a God who loves His children and a Savior who redeemed all of us from death and hell. I was so proud of this message of love, joy, and hope.

Some of my friends would say that this message felt familiar, even though such things were never taught in their religious upbringing. It was as if they had always known these things to be

true, as if I was simply casting light on something that was always and deeply rooted in their hearts.

We Have Answers!

I believe every human being carries in his or her heart some form of fundamental questions regarding life itself. Where did I come from? Why am I here? What will happen after I die?

These kinds of questions have been asked by mortals since the dawn of time. Philosophers, scholars, and pundits have spent their lives and fortunes seeking for answers.

I am grateful that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ has answers to the most complex questions in life. These answers are taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are true, plain, straightforward, and easy to understand. They are inspired, and we teach them to our three-year-olds in the Sunbeam class.

Brothers and sisters, we are eternal beings, without beginning and without end. We have always existed.¹ We are the literal spirit children of divine, immortal, and omnipotent Heavenly Parents!

We come from the heavenly courts of the Lord our God. We are of the royal house of Elohim, the Most High God. We walked with Him in our pre-mortal life. We heard Him speak, witnessed His majesty, learned His ways.

You and I participated in a Grand Council where our beloved Father presented His plan for us—that we would come to earth, receive mortal bodies, learn to choose between good and evil, and progress in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

When we passed through the veil and entered this mortal life, we knew that we would no longer remember the life before. There would be opposition

and adversity and temptation. But we also knew that gaining a physical body was of paramount importance for us. Oh, how we hoped that we would quickly learn to make the correct choices, withstand the temptations of Satan, and eventually return to our beloved Parents in Heaven.

We knew we would sin and make mistakes—perhaps even serious ones. But we also knew that our Savior, Jesus Christ, had pledged to come to earth, live a sinless life, and voluntarily lay down His life in an eternal sacrifice. We knew that if we gave our heart to Him, trusted Him, and strived with all the energy of our soul to walk in the path of discipleship, we could be washed clean and once again enter the presence of our beloved Father in Heaven.

So, with faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you and I accepted, by our free will, Heavenly Father's plan.

That is why we are here on this beautiful planet earth—because God offered us the opportunity, and we chose to accept it. Our mortal life, however, is only temporary and will end with the death of our physical body. But the essence of who you and I are will not be destroyed. Our spirits will continue living and await the Resurrection—a free gift to all by our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.² At the Resurrection, our spirits and bodies will be reunited, free from pain and physical imperfections.

After the Resurrection, there will be a Day of Judgment. While all will eventually be saved and inherit a kingdom of glory, those who trust in God and seek to follow His laws and ordinances will inherit lives in the eternities that are unimaginable in glory and overwhelming in majesty.

That Day of Judgment will be a day of mercy and love—a day when



broken hearts are healed, when tears of grief are replaced with tears of gratitude, when all will be made right.³

Yes, there will be deep sorrow because of sin. Yes, there will be regrets and even anguish because of our mistakes, our foolishness, and our stubbornness that caused us to miss opportunities for a much greater future.

But I have confidence that we will not only be satisfied with the judgment of God; we will also be astonished and overwhelmed by His infinite grace, mercy, generosity, and love for us, His children. If our desires and works are good, if we have faith in a living God, then we can look forward to what Moroni called “the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge.”⁴

Pro Tanto Quid Retribuamus

My beloved brothers and sisters, my dear friends, does it not fill our hearts and minds with wonder and awe to contemplate the great plan of happiness our Heavenly Father has prepared for us? Does it not fill us with unspeakable joy to know of the glorious future that is prepared for all who wait upon the Lord?

If you have never felt such wonder and joy, I invite you to seek, study, and ponder the simple yet profound truths of the restored gospel. “Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.”⁵



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

Let them bear testimony unto you of the divine plan of salvation.

If you have felt these things before, I ask you today, “Can [you] feel so now?”⁶

Recently I had the opportunity to travel to Belfast, Northern Ireland. While there, I noticed the Belfast Coat of Arms, which includes the motto “Pro tanto quid retribuamus,” or “What shall we give in return for so much?”⁷

I invite each of us to consider this question. What shall we give in return for the flood of light and truth God has poured out upon us?

Our beloved Father simply asks that we live by the truth we have received and that we follow the path He has provided. Therefore, let us take courage and trust in the guidance of the Spirit. Let us in word and in deed share with our fellowmen the amazing and awe-inspiring message of God’s plan of happiness. May our motive be our love for God and for His children, for they are our brothers and sisters. This is the beginning of what we can do in return for so much.

Someday “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” that God’s ways are just and His plan is perfect.⁸ For you and me, let that day be today. Let us proclaim, with Jacob of old, “O how great the plan of our God!”⁹

Of this I testify in deep gratitude to our Heavenly Father, as I leave you my blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:29.
2. See John 5:28–29.
3. See Revelation 21:4.
4. Moroni 10:34.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 43:34.
6. Alma 5:26.
7. See Psalm 116:12.
8. Mosiah 27:31.
9. 2 Nephi 9:13; see also verses 8–12, 14–20.

“Come, Follow Me” by Practicing Christian Love and Service

As the Savior’s latter-day disciples, we come unto Him by loving and serving God’s children.

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was in the hospital recovering from open-heart surgery when he was visited by his five-year-old grandson. As the little boy looked into his grandfather’s eyes, he saw his pain. “Grandpa,” he asked, “if I loved you more, would you [hurt less]?”¹ Today I ask a similar question of each of us: “If we love the Savior more, will we suffer less?”

When the Savior called His disciples to follow Him, they were living the law of Moses, including seeking “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,”² but the Savior came to fulfill that law with His Atonement. He taught a new doctrine: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”³

The disciples were taught to turn from the ways of the natural man to the loving and caring ways of the Savior by replacing contention with forgiveness, kindness, and compassion. The “new commandment” to “love one another”⁴ was not always easy to keep. When the

disciples worried about associating with sinners and certain classes of people, the Savior patiently taught, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁵ Or, as a Book of Mormon prophet explained, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”⁶

As the Savior’s latter-day disciples, we come unto Him by loving and serving





God's children. As we do, we may not be able to avoid tribulation, affliction, and suffering in the flesh, but we will suffer less spiritually. Even in our trials we can experience joy and peace.

Our Christian love and service naturally begin in the home. Parents, you are called to be loving teachers and missionaries to your children and youth. They are your investigators. You bear the responsibility to help them become converted. In truth, all of us are seeking to be converted—which means being filled with our Savior's love.

As we follow Jesus Christ, His love motivates us to support each other on our mortal journey. We cannot do it alone.⁷ You have heard me share the Quaker proverb before: Three lift me, I'll lift thee, and we'll ascend together eternally.⁸ As disciples, we begin to do this when we are baptized, showing our willingness "to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light."⁹

"Teach[ing] one another the doctrine of the kingdom"¹⁰ is a way to love and serve each other. Parents and grandparents, we tend to bemoan the state of the world—that schools are not teaching moral character. But there is much *we* can do. *We* can take advantage of the teaching moments in our

own families—that means now. Don't let them slip by. When an opportunity comes to share your thoughts about the gospel and the lessons of life, stop everything, sit down, and talk with your children and grandchildren.

We should not worry that we are not professionally trained gospel teachers. No training class or manual is as helpful as personally studying our scriptures, praying, pondering, and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will lead you along. I promise you: the calling to be a parent includes the gift to teach in the ways that are right for you and for your children. Remember, God's power to influence us righteously is His love. "We love him, because he first loved us."¹¹

Youth, you are some of our most effective gospel teachers. You come to church to learn so that you can go home to teach and serve your family, neighbors, and friends. Don't be afraid. Have faith to testify of what you know to be true. Think how full-time missionaries grow because they are faithfully living a consecrated life—using their time and talents and bearing testimony to serve and bless others. As you share your testimony of the gospel, your faith will grow and your confidence will increase!

Some of our most impactful Christian service is given by holding family scripture study, family prayer, and family council meetings. For more than a hundred years, Church leaders have called us to set aside uninterrupted time each week. But many of us are still missing the blessings. Family home evening is not a lecture from Mom and Dad. It is our family time to share simple spiritual concepts and experiences, to help our children learn to care and share, have fun together, bear testimony together, and grow and progress together. As we hold family home evening every week, our love for one another will grow stronger and we will suffer less.

Let us remember, the most important work we do in our families is through the power of the Holy Ghost. Whenever we raise our voices in anger, the Spirit leaves our companionships and families. When we speak in love, the Spirit can be with us. Let us remember that our children and grandchildren measure our love by how much devoted time we give them. Above all, don't lose patience and don't give up!

The scriptures tell us that when some of Heavenly Father's spirit



children chose not to follow His plan, the heavens wept.¹² Some parents who have loved and taught their children also weep when their grown children choose not to follow the Lord's plan. What can parents do? We cannot pray away another's agency. Remember the father of the prodigal son, who patiently waited for his son to "[come] to himself," all the while watching for him. And "when he was yet a great way off," he ran to him.¹³ We can pray for guidance about when to speak, what to say, and yes, on some occasions, when to be still. Remember, our children and family members already chose to follow the Savior in their premortal realm. Sometimes it is only by their own life's experiences that those sacred feelings are awakened again. Ultimately, the choice to love and follow the Lord has to be their own.

There is another special way disciples show their love for the Savior. Today I pay tribute to all who serve the Lord as caregivers. How the Lord loves you! In your quiet, unheralded service, you are following Him who promised, "Thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly."¹⁴

I think of my neighbor whose wife was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Every Sunday he would help her dress for Church meetings, comb her hair, apply her makeup, even put on her earrings. In rendering this service, he was an example to every man and woman in

our ward—in fact, for the world. One day his wife said to him, "I just want to see my husband again and be with him."

He answered, "I am your husband."

And she sweetly replied, "Oh, good!"

I cannot speak of giving care without acknowledging the special caregiver in my life—the Savior's special disciple to me—my eternal companion, Mary. She has given all in compassionate nurturing and love. Her hands reflect His gentle, sustaining touch. I would not be here without her. And with her, I will be able to endure to the end and be with her in eternal life.

If you are suffering deeply, with others or alone, I urge you to let the Savior be your caregiver. Lean on His ample arm.¹⁵ Accept His assurance. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," He promises.¹⁶

Brothers and sisters, if we have not fully done so yet, let us turn more toward forgiveness, kindness, and love. Let us renounce the war that so often rages in the heart of the natural man and proclaim Christ's caring, love, and peace.¹⁷

If "ye have come to the knowledge of the glory [and goodness] of God"¹⁸ and also "the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world,"¹⁹ "ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably. . . . And ye will not suffer your children that . . . they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel

one with another. . . . But ye will teach them . . . to love one another, and to serve one another."²⁰

Just before the Savior's Crucifixion, He taught His Apostles: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"²¹ and "If ye love me, keep my commandments."²²

I testify that the Savior's true posture toward us is the one posed by the outstretched arms of Thorvaldsen's statue *Christus*. He continues to stretch forth His hands,²³ beckoning, "Come, follow me." We follow Him by loving and serving one another and keeping His commandments.

I bear my special witness that He lives and loves us with a perfect love. This is His Church. Thomas S. Monson is His prophet on the earth today. That we may love our Heavenly Father and His Son more, and suffer less, is my prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. In Elie Wiesel, *Open Heart*, trans. Marion Wiesel (2012), 70.
2. Matthew 5:38.
3. Matthew 5:44; see also 3 Nephi 12:44.
4. John 13:34.
5. Matthew 25:40.
6. Mosiah 2:17.
7. See 1 Corinthians 12:12.
8. Adapted from "A Story of the 'Barefoot Boy': Written for J. G. Whittier's Seventieth Birthday," *The Poetical Works of John Townsend Trowbridge* (1869), 227.
9. Mosiah 18:8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77.
11. 1 John 4:19.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:26; Moses 7:37.
13. Luke 15:17, 20.
14. 3 Nephi 13:4; see also Matthew 6:4.
15. See "Lean on My Ample Arm," *Hymns*, no. 120.
16. John 14:18.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 98:16.
18. Mosiah 4:11.
19. Mosiah 4:7.
20. Mosiah 4:13–15.
21. John 13:34.
22. John 14:15; see also John 15:10.
23. See Jacob 6:4.



By Carol F. McConkie

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

The Soul's Sincere Desire

Every moment of precious prayer can be holy time spent with our Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

In the struggles of mortality, we are never left alone to accomplish our work, to fight our battles, to face adversity or unanswered questions. Jesus Christ taught with a parable “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” He told of a judge who did not honor God and did not have any regard for mankind. Repeatedly, a widow came before him, pleading to be avenged of her adversary. For a while, the judge would offer her no relief. But as a result of her faithful, consistent pleading, the judge finally thought, “Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”

Then Jesus explained:

“Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him . . . ?

“I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

And then the Lord asks this question: “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”¹

Prayer is essential to developing faith. When the Lord comes again, will He find a people who know how to pray in faith and who are prepared to receive salvation? “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”² We are children of a loving

Heavenly Father, and we may enjoy personal communion with Him when we pray “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ”³ and then act in accordance with the answers we receive by the promptings of the Holy Ghost. In faith we pray, we listen, and we obey, that we might learn to become one with the Father and the Son.⁴

A prayer of faith opens the way to receive glorious heaven-sent blessings. The Savior taught:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”⁵

If we expect to receive, we must ask, seek, and knock. In his search for truth, Joseph Smith read from the scriptures, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”⁶ In answer to his prayer of faith, the heavens were opened. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, descended in glory and spoke to Joseph Smith, ushering in the dispensation of the fulness of times. For us, miraculous healing, powerful protection, divine knowledge, liberating forgiveness, and precious peace are among the answers

that come when we offer up a “soul’s sincere desire”⁷ in faith.

We pray to our Father in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, thus engaging all three members of the Godhead in our utterances.

We pray to our Heavenly Father and Him only because He is “God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting . . . , the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them.” As our Creator, He gave commandments that we “should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom [we] should worship.”⁸

As you pray to Heavenly Father in faith, “he will console you in your afflictions, . . . [and ye may] feast upon his love.”⁹ President Henry B. Eyring shared that his father’s prayers during a losing battle with cancer taught him the deeply personal relationship between God and His children:

“When the pain became intense, we found him in the morning on his knees by the bed. He had been too weak to get back into bed. He told us he had been praying to ask his Heavenly Father why he had to suffer so much when he had always tried to be good. He said a kindly answer came: ‘God needs brave sons.’

“And so he soldiered on to the end, trusting that God loved him, listened to him, and would lift him up. He was blessed to have known early and to never forget that a loving God is as close as a prayer.”¹⁰

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ because our salvation is in Christ, and “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”¹¹ We come unto the Father in the sacred name of Jesus Christ¹² because He is



our Advocate with the Father and He does plead our cause.¹³ He suffered, bled, and died to glorify His Father, and His merciful petition on our behalf opens the way for each of us to obtain peace in this life and everlasting life in the world to come. He does not want us to suffer longer or endure more trials than needed. He does want us to turn to Him and allow Him to ease our burdens, to heal our hearts, and to cleanse our souls through His purifying power. We never want to take His name in vain with rote and repetitious words. Sincere prayers offered in the holy name of Jesus Christ are an expression of our devoted love, our eternal gratitude, and our steadfast desire to pray as He prayed, to do as He did, and to become as He is.

We pray by the power of the Holy Ghost because “he that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God.”¹⁴ When we pray with faith, the Holy Ghost can guide our thoughts so that our words harmonize with the will of God. “Ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.”¹⁵

“It is not only important that we shall know how to pray, but it is equally important that we shall know how to receive the answer to our prayer, to be discerning, to be alert, to be able to see with clear vision and

understand with clear intention God’s will and purpose concerning us.”¹⁶

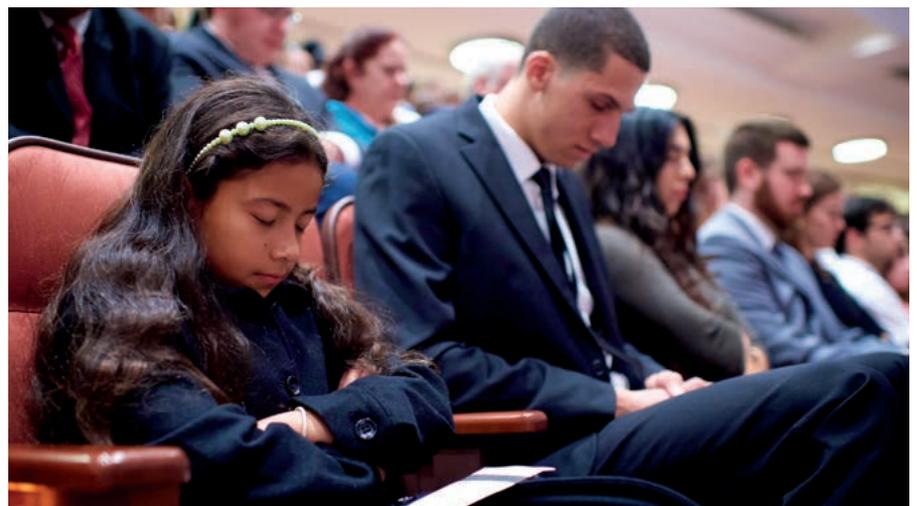
President Eyring shared: “I have had prayers answered. Those answers were most clear when what I wanted was silenced by an overpowering need to know what God wanted. It is then that the answer from a loving Heavenly Father can be spoken to the mind by the still, small voice and can be written on the heart.”¹⁷

As the Savior entered the Garden of Gethsemane, His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. In His agony, the only one He could turn to was His Father. He pleaded, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” But He added, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¹⁸ Though sinless, the Savior was called upon to “[suffer]

pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind,” including the sicknesses and infirmities of His people. “[He] suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.”¹⁹ Three times He prayed, “Father, thy will be done.”²⁰ The cup was not removed. In humble, faithful prayer He was strengthened to go forward and fulfill His divine mission to prepare for our salvation, that we might repent, believe, obey, and obtain the blessings of eternity.

The answers we receive in prayer may not be what we would desire. But in times of trouble, our prayers become a lifeline of love and tender mercy. In our pleading, we may be strengthened to go forward and fulfill all that we have been ordained to do. To His Saints living in perilous times, the Lord says, “Let your hearts be comforted . . . ; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God.”²¹

Whether we pray privately, with our families, at church, in the temple, or wherever we are; whether we pray with broken hearts and contrite spirits



seeking forgiveness, heavenly wisdom, or simply the strength to endure, we pray *always* with full hearts, drawn out unto God continually for our welfare and the welfare of those around us. Sincere desires offered in a spirit of gratitude for abundant blessings and gratitude for the lessons of life instill in our hearts steadfast faith in Christ, a “brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.”²²

Prayer is a gift from God. We need never feel lost or alone. I testify that every moment of precious prayer can be holy time spent with our Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Luke 18:1–8; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 18:8 (in Luke 18:8, footnote *a*).
2. Romans 10:13.
3. Moroni 10:4.
4. See John 17:21–23. The Savior prayed that we would become one with the Father and the Son and be made perfect. We obtain unity with the Father and the Son as we believe the words of Christ and act in faith.
5. Matthew 7:7–8.
6. James 1:5.
7. “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” *Hymns*, no. 145.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:17, 19.
9. Jacob 3:1–2.
10. Henry B. Eyring, “Families and Prayer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2015, 4.
11. Acts 4:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:19–20.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 46:30.
15. Mormon 9:28.
16. Melvin J. Ballard, “Our Channels of Power and Strength,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1923, 992; quoted in M. Russell Ballard, *Yesterday, Today, and Forever* (2015), 133.
17. Henry B. Eyring, “Write upon My Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 86; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 100.
18. Matthew 26:39; see also verse 38.
19. Alma 7:11, 13.
20. See Matthew 26:39–44.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
22. 2 Nephi 31:20.



By Elder Craig C. Christensen
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

“A Choice Seer Will I Raise Up”

Because Joseph was a prophet, we have more than a window into heaven—the very doorway to the eternities is open to us.

When Moroni first came to Joseph Smith, he warned that Joseph’s “name should be had for good and evil among all nations.”¹ We have seen the fulfillment of that prophecy. In the war between good and evil, the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith has both inspired believers who follow him and also provoked antagonists who fight furiously against the cause of Zion and against Joseph himself. This battle is not new. It began soon after young Joseph walked into the Sacred Grove and continues today with added visibility on the internet.

The Lord personally declared to Joseph Smith:

“The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.”²

Today I offer my testimony to all who seek to better understand the

sacred mission of Joseph Smith Jr., the Prophet of the Restoration.

We need not be timid about testifying of Joseph’s mission as prophet, seer, and revelator, for the Lord has always worked through prophets.³ Because of the truths restored through Joseph Smith, we know much more about our Heavenly Father and the Savior Jesus Christ. We know of Their divine attributes, Their relationship to each other and to us, and the great plan of redemption that allows us to return to Their presence.

Of Joseph, President Brigham Young declared: “It was decreed in the councils of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people and receive the fullness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eye upon him . . . [for he] was foreordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation.”⁴

In preparation for this great work, Joseph Smith was born into a loving family who experienced many of the everyday burdens and trials of life. As



the Holy Ghost that we can “know the truth of all things.”¹¹

For many of us, a witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith begins as we read the Book of Mormon. I first read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover as a young early-morning seminary student. With my vivid boyish imagination, I decided to read as if I were Joseph Smith, discovering the truths in the Book of Mormon for the very first time. It had such an impact on my life that I continue to read the Book of Mormon in that way. I often find that doing so deepens my appreciation for the Prophet Joseph and for the truths restored in this precious book.

For example, imagine Joseph’s feelings as he translated passages about baptism for the remission of sins. Joseph, who had been told not to join any of the existing churches, naturally had questions about this saving ordinance. His questions led him, once again, to pray, and that prayer led to a visit from John the Baptist, who restored the Aaronic Priesthood and the authority to baptize.¹²

Or consider how Joseph might have felt when he learned for the first time that Jesus Christ visited the people of the Western Hemisphere—that He taught them, prayed for them, healed their sick, blessed their children, conferred priesthood authority, and administered the sacrament unto them.¹³ Joseph may not have realized it at the time, but what he learned about the ordinances and organization of Christ’s ancient Church prepared him to later assist the Lord in restoring that same Church to the earth.

During the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph and his wife Emma mourned the death of their infant son. In those days preachers commonly taught that children who died without

Joseph began to mature, his feelings toward God “were deep and often poignant,”⁵ yet he was confused by conflicting religious ideas taught by the preachers of his day. Fortunately, young Joseph did not let his questions paralyze his faith. He sought answers in the Bible and found this counsel: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”⁶

Joseph recalled: “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again.”⁷

With simple faith, Joseph acted on these spiritual feelings. He found a secluded place, knelt down, “and began to offer up the desires of [his] heart to God.”⁸ There is great power in Joseph’s description of what happened:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁹

Joseph Smith saw God, the Eternal Father, and Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. This was Joseph’s *First Vision*. In the years that followed, Joseph translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. Numerous other heavenly beings visited him, restoring truths and authority that had been lost for centuries. These divine communications to Joseph Smith opened the windows of heaven and the glories of eternity to our view. Joseph’s life stands as a testimony that if any of us lack wisdom, we can ask God in faith and receive answers—sometimes from heavenly beings but more often by the power of the Holy Ghost, who speaks to us through inspired thoughts and feelings.¹⁰ It is through

baptism would be condemned forever. With this in mind, imagine how Joseph must have felt as he translated these words from the prophet Mormon: “Little children need no repentance, neither baptism. . . . [For] little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world.”¹⁴

Perhaps the most stunning passage in the Book of Mormon to young Joseph may have been the third chapter of 2 Nephi. This chapter contains an ancient prophecy about a “choice seer” whom the Lord would raise up in the latter days—a seer named Joseph, named after his father. This future prophet would be “esteemed highly” and would do a work “of great worth” unto his people. He would “be great like unto Moses” and would be given “power to bring forth [God’s] word.”¹⁵ Consider how Joseph Smith must have felt as he realized that this prophecy was about *him*! He was not just translating history; he was translating a vision of the last days, of the miraculous Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ—and *Joseph himself would help fulfill it!*

Today, almost 200 years later, it’s easy to see how this prophecy has been realized. We know about the great things Joseph accomplished as the Lord’s prophet. But remember that when Joseph translated this prophecy, he had done few of the things the prophets foretold. He was still a young man in his early 20s. The Church had not yet been organized. There were no wards or branches, no missionaries, and no temples. Hardly anyone had heard of Joseph Smith, and some of those who had, actively opposed him. Now look at the great work the Lord has wrought by the hand of His servant Joseph, notwithstanding the opposition against him. Is not the



fulfillment of this prophecy compelling evidence of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith?

To any who may be questioning their testimony of Joseph Smith or are struggling with erroneous, misleading, or superficial information about his life and ministry, I invite you to consider the fruits—the many blessings that have come to us through the miraculous mission of Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration.

Because Joseph was a prophet, revelations and prophets are no longer a thing of the past. The “day of miracles”—of visions, healings, and ministering of angels—has not ceased.¹⁶

Because Joseph was a prophet, each of us has access to the power and blessings of the holy priesthood, including baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrament.

Because Joseph was a prophet, we have the blessings and ordinances of the temple that bind us to God, make us His people, and manifest to us “the power of godliness,” making it possible one day to “see the face of God, even the Father, and live.”¹⁷

Because Joseph was a prophet, we know that marriage and family are an essential part of God’s plan for our happiness. We know that through temple ordinances and covenants, our



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cherished family relationships can endure eternally.

Because Joseph was a prophet, we have more than a window into heaven—the very doorway to the eternities is open to us. We can know “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He has] sent.”¹⁸ Eternal life can be ours.

Most of all, because Joseph was a prophet, we have witness upon witness, testimony upon testimony, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world. We have an unbroken chain of special witnesses of Jesus Christ, including our prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson; the counselors in the First Presidency; and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To their witnesses, I add my humble yet certain testimony: Jesus Christ lives and leads His Church. Joseph Smith was and is the Prophet of the Restoration. The priesthood and authority of God are again on the earth. May we fearlessly declare our witness and our gratitude for this wonderful prophet, seer, and revelator of the Lord is my prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 122:1–2.
3. See Amos 3:7.
4. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 26, 1859, 266; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 544.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:8.
6. James 1:5.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:12.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:15.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
11. Moroni 10:5.
12. See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72.
13. See 3 Nephi 11–20.
14. Moroni 8:11–12.
15. See 2 Nephi 3:6–15.
16. See Moroni 7:35–37; Articles of Faith 1:7.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:21–22.
18. John 17:3.

The Lord Jesus Christ Teaches Us to Pray

When you pray, are you really praying or just saying prayers?

In 1977, I was serving as a full-time missionary in Cusco, Peru. My companion and I received approval to take all the missionaries in the Cusco zone to the magnificent Machu Picchu ruins.

Towards the end of our visit to the ruins, some of the missionaries wanted to go to the Inca Bridge, part of a mountain trail. Immediately, I felt in my heart the Spirit constraining me not to go there. The trail was on the side of a mountain with a 2,000-foot (610 m) drop-off. In several areas the trail was only wide enough for one person to pass at a time. My companion and I

told them that we should not go to the Inca Bridge.

However, the missionaries insisted that we go. The pleadings became more intense, and despite what the Spirit had indicated to me, I gave in to the peer pressure and told them that we would visit the bridge but only if we were very careful.

We entered the trail that leads to the Inca Bridge with me at the end of the group, and at first everyone walked slowly, as agreed. Then the missionaries started to walk very fast and even run. They ignored my petitions to slow



down. I felt obligated to catch up to them, to tell them that we had to turn back. I was far behind them, and I had to run fast to catch up with them.

As I came around a turn, in a passage too narrow for two to walk, I found a missionary standing still with his back against the rocks. I asked him why he was standing there. He told me he had received an impression to remain in that spot for a moment and that I should go on.

I felt the urgency to catch up to those ahead of us, so he helped me to pass him, and I was able to get a little farther down the trail. I noticed that the ground was full of greenery. I planted my right foot on the ground, realizing, as I fell, that there was no ground underneath the greenery. I desperately grabbed onto some branches that were underneath the trail. For a moment I could see down, some 2,000 feet below me, the Urubamba River, which crosses the Sacred Valley of the Incas. I felt as if my strength had left me, and it was only a matter of time before I could not hold on anymore. In that moment, I prayed intensely. It was a very brief prayer. I opened my mouth and said, "Father, help me!"

The branches were not strong enough to support the weight of my body. I knew the end was near. In the *very* moment when I was about to fall, I felt a firm hand take me by the arm and pull me up. With that help I was able to continue fighting and get myself back on the trail. The missionary who had stayed behind was the one who saved me.

But in reality our Father in Heaven saved me. He listened to my voice. I had heard the voice of the Spirit three times before, telling me not to go to the Inca Bridge, but I had not obeyed that voice. I was in shock, I was pale, and I did not



know what to say. Then I remembered that the other missionaries were ahead of us, and so we went looking for them until we found them and told them what had happened to me.

We returned to Machu Picchu very carefully and in silence. On the return trip I remained silent, and the idea came to my mind that He had paid attention to my voice but that I had not paid any attention to His. There was a deep pain in my heart for disobeying His voice and at the same time a deep sense of gratitude for His mercy. He did not exercise His justice upon me, but in His great mercy, He had saved my life (see Alma 26:20).

At the end of the day, when it was time for my personal prayer, I prayed from the heart to "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). I prayed "with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ" (Moroni 10:4).

In the early morning of that same day, I had prayed with my lips, and when I was about to perish, I prayed from the heart to Him. I pondered my life to that point. I found that on many occasions, our Father in Heaven had been so merciful to me. He taught me many lessons that day in Machu Picchu and in Cusco, Peru. One of the greatest lessons was that I should always,

always pray "with a sincere heart, with real intent, [exercising] faith in Christ."

On one occasion the Lord Jesus Christ "was praying in a certain place," and "when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Then He taught His disciples to pray. And today He teaches you and me to pray as we see Him in our minds praying in Gethsemane and saying, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). When you pray, do you really, truly want that "not my will, but thine, be done"?

Paul describes how Jesus prayed "in the days of his flesh," especially in Gethsemane: "When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). When you pray, are you really praying or just saying prayers? Are you superficial with your prayers?

Jesus prayed intensely and spoke with His Father. "It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened" (Luke 3:21). When you pray, do you feel like heaven is opened? When was the last time you felt that connection with heaven?

Jesus prepared Himself to make important decisions by praying to His Father.



By Elder J. Devn Cornish
Of the Seventy

“He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve” (Luke 6:12–13).

Do you prepare yourself to make important decisions by praying to your Heavenly Father? Do you prepare yourself for a moment of prayer?

When Jesus came to the American continent, He taught the people to pray. “And Jesus said unto them: Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray” (3 Nephi 19:26).

Jesus invites us to “pray always” (D&C 10:5). Jesus knows that our Heavenly Father hears and gives what is best for us. Why is it that sometimes we don’t want to receive? Why?

At the very moment we say, “Father in Heaven,” He hears our prayers and is sensitive to us and our needs. And so His eyes and His ears are now connected to you. He reads our minds, and He feels our hearts. You cannot hide anything from Him. Now, the wonderful thing is that He will see you with eyes of love and mercy—love and mercy that we cannot fully understand. But love and mercy are with Him the very moment you say, “Father in Heaven.”

So a moment of prayer is a very, very sacred moment. He is not one to say, “No, I will not listen to you now because you only come to me when you are in trouble.” Only men do that. He is not one to say, “Oh, you cannot imagine how busy I am now.” Only men say that.

That we all may pray as Jesus has taught us to pray is my hope and my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?

If you will really try and will not rationalize or rebel—repenting often and pleading for grace—you positively are going to be “good enough.”

Dear sisters and brothers, what a blessing it is for us to gather to be taught by the Lord’s servants. Isn’t it wonderful how many ways our loving Heavenly Father guides and blesses us? He really wants us to come home.

Through a series of tender mercies as a young doctor coming out of medical school, I was accepted for pediatric

residency training in a high-powered, competitive program. When I met the other interns, I felt like the least intelligent and least prepared of all. I thought there was no way I could measure up to the rest of the group.

Early in our third month, I was sitting in the nurse’s station in the hospital late one night, alternately sobbing to myself and falling asleep as I tried to write the admission orders for a small boy with pneumonia. I had never felt so discouraged in my life. I didn’t have any idea how to treat pneumonia in a 10-year-old. I began to wonder what I was doing there.

Just at that moment, one of the senior residents put his hand on my shoulder. He asked me how I was doing, and I poured out my frustrations and fears. His response changed my life. He told me how proud he and all of the other senior residents were of me and how they felt like I was going to be an excellent doctor. In short, he believed in me at a time when I didn’t even believe in myself.

As with my own experience, our members often ask, “Am I good enough as a person?” or “Will I really





make it to the celestial kingdom?" Of course, there is no such thing as "being good enough." None of us could ever "earn" or "deserve" our salvation, but it is normal to wonder if we are acceptable before the Lord, which is how I understand these questions.

Sometimes when we attend church, we become discouraged even by sincere invitations to improve ourselves. We think silently, "I can't do all these things" or "I will never be as good as all these people." Perhaps we feel much the same as I did in the hospital that night.

Please, my beloved brothers and sisters, we must stop comparing ourselves to others. We torture ourselves needlessly by competing and comparing. We falsely judge our self-worth by the *things* we do or don't have and by the *opinions of others*. If we must compare, let us compare how we were in the past to how we are today—and even to how we want to be in the future. The only opinion of us that matters is what our Heavenly Father thinks of us. Please sincerely ask Him what He thinks of you. He will love and correct but never discourage us; that is Satan's trick.

Let me be direct and clear. The answers to the questions "Am I good

enough?" and "Will I make it?" are "Yes! You are going to be good enough" and "Yes, you are going to make it as long as you keep repenting and do not rationalize or rebel." The God of heaven is not a heartless referee looking for any excuse to throw us out of the game. He is our perfectly loving Father, who yearns more than anything else to have all of His children come back home and live with Him as families forever. He truly gave His Only Begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life!¹ Please believe, and please take hope and comfort from, this eternal truth. Our Heavenly Father intends for us to make it! That is His work and His glory.²

I love the way President Gordon B. Hinckley used to teach this principle. I heard him say on several occasions, "Brothers and sisters, all the Lord expects of us is to try, but you have to *really try!*"³

"Really trying" means doing the best we can, recognizing where we need to improve, and then trying again. By repeatedly doing this, we come closer and closer to the Lord, we feel His Spirit more and more,⁴ and we receive more of His grace, or help.⁵

I sometimes think we don't recognize how very much the Lord wants to help us. I love the words of Elder David A. Bednar, who said:

"Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints. . . .

". . . The Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. . . .

" . . . *It is . . . through the grace of the Lord that individuals . . . receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to [do]. . . . This grace is an enabling power . . .* [Bible Dictionary, "Grace"; emphasis added] . . . or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom."⁶

All we have to do to receive this heavenly help is to ask for it and then to act on the righteous promptings we receive.

The great news is that if we have sincerely repented, our former sins will not keep us from being exalted. Moroni tells us of the transgressors in his day: "But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven."⁷



And the Lord Himself said of the sinner:

“If he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also.

“Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.”⁸

If we will sincerely repent, God really will forgive us, even when we have committed the same sin over and over again. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “However many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made . . . , I testify that you have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”⁹

This does not mean in any way that sin is OK. Sin always has consequences. Sin always harms and hurts both the sinner and those affected by his or her sins. And true repentance is never easy.¹⁰ Moreover, please understand that even though God takes away the guilt and stain of our sins when we sincerely repent, He may not immediately take away all of the consequences of our sins. Sometimes they remain with us for the rest of our lives. And the worst kind of sin is premeditated sin, where one says, “I can sin now

and repent later.” I believe that this is a solemn mockery of the sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Himself declared, “For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”¹¹

And Alma proclaimed, “Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.”¹²

One of the reasons that Alma’s statement is particularly true is that with repeated sinning, we distance ourselves from the Spirit, become discouraged, and then stop repenting. But I repeat, because of the Savior’s Atonement, we can repent and be fully forgiven, as soon as our repentance is sincere.

What we cannot do is rationalize rather than repent. It will not work to justify ourselves in our sins by saying, “God knows it’s just too hard for me, so He accepts me like I am.” “Really trying” means we keep at it as we fully come up to the Lord’s standard, which is clearly defined in the questions we are asked in order to get a temple recommend.

The other thing that will surely keep us out of heaven and separate us from the help we need now is rebellion. From the book of Moses, we learn that Satan was cast out of heaven for rebellion.¹³ We are in rebellion any time we say in our hearts, “I don’t need God, and I don’t have to repent.”

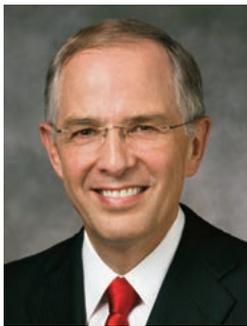
As an intensive care pediatrician, I know that if one inappropriately rejects lifesaving treatment, it can lead needlessly to physical death. Similarly, when we rebel against God, we reject our only help and hope, who is Jesus Christ, which leads to spiritual death. None of us can do this on our own power. None of us will ever be “good enough,” save through the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ,¹⁴ but because God respects our agency, we also

cannot be saved without our trying. That is how the balance between grace and works works. We can have hope in Christ because He wants to help and change us. In fact, He is already helping you. Just pause and reflect and recognize His help in your life.

I witness to you that if you will really try and will not rationalize or rebel—repenting often and pleading for the grace, or help, of Christ—you positively are going to be “good enough,” that is, acceptable before the Lord; you are going to make it to the celestial kingdom, being perfect in Christ; and you are going to receive the blessings and glory and joy that God desires for each of His precious children—including specifically you and me. I testify that God lives and wants us to come home. I testify that Jesus lives. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See John 3:16.
2. See Moses 1:39.
3. This exact phrasing from President Hinckley does not appear in print, but the following is recorded: “Just do the best you can, but be sure it is your very best” (“A Challenging Time—a Wonderful Time,” *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* [Church Educational System manual, 2004], 18). He also said: “Please don’t nag yourself with thoughts of failure. Do not set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. Simply do what you can do, in the best way you know, and the Lord will accept of your effort” (“Rise to the Stature of the Divine within You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 96).
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
5. See Ether 12:27.
6. David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 14.
7. Moroni 6:8.
8. Mosiah 26:29–30.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 33.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
12. Alma 41:10.
13. See Moses 4:3.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:6–8.



By Elder Neil L. Andersen
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

A Witness of God

I suggest that you stop feeling guilty about any insufficiency you think you have in sharing the gospel. Rather, pray “to stand as [a witness] of God.” This is a much stronger motivation than guilt.

Much of the important work of God is unseen in the eyes of the world. The sixth century before Christ brought illustrious thinkers such as Confucius in China and Buddha in Eastern India, but the power of God’s priesthood was upon Daniel, the prophet living in captivity during the reign of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

Troubled by a dream in the night, King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his magicians and sorcerers tell him both what he had dreamed and the interpretation of the dream. Of course, they could not tell the king what he had dreamed, and they protested. “There is not a man upon the earth that can [do this, nor any king that would ask] such things.”¹ King Nebuchadnezzar was furious with their failure and angrily declared that all his counselors would be slain.

Daniel, one of the king’s wise men, prayed for the “mercies of . . . God . . . concerning this secret.”²

A miracle occurred. The secret of what the king had dreamed was revealed to Daniel.

Daniel was taken before the king. “Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen,

and the interpretation thereof?”

Daniel responded:

“The wise men, the astrologers, the magicians [cannot tell you what you dreamed]. . . .

“But there is a God in heaven that [can reveal these things, and He] maketh known to . . . king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. . . .

“The God of heaven,” Daniel said, “[shall] set up a kingdom, [a stone cut out without hands, that will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth,] never [to] be destroyed . . . [but to] stand for ever.

“ . . . The dream,” said Daniel, “is certain, and the interpretation . . . sure.”³

With his dream explained and interpreted, the king spoke boldly, “Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings.”⁴

From the miraculous intervention of God to Daniel came the prophesied future of the gospel of Jesus Christ being restored to the earth, a kingdom that would fill the whole earth, “never [to] be destroyed . . . [but to] stand for ever.”

The number of members of the Church in the latter days would be relatively few, as Nephi prophesied, but they would be upon all the face of the earth, and the power and ordinances of the priesthood would be available to all who desired them, filling the earth as Daniel foretold.⁵

In 1831 the Prophet Joseph Smith received this revelation: “The keys of the kingdom of God [and the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth] are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands



shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.”⁶

A Responsibility We Share

The gathering of Israel is a miracle. It is like an enormous puzzle whose pieces will be set in place prior to the glorious events of the Second Coming. Just as we might be perplexed with a mountain of puzzle pieces, the early Saints must have seen the commission to take the restored gospel to all the world as a nearly impossible task. But they began, one person, one puzzle

piece at a time, finding the straight edges, working to rightly frame this divine work. Little by little, the stone cut without hands began to roll forth; from hundreds to thousands, to tens of thousands, and now millions of covenant Latter-day Saints across every nation are connecting the puzzle pieces of this marvelous work and a wonder.

Each of us is a piece of the puzzle, and each of us helps to set in place other essential pieces. You are important to this great cause. Our view ahead is now clear. We can see the miracle

continuing and the Lord’s hand guiding us as we complete the gaps that remain. Then, “the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done,”⁷ and He will return in majesty and glory.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together . . . to bring souls unto Him. . . . He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work.”⁸

The divinely appointed responsibility that once rested primarily upon the shoulders of full-time missionaries now rests upon us all. We all want to share the restored gospel, and gratefully, thousands are baptized each week. But even with this wonderful blessing, our concern for our brothers and sisters and our desire to please God bring a compelling urgency to share and strengthen the kingdom of God across the world.

The Limits of Guilt

Even with a strong desire to share the gospel, you may be less than happy with the success of your past efforts. You may feel like a friend who said, “I have talked to our family and friends about the Church, but few have shown any interest, and with each rejection, I have become more hesitant. I know I should do more, but I am stuck, and all I feel is enormous guilt.”

Let me see if I can help.

Guilt has an important role as it awakens us to changes we need to make, but there are limits to how far guilt will help us.

Guilt is like a battery in a gasoline-powered car. It can light up the car, start the engine, and power the headlights, but it will not provide the fuel for the long journey ahead. The battery, by itself, is not sufficient. And neither is guilt.

I suggest that you stop feeling guilty about any insufficiency you think you



The gathering of Israel is like an enormous puzzle whose pieces will be set in place prior to the Second Coming. Each of us is a piece of the puzzle, and each of us helps to set in place other essential pieces.

have in sharing the gospel. Rather, pray, like Alma taught, for opportunities “to stand as [a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . that [others] may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, [and] have eternal life.”⁹ This is a much stronger motivation than guilt.

To be a witness of God at all times and in all places reflects both how we live and how we speak.

Be open about your faith in Christ. When the occasion presents itself, speak of His life, His teachings, and His incomparable gift to all mankind. Share His powerful truths from the Book of Mormon. He has given us this promise: “Whosoever . . . shall confess me before men, him will I confess . . . before my Father . . . in heaven.”¹⁰ I promise you that as you pray often and sincerely for opportunities to “stand as a witness of God,” those opportunities will come, and those who seek more light and knowledge will be put before you. As you respond to spiritual promptings, the Holy Ghost will carry your words to the heart of another, and one day the Savior will confess you before His Father.

A Group Effort

The spiritual work of helping someone come into the kingdom of God is a group effort. Enlist the missionaries as soon as you can, and pray for heavenly help. But remember, the timing of another’s conversion is not fully up to you.¹¹

Kamla Persand was from the Mauritius island, attending medical school in Bordeaux, France, when we met her in February of 1991. We had prayed as a family to be able to share the gospel with someone who was seeking the truth, and we taught her in our home. I was privileged to perform her baptism, but we were not the most



The conversion of Diego Gomez (above, front row, third from right) and of Kamla Persand (at right with her family 25 years after her baptism) came with the help and support of many who reached out to them as “witnesses of God.”

significant influences in Kamla joining the Church. Friends, missionaries, and even family members had been “witnesses of God” in her home country, and one day in France, when the time was right for Kamla, she made the decision to be baptized. Now, 25 years later, the blessings of that decision are all around her, and her son is a missionary in Madagascar.

Please don’t see your efforts to share the love of the Savior with another as a pass/fail test with your grade determined by how positively your friends respond to your feelings or invitation to meet the missionaries.¹² With our mortal eyes, we cannot judge the effect of our efforts, nor can we establish the timetable. When you share the love of the Savior with another, your grade is always an A+.

Some governments have restricted the work of missionaries, leading our noble members to show even greater courage in being “witnesses of God at all times and in all . . . places.”

Nadezhda from Moscow often gives others a copy of the Book of Mormon in a gift box with lots of candy packed around it. “I tell them,” she said, “that it is the sweetest gift I could possibly give them.”

Shortly after being baptized in Ukraine, Svetlana had the impression



to share the gospel with a man she frequently saw on the bus. When the man got off at his stop, she asked, “Would you like to know more about God?” The man said, “Yes.” Missionaries taught Viktor, and he was baptized. He and Svetlana were later sealed in the Freiberg Germany Temple.

Be careful; your blessings may come in unexpected ways.

Seven years ago, Kathy and I met Diego Gomez and his beautiful family in Salt Lake City. They attended a temple open house with us but graciously declined our invitation to learn more about the Church. This past May, I received a surprising telephone call from Diego. Events in his life had led him to his knees. He had found the missionaries on his own, taken the discussions, and was ready for baptism. This past June 11, I walked into the waters of baptism with my friend and fellow disciple Diego Gomez. His conversion had



its own timetable and came with the help and support of many who reached out to him as “witnesses of God.”

An Invitation to the Youth

To our amazing youth and young adults across the world, I give a special invitation and challenge to be “witnesses of God.” Those who surround you are open to spiritual inquiry. Remember the puzzle? You do not come to the table with empty hands but with technology and social media at your command. We need you; the Lord needs you to be even more engaged in this great cause.

The Savior said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”¹³

It is not by chance that you live in Africa; Asia; Europe; North, Central, or South America; the Pacific; or another place in God’s world, because the gospel must go to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”¹⁴

“The God of heaven [has] set up a kingdom, [a stone cut out without hands, that has become a great mountain and is filling the whole earth,] never [to] be destroyed . . . [but to] stand for ever.

“ . . . The dream is certain, and the interpretation . . . sure.”¹⁵

I close with words from the Doctrine and Covenants: “Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may

receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down [from] heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God . . . on the earth.”¹⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Daniel 2:10.
2. Daniel 2:18.
3. Daniel 2:26–28, 44–45; see also verses 34–35.
4. Daniel 2:47.
5. See 1 Nephi 14:12–14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2; see also Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 444; see also Boyd K. Packer, “The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 27.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 4.
9. Mosiah 18:9.

10. Matthew 10:32.

11. A month ago I was in Santa Maria, Brazil. Brother João Grahl told me that, as a young man, he had attended church for two years, wanting to be baptized, but his father would not allow it. One day he told his sisters, who had the same desire, that they needed to get on their knees and pray that God would soften the heart of their father. They knelt in prayer and went to school.

When they returned home that day, surprisingly, an uncle, their father’s brother, had come from a distant city. He was in their home talking to their father. With their uncle in the room, the children again asked their father if they could be baptized. Their uncle stepped forward and placed his hand on his younger brother’s shoulder and said, “Reinaldo, it is true. Let them be baptized.” Unknown to any of them, the uncle had been baptized a few months previously.

The uncle was prompted to travel to his brother’s house, and because he “stood as a witness of God” that day, his nieces and nephew were allowed to be baptized. A few weeks later, Reinaldo and his wife were baptized. God answered the prayers of those children in a miraculous way through one who was willing to be “a witness of God.”

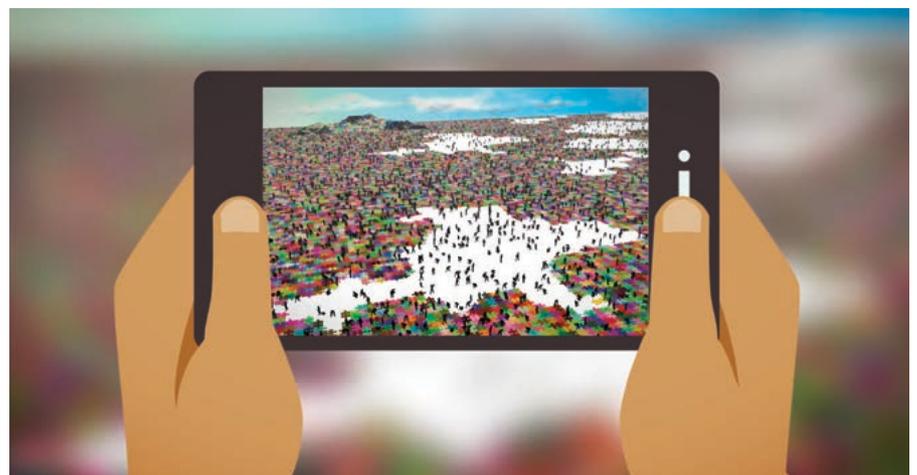
12. “You succeed when you invite, regardless of how it turns out” (Clayton M. Christensen, *The Power of Everyday Missionaries* [2012], 23; see also everydaymissionaries.org).

13. Matthew 28:19.

14. Mosiah 15:28.

15. Daniel 2:44–45; see also verses 34–35.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 65:5.



Youth and young adults across the world come to the table with technology and social media at their command.



Presented by President Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor in the First Presidency

The Sustaining of Church Officers

Brothers and sisters, President Monson has invited me to present the names of the General Officers and Area Seventies of the Church to you 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 may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell Marion 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.

It is proposed that we release with appreciation for their distinguished service Elders Daniel L. Johnson, Jairo Mazzagardi, Kent F. Richards, and Francisco J. Viñas as General Authority Seventies and grant them emeritus status. We note the service of Elder Per G. Malm, who passed away on July 26, 2016. We express our love and heartfelt condolences to Sister Malm and to their children and grandchildren.

Those who wish to join with us in expressing gratitude to these Brethren for their remarkable service, please so manifest.

It is proposed that we release Alan R. Walker as an Area Seventy. Those who wish to express appreciation to Brother Walker for his service, please so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Seventies: Bhanu K. Hiranandani and Sandino Roman.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

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.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

President Monson, the voting has been noted. We invite those who may have opposed any of the proposals to contact their stake presidents.

Brothers and sisters, thank you for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church. ■





By Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Valiant in the Testimony of Jesus

We cannot afford to have our testimonies of the Father and the Son become confused and complicated by stumbling blocks.

Eternal life is the greatest gift of God and is bestowed on those who “keep [God’s] commandments and endure to the end.”¹ On the other hand, eternal life with our Heavenly Father is denied those “who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.”² There are a number of stumbling blocks to our valor that can prevent us from reaching the goal of eternal life.³ Stumbling blocks can be complex; let me illustrate.

Many years ago my father built a small cabin on part of the ranch property where he had been raised. The vistas across the meadows were exceptional. When the walls were framed in for the cabin, I made a visit. I was surprised that the window with the view focused directly on a power pole that was a short distance from the house. To me, it was a huge distraction from the magnificent view.

I said, “Dad, why did you let them put the power pole directly in front of your view from the window?”

My father, an exceptionally practical and calm man, exclaimed with some emotion, “Quentin, that power pole is the most beautiful thing to me on the

entire ranch!” He then made his case: “When I look at that pole, I realize that, unlike when I grew up here, I will not have to carry water in containers from the spring up to the house to cook, wash my hands, or bathe. I will not have to light candles or oil lamps at night to read. I want to see that power pole right in the middle of the view window.”

My father had a different perspective on the power pole than I did. To him

that pole represented an improved life, but to me it was a stumbling block to a magnificent vista. My dad valued power, light, and cleanliness above an aesthetic view. I immediately realized that while the pole was a stumbling block for me, it had great practical, symbolic meaning to my father.

A stumbling block is “an impediment to belief or understanding” or “an obstacle to progress.”⁴ To stumble spiritually is “to fall into sin or waywardness.”⁵ A stumbling block can be anything that distracts us from achieving righteous goals.

We cannot afford to have our testimonies of the Father and the Son become confused and complicated by stumbling blocks. We cannot fall into that trap. Our testimonies of Them need to remain pure and simple like my father’s simple defense of the power pole on the ranch where he grew up.

What are some of the stumbling blocks that confuse and complicate our pure and simple testimony of the Father and the Son and keep us from being valiant in that testimony?



One Stumbling Block Is the Philosophies of Men

We are committed to knowledge of every kind and believe “the glory of God is intelligence.”⁶ But we also know that the preferred strategy of the adversary is to lead people away from God and cause them to stumble by emphasizing the philosophies of men over the Savior and His teachings.

The Apostle Paul was a sure witness of Jesus Christ because of a miraculous and life-changing experience with the Savior.⁷ Paul’s unique background prepared him to relate to people of many cultures. He loved the “frank simplicity” of the Thessalonians and the “tender sympathy” of the Philippians.⁸ He initially found it more difficult to relate to the intellectual and sophisticated Greeks. In Athens on Mars’ Hill, he attempted a philosophical approach and was rejected. To the Corinthians he determined to simply teach “the doctrine of Christ crucified.”⁹ To use the Apostle Paul’s own words:

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”¹⁰

Some of the most magnificent scriptural accounts of the Savior and His mission are set forth in 1 Corinthians. One chapter—15—has received worldwide attention through performances of George Frideric Handel’s *Messiah*.¹¹ It contains profound doctrine about the Savior. In the third part of *Messiah*, immediately following the “Hallelujah Chorus,” most of the scriptures used are from 1 Corinthians 15. In a few of these verses, Paul beautifully describes some of what the Savior accomplished:



“[For] now is Christ risen from the dead, . . . the firstfruits of them that slept.

“ . . . Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . .

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . .

“But thanks be to God, [who] giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹²

We know the Apostasy occurred in part because the philosophies of men were elevated over Christ’s basic, essential doctrine. Instead of the simplicity of the Savior’s message being taught, many plain and precious truths were changed or lost. In fact, Christianity adopted some Greek philosophical traditions to reconcile people’s beliefs

with their existing culture. The historian Will Durant wrote: “Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life.”¹³ Historically, and in our own day, some people reject the gospel of Jesus Christ because, in their view, it doesn’t have adequate intellectual sophistication.

At the dawn of the Restoration, many at least professed to follow the Savior’s teachings. Many countries considered themselves Christian nations. But even then there was prophecy of a more difficult time for our day.

Heber C. Kimball was one of the original Twelve Apostles of this dispensation and First Counselor to President Brigham Young. He warned: “The time is coming when . . . it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face

of an enemy to the people of God. Then . . . look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall.” He concluded that there is “a TEST coming.”¹⁴

In our day, the influence of Christianity in many countries, including the United States, is significantly reduced. Without religious beliefs, there is no feeling of accountability to God. Accordingly, it is hard to establish universal values about how to live. Philosophies which are deeply held often conflict with each other.

Unfortunately, this also happens with some members of the Church who lose their bearings and become influenced by the cause of the moment—many of which are clearly not righteous.

In line with Heber C. Kimball’s prophecy, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said in 1982: “Much sifting will occur because of lapses in righteous behavior which go unrepented of. A few will give up instead of holding out to the end. A few will be deceived by defectors. Likewise, others will be offended, for sufficient unto each dispensation are the stumbling blocks thereof!”¹⁵

Another Stumbling Block Is Refusing to See Sin in Its True Light

One of the unique and troubling aspects of our day is that many people engage in sinful conduct but refuse to consider it sinful. They have no remorse or willingness to acknowledge their conduct as being morally wrong. Even some who profess a belief in the Father and the Son wrongfully take the position that a loving Father in Heaven should exact no consequences for conduct that is contrary to His commandments.

This was apparently the position taken by Corianton, the son of Alma

the Younger in the Book of Mormon. He had engaged in grievous immoral conduct and was being counseled by Alma. We are blessed that the great prophet Alma, who had personally experienced “the darkest abyss [and] the marvelous light,”¹⁶ recorded the instruction he gave. In the 39th chapter of Alma, we read how he counseled this son through the repentance process and then explained how Christ would come to take away sin. He made the necessity of repentance clear to Corianton because “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God.”¹⁷

Alma 42 contains some of the most magnificent doctrine on the Atonement in all scripture. Alma helped Corianton understand that it is not an “injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery.”¹⁸ But he noted that starting with Adam, a merciful God had provided a “space for repentance” because without repentance, “the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated.”¹⁹ Alma also established that God’s plan is a “plan of happiness.”²⁰

Alma’s teachings are most instructive: “For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none

but the truly penitent are saved.”²¹ Seen in their true light, the glorious blessings of repentance and adherence to the Savior’s teachings are monumentally important. It is not unfair to be clear, as Alma was with Corianton, about the consequences of sinful choices and lack of repentance. It has often been declared, “Sooner or later everybody has to sit down to a banquet of consequences.”²²

The remarkable and celestial blessing of the Savior’s Atonement is that through repentance, sinful conduct is blotted out. After Corianton’s repentance, Alma concluded, “Let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance.”²³

Looking beyond the Mark Is a Stumbling Block

The prophet Jacob referred to ancient Jews as “a stiffnecked people [who] despised . . . plainness, . . . killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall.”²⁴

While there are many examples of looking beyond the mark,²⁵ a significant one in our day is extremism. Gospel extremism is when one elevates any gospel principle above other equally important principles and takes a position that is beyond or contrary to the teachings of Church leaders. One example is when one advocates for additions, changes, or primary emphasis to one part of the Word of Wisdom. Another is expensive preparation for end-of-days scenarios. In both examples, others are encouraged to accept private interpretations. “If we turn a health law or any other principle into



a form of religious fanaticism, we are looking beyond the mark.”²⁶

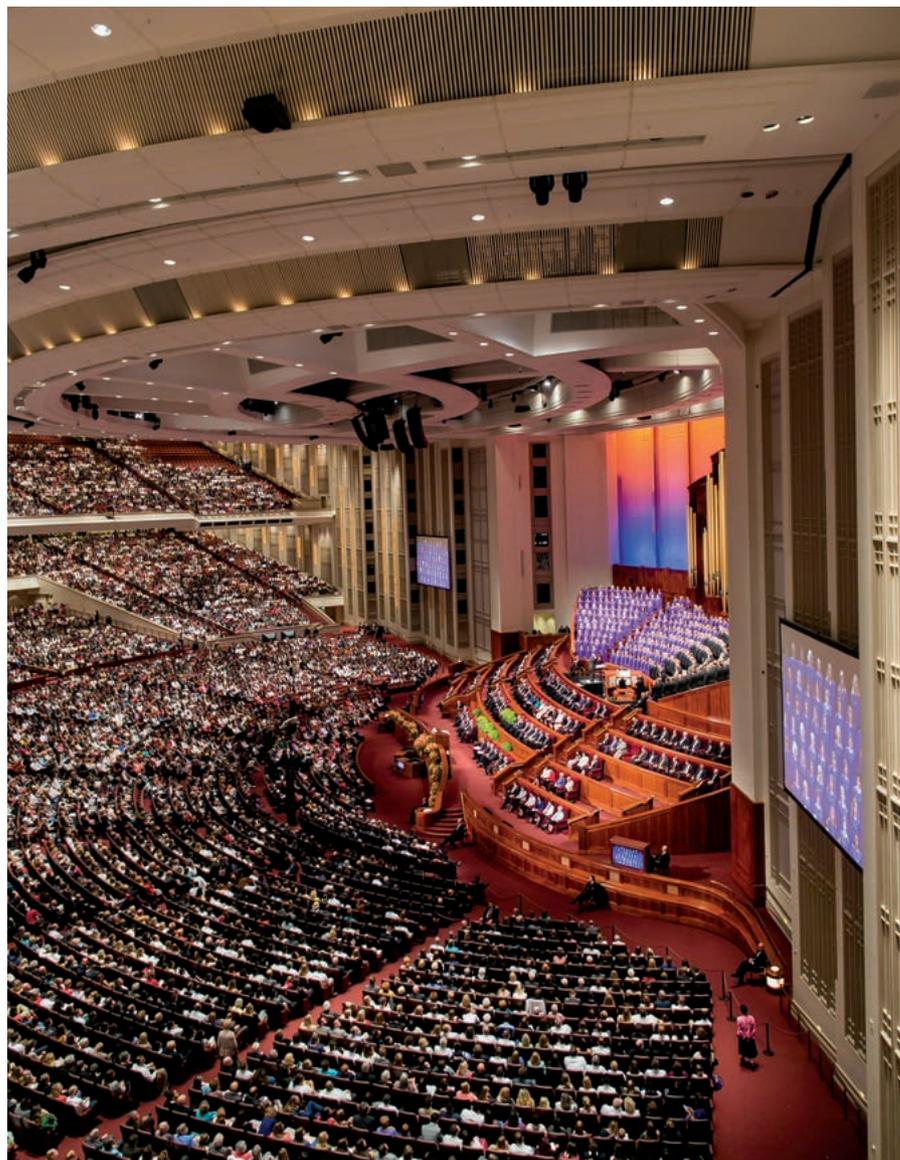
Speaking of important doctrine, the Lord has declared, “Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me.”²⁷ When we elevate any principle in a way that lessens our commitment to other equally important principles or take a position contrary to or which exceeds teachings of Church leaders, we are looking beyond the mark.

In addition, some members elevate causes, many of which are good, to a status superior to basic gospel doctrine. They substitute their devotion to the cause as their first commitment and relegate their commitment to the Savior and His teachings to a secondary position. If we elevate anything above our devotion to the Savior, if our conduct recognizes Him as just another teacher and not the divine Son of God, then we are looking beyond the mark. Jesus Christ is the mark!

The 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants makes it clear that being “valiant in the testimony of Jesus”²⁸ is the simple, essential test between those who will inherit the blessings of the celestial kingdom and those in the lesser terrestrial kingdom. To be valiant, we need to focus on the power of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice to overcome death and, through our repentance, to cleanse us from sin, and we need to follow the doctrine of Christ.²⁹ We also need the light and knowledge of the Savior’s life and teachings to guide us on the covenant pathway, including the sacred ordinances of the temple. We must be steadfast in Christ, feast upon His word, and endure to the end.³⁰

Conclusion

If we are to be valiant in our testimony of Jesus, we must avoid



the stumbling blocks that entrap and impede the progress of many otherwise honorable men and women. Let us determine to always be in His service. While seeking knowledge, we need to avoid the philosophies of men that lessen our commitment to the Savior. We must see sin in its true light and accept the Savior’s Atonement through repentance. We need to avoid looking beyond the mark and focus on Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and follow His doctrine.

My father saw the pole as a means of providing power, light, and abundant water for cooking and cleansing. It was a stepping-stone to improving his life.

One writer suggests that stumbling blocks may be made into “stepping-stones to a noble character and to Heaven.”³¹

For us, being valiant in our testimony of Jesus is a stepping-stone toward qualifying for the Savior’s grace and the celestial kingdom. Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven by which we may be saved.³² I bear my sure witness of both His divinity and His supernal role in the Father’s plan. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; see also John 17:3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 76:79.
3. See *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 52–53.



By Elder Gary E. Stevenson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

4. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2003), "stumbling block."
5. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, "stumble."
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
7. See Acts 9:1–9; 26:13–18.
8. See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (1898), 319.
9. See Farrar, *Life and Work of St. Paul*, 319–20.
10. 1 Corinthians 2:4–5.
11. See George Frideric Handel, *Messiah*, ed. T. Tertius Noble (1912).
12. 1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 55, 57.
13. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, *Caesar and Christ* (1944), 595.
14. Heber C. Kimball, in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 446.
15. Neal A. Maxwell, "Be of Good Cheer," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 68.
16. Mosiah 27:29.
17. Alma 40:26.
18. Alma 42:1. In Latter-day Saint doctrine, provision is made for all mankind, including those who do not hear of Christ in this life, children who die before the age of accountability, and those who have no understanding (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–50; 137:7–10).
19. Alma 42:5.
20. Alma 42:8.
21. Alma 42:24. Note that the personal pronoun for justice is *his* (male) and the personal pronoun for mercy is *her* (female).
22. Robert Louis Stevenson, in Carla Carlisle, "A Banquet of Consequences," *Country Life*, July 6, 2016, 48. Mrs. Carlisle credits Robert Louis Stevenson for the quote. Some give credit to others.
23. Alma 42:29.
24. Jacob 4:14.
25. In an article I wrote for Church magazines in 2003, I emphasized four areas that could create theological blindness and the stumbling that Jacob described: substituting the philosophies of men for gospel truths, gospel extremism, heroic gestures as a substitute for daily consecration, and elevating rules over doctrine (see "Looking beyond the Mark," *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 41–44; *Liahona*, Mar. 2003, 21–24).
26. Quentin L. Cook, "Looking beyond the Mark," *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 42; *Liahona*, Mar. 2003, 22.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 10:68.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 76:79.
29. See 2 Nephi 31:17–21.
30. See 2 Nephi 31:20–21.
31. Henry Ward Beecher, in Tryon Edwards, *A Dictionary of Thoughts* (1891), 586.
32. See 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 3:17.

Look to the Book, Look to the Lord

Can you see the Book of Mormon as your keystone, your spiritual center of strength?

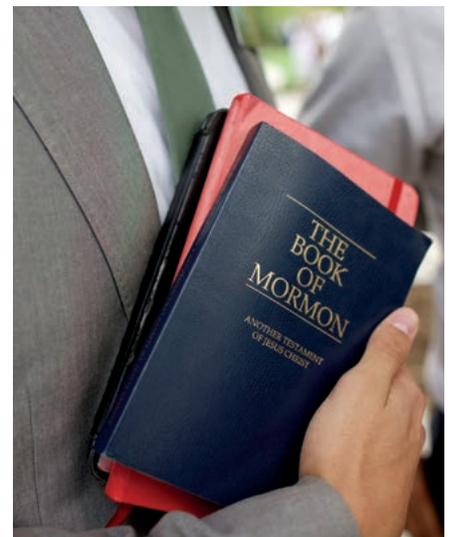
Mary Elizabeth Rollins

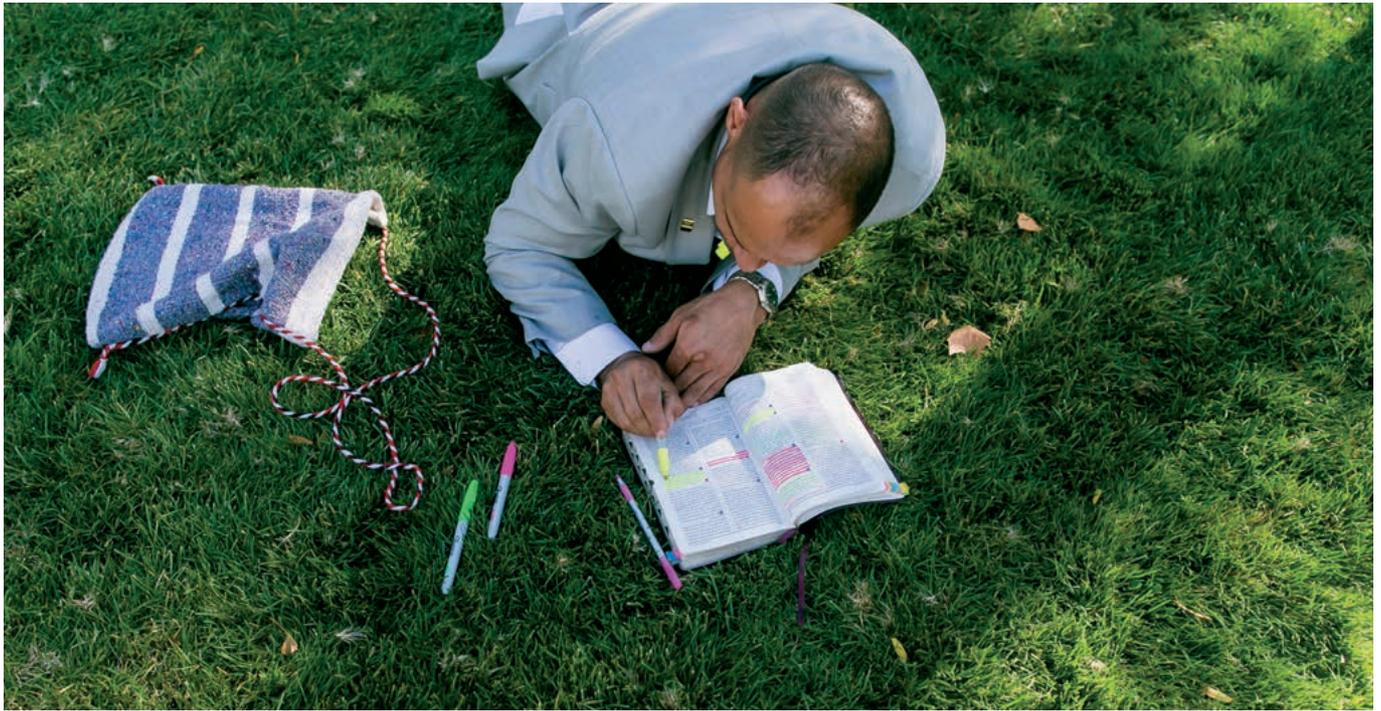
In my mind, I imagine you of the rising generation watching or listening to this conference session somewhere in the world. I'd like to share a true story with you, a story that can be both an example and a lesson. It can show you how to get closer to the Lord and access greater power to resist temptation.

This is a story of a young girl, living in New York, who before age three lost her father when his boat sank on a large lake. She, her mother, older brother, and younger sister moved to a new city in another state to live with her aunt and uncle. Sometime after the family arrived, missionaries and members of a newly organized religion came to their town with the glorious news of the Restoration of the gospel. They told a remarkable story of an angel delivering an ancient record to a young man named Joseph Smith, a record he had translated by the power of God. Two of the visitors, Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer, had actually seen the engraved metal pages of the ancient record with their own eyes, and Whitmer witnessed he

had held the golden plates in his own hands. This record had been recently published, and Brother Whitmer brought the book with him. The name of the book, of course, was the Book of Mormon.

When 12-year-old Mary heard the missionaries speak about the book, she had a special feeling in her heart. Even though the Book of Mormon was thick with many pages, Mary yearned to read it. When Brother Whitmer departed, he





gave one precious copy of the book to Brother Isaac Morley, who was a friend of Mary's uncle and a local leader in the new church.

Mary later recorded: "I went to [Brother Morley's] house . . . and asked to see the Book; [he] put it in my hand, [and] as I looked at it, I felt such a desire to read it, that I could not refrain from asking him to let me take it home and read it. . . . He said . . . he had hardly had time to read a chapter in it himself, and but few of the brethren had even seen it, but I plead so earnestly for it, he finally said, 'child, if you will bring this book home before breakfast tomorrow morning, you may take it.'"

Mary ran home and was so captured by the book that she stayed up nearly all night reading it. The next morning, when she returned the book, Brother Morley said, "I guess you did not read much in it" and "I don't believe you can tell me one word of it." Mary stood up straight and repeated from memory the first verse of the Book of Mormon. She then told him the story of the prophet Nephi. Mary later wrote, "He gazed at me in surprise, and said, 'child, take this book home and finish it, I can wait.'"

A short time later, Mary finished reading the book and was the first person in

her town to read the entire book. She knew it was true and that it came from Heavenly Father. As she looked to the book, she looked to the Lord.

One month later a special visitor came to her house. Here is what Mary wrote about her memorable encounter that day: "When [Joseph Smith] saw me he looked at me so earnestly. . . . After a moment or two he . . . gave me a great blessing . . . and made me a present of the book, and said he would give Brother Morley another [copy]. . . . We all felt that he was a man of God, for he spoke with power, and as one having authority."

This young girl, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, saw many other miracles in her life and always kept her testimony of the Book of Mormon.¹ This story has special meaning to me because she is my fourth-great-aunt. Through Mary's example, along with other experiences in my life, I have learned that one is never too young to seek and receive a personal testimony of the Book of Mormon.

The Keystone of Your Testimony

There is a personal lesson for you in Mary's story. Each of you young men, young women, and children can have the same feelings she had. When you

read the Book of Mormon and pray with a desire to know it is true, you too can receive the same impression in your heart that Mary received. You may also find that as you stand and bear witness of the Book of Mormon, you will feel the same spirit of confirmation. The Holy Ghost will speak to your heart. You can also feel this same spirit of confirmation when you hear others share their testimonies of the Book of Mormon. Each of these spiritual witnesses can lead to the Book of Mormon becoming the keystone of your testimony.

Let me explain. The Prophet Joseph Smith, who translated the Book of Mormon through "the gift and power of God," described the Book of Mormon as "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion."²

Since the Book of Mormon's first printing in 1830, more than 174 million copies have been published in 110 different languages, demonstrating that the Book of Mormon is still the keystone of our religion. But what does this mean for each of you?

In architectural terms a keystone is a main element in an arched gateway. It is the wedge-shaped stone in the



The Book of Mormon, like a keystone in an arched gateway, can become the keystone of our testimony.

very center and at the highest point of an arch. It is the most important of the stones because it keeps the sides of the arch in place, preventing collapse. And it is the structural element that ensures the gate, or opening below, is passable.

In gospel terms it is a gift and blessing from the Lord that the keystone of our religion is something as tangible and graspable as the Book of Mormon and that you can hold it and read it. Can you see the Book of Mormon as your keystone, your spiritual center of strength?

President Ezra Taft Benson expanded on those teachings of Joseph Smith. He said: “There are three ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. It is the keystone in our witness of Christ. It is the keystone of our doctrine. It is the keystone of testimony.”

President Benson further taught: “The Book of Mormon teaches us truth [and] bears testimony of Christ. . . . But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. . . . You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path.”³

My Personal Witness

In my case the Book of Mormon became the keystone of my testimony over a period of years and through a number of experiences. One powerful experience in forming my testimony occurred while I was a young missionary serving in my first area: Kumamoto, Japan. My companion and I were house-to-house proselyting. I met a grandmother who kindly invited us into the entry of her home, which is called a *genkan* in Japanese. She offered us a cold drink on a hot day. I had not been in Japan very long, and I had recently completed reading the Book of Mormon and had been praying to know with certainty that it was true.

Because of my newness to Japan, I didn’t speak Japanese very well. In fact, I don’t think this woman understood much of what I was saying. I began teaching her about the Book of Mormon, describing how Joseph Smith received from an angel an ancient record engraved on plates and how he translated them by the power of God.

As I offered her my testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and another testament of Jesus Christ, I received the strongest impression, accompanied by a warm feeling of comfort and serenity inside my chest, which the scriptures describe as “your bosom [burning] within you.”⁴ This feeling reaffirmed to me in a powerful way that the Book of Mormon truly is the word of God. At that time my feelings were so strong that tears came to my eyes as I talked to this Japanese grandmother. I have never forgotten the special feeling of that day.

Your Personal Witness

Each of you can also receive a personal witness of this book! Do you realize that the Book of Mormon was

written for you—and for your day? This book is one of the blessings of living in what we call the dispensation of the fulness of times. Although the Book of Mormon was written by inspired, ancient authors—many of whom were prophets—they and the people of their day did not have the benefit of possessing the whole book. You now have easily within your reach the sacred record that prophets, priests, and kings treasured, embraced, and preserved! You have the benefit of holding in your hands the complete Book of Mormon. Interestingly, one of the Book of Mormon prophets, Moroni, saw our day—your day. He even saw you, in vision, many hundreds of years ago! Moroni wrote:

“Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning . . . that day when these things,” meaning the Book of Mormon, “shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.”⁵

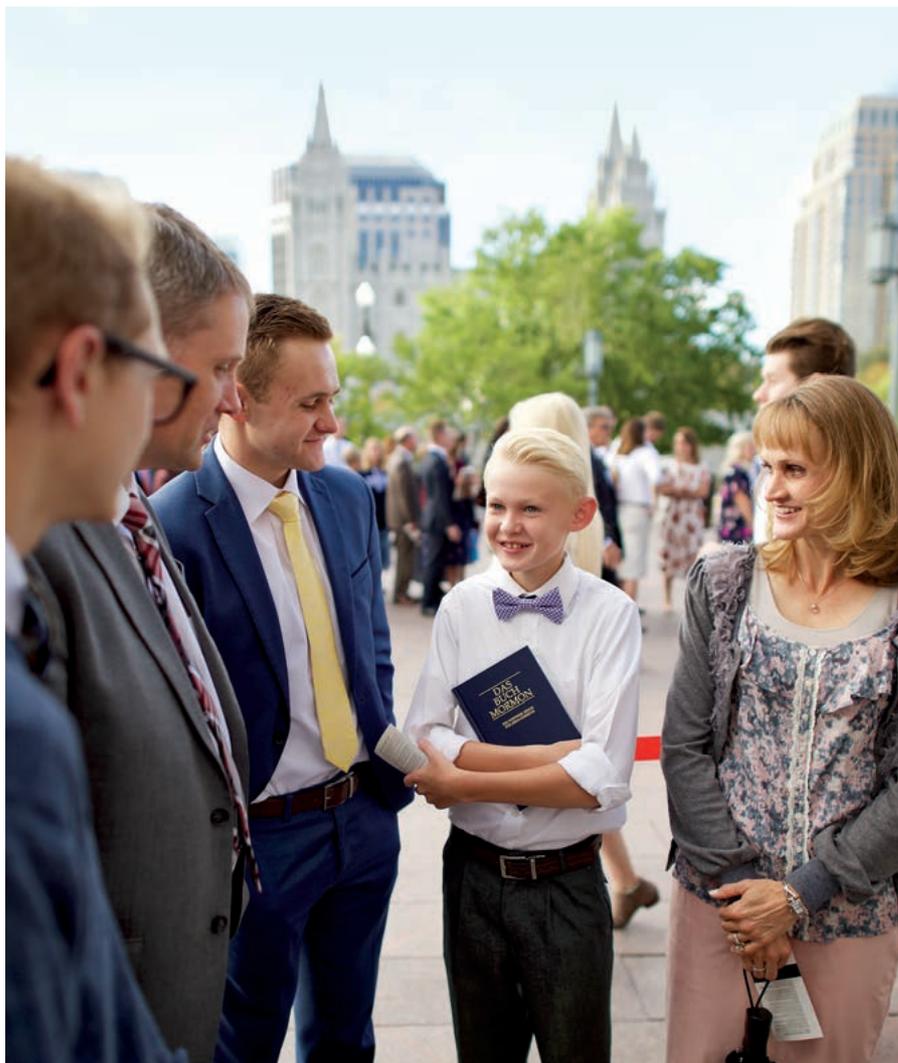
In order to help the Book of Mormon become the keystone of your testimony, I offer you a challenge. I recently learned that many young people spend an average of seven hours a day looking at TV, computer, and smartphone screens.⁶ With this in mind, would you make a small change? Will you replace some of that daily screen time—particularly that devoted to social media, the internet, gaming, or television—with reading the Book of Mormon? If the studies I referred to are accurate, you could easily find time for daily study of the Book of Mormon even if for only 10 minutes a day. And you can study in a way that allows you to enjoy it and understand it—either on your device or in book form. President

Russell M. Nelson recently cautioned, “We should never make reading the Book of Mormon seem like an onerous duty, like the gulping of nasty medicine to be swallowed quickly and then checked off with finality.”⁷

For some of you younger children, you might read it with a parent, grandparent, or loved one. If a chapter, verse, or portion becomes difficult enough to discourage your reading, move on to the next and the next. I picture you following the example of Mary. I picture you excitedly finding time and a quiet place to read the Book of Mormon. I see you discovering answers, feeling guidance, and gaining your own testimony of the Book of Mormon and a testimony of Jesus Christ. As you look to the book, you look to the Lord.

You will pore through the passages of this precious book and encounter your beloved Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, on nearly every page. It is estimated that some form of His name is used an average of once every 1.7 verses.⁸ Even Christ Himself testified of its truthfulness in these the latter days, stating, “As your Lord and your God liveth it is true.”⁹

I am grateful for the invitation and promise that the Lord has offered through the prophet Moroni to each of you—and to everyone who reads the Book of Mormon. I close by reading this invitation and promise and adding my testimony: “And when ye shall receive these things [the Book of Mormon], I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of [Jesus] Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰



I bear testimony of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days and of the Book of Mormon as tangible evidence of that Restoration. Just as the words of this book inspired a 12-year-old girl to embrace the restored Church of Jesus Christ nearly two centuries ago, the truths you will find there will uplift and inspire you in a similar way. They will strengthen your faith, fill your soul with light, and prepare you for a future you scarcely have the ability to comprehend.

Within the book’s pages, you will discover the infinite love and incomprehensible grace of God. As you strive to follow the teachings you find there, your joy will expand, your understanding will increase, and the answers you seek to the many challenges mortality presents will be opened to you. As you

look to the book, you look to the Lord. The Book of Mormon is the revealed word of God. Of this I testify, with all my heart and soul, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, July 1926, 193–95.
2. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 5, 7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
5. Mormon 8:34–35.
6. See American Academy of Pediatrics, “Media and Children,” aap.org.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Strengthen the Shepherds” (address given at the general conference leadership meetings, Sept. 28, 2016).
8. See Susan Easton Black, *Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon* (1987), 16–18.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 17:6.
10. Moroni 10:4; see also verses 3, 5.



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

“Abide in My Love”

God’s love is infinite and it will endure forever, but what it means for each of us depends on how we respond to His love.

The Bible tells us that “God is love.”¹ He is the perfect embodiment of love, and we rely heavily on the constancy and universal reach of that love. As President Thomas S. Monson has expressed: “God’s love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. It is simply always there.”²

There are many ways to describe and speak of divine love. One of the terms we hear often today is that God’s love is “unconditional.” While in one sense that is true, the descriptor *unconditional* appears nowhere in scripture. Rather, His love is described in scripture as “great and wonderful love,”³ “perfect love,”⁴ “redeeming love,”⁵ and “everlasting love.”⁶ These are better terms because the word *unconditional* can convey mistaken impressions about divine love, such as, God tolerates and excuses anything we do because His love is unconditional, or God makes no demands upon us because His love is unconditional, or *all* are saved in the heavenly kingdom of God because His love is unconditional. God’s love is infinite and it will endure forever, but what it means for each of us depends on how we respond to His love.

Jesus said:

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”⁷

To “continue in” or “abide in” the Savior’s love means to receive His grace and be perfected by it.⁸ To receive His grace, we must have faith in Jesus Christ and keep His commandments, including repenting of our sins, being baptized for the remission of sins, receiving the Holy Ghost, and continuing in the path of obedience.⁹

God will always love us, but He cannot save us in our sins.¹⁰ Remember the words of Amulek to Zeezrom that the Savior would not save His people *in* their sins but *from* their sins,¹¹ the reason being that with sin we are unclean and “no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven”¹² or dwell in God’s presence. “And [Christ] hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem [His people] from their sins because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls.”¹³

From the Book of Mormon we learn that the intent of Christ’s suffering—the ultimate manifestation of His love—was

“to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

“And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”¹⁴

Repentance, then, is His gift to us, purchased at a very dear price.

Some will argue that God blesses everyone without distinction—citing, for example, Jesus’s statement in the Sermon on the Mount: “[God] maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”¹⁵ Indeed, God does rain down upon all His children all the blessings He can—all the blessings that love and law and justice and mercy will permit. And He commands us to be likewise generous:





“I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”¹⁶

Nevertheless, God’s greater blessings are conditioned on obedience. President Russell M. Nelson explained: “The resplendent bouquet of God’s love—including eternal life—includes blessings for which we must qualify, not entitlements to be expected unworthily. Sinners cannot bend His will to theirs and require Him to bless them in sin [see Alma 11:37]. If they desire to enjoy every bloom in His beautiful bouquet, they must repent.”¹⁷

Beyond rendering the penitent person guiltless and spotless with the promise of being “lifted up at the last day,”¹⁸ there is a second vital aspect of abiding in the love of God. Abiding in His love will enable us to realize our full potential, to become even as He is.¹⁹ As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf stated: “The grace of God does not merely restore us to our previous innocent state. . . . His aim is much higher:

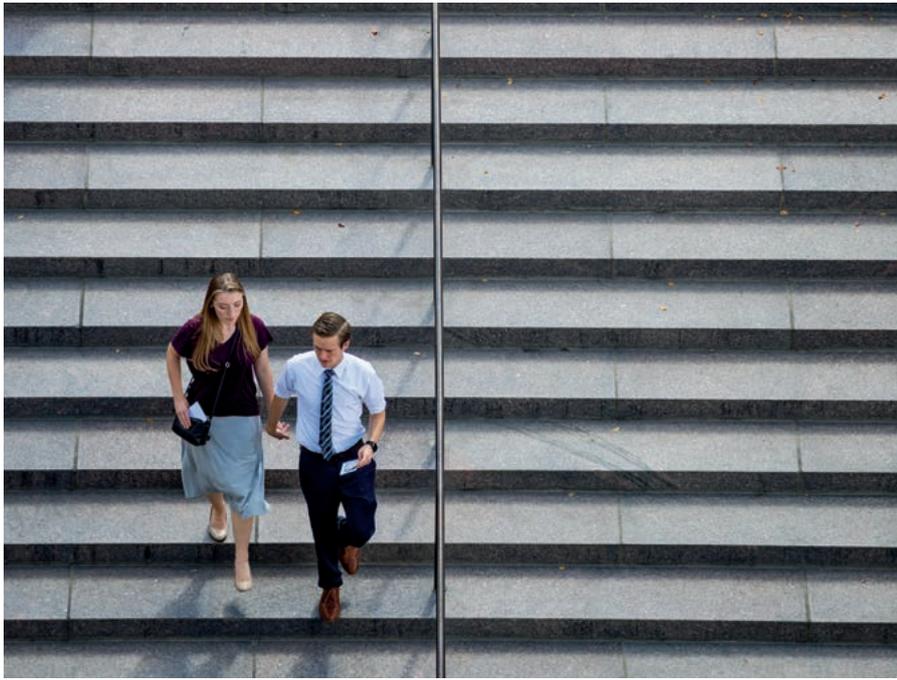
He wants His sons and daughters to become like Him.”²⁰

To abide in God’s love in this sense means to submit fully to His will. It means to accept His correction when needed, “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”²¹ It means to love and serve one another as Jesus has loved and served us.²² It means to learn “to abide the law of a celestial kingdom” so that we can “abide a celestial glory.”²³ For Him to be able to make of us what we can become, our Heavenly Father pleads with us to yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man and [become] a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”²⁴

Elder Dallin H. Oaks observed: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*.”²⁵

The story of Helen Keller is something of a parable suggesting how divine love can transform a willing soul. Helen was born in the state of Alabama in the United States in 1880. When just 19 months old, she suffered an undiagnosed illness that left her both deaf and blind. She was extremely intelligent and became frustrated as she tried to understand and make sense of her surroundings. When Helen felt the moving lips of family members and realized that they used their mouths to speak, “she flew into a rage [because] she was unable to join in the conversation.”²⁶ By the time Helen was six, her need to communicate and her frustration grew so intense that her “outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly.”²⁷

Helen’s parents hired a teacher for their daughter, a woman named Anne Sullivan. Just as we have in Jesus Christ one who understands our infirmities,²⁸ Anne Sullivan had struggled with her own serious hardships and understood Helen’s infirmities. At age five, Anne had contracted a disease that caused painful scarring of the cornea and left her mostly blind. When Anne was eight, her mother died; her



father abandoned her and her younger brother, Jimmie; and they were sent to a “poor house,” where conditions were so deplorable that Jimmie died after only three months. Through her own dogged persistence, Anne gained entry to the Perkins School for the Blind and vision impaired, where she succeeded brilliantly. A surgical operation gave her improved vision so that she was able to read print. When Helen Keller’s father contacted the Perkins School seeking someone to become a teacher for his daughter, Anne Sullivan was selected.²⁹

It was not a pleasant experience at the beginning. Helen “hit, pinched and kicked her teacher and knocked out one of her teeth. [Anne] finally gained control by moving with [Helen] into a small cottage on the Kellers’ property. Through patience and firm consistency, she finally won the child’s heart and trust.”³⁰ Similarly, as we come to trust rather than resist our divine Teacher, He can work with us to enlighten and lift us to a new reality.³¹

To help Helen learn words, Anne would spell the names of familiar objects with her finger on the palm of Helen’s hand. “[Helen] enjoyed this ‘finger play,’ but she didn’t understand until the famous moment when [Anne] spelled ‘w-a-t-e-r’ while pumping

water over [Helen’s] hand. [Helen] later wrote:

“Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten . . . and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! . . . Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house[,] every object . . . I touched seemed to quiver with life.”³²

As Helen Keller grew to adulthood, she became known for her love of language, her skill as a writer, and her eloquence as a public speaker.

In a movie depicting the life of Helen Keller, her parents are portrayed as satisfied with Anne Sullivan’s work once she has domesticated their wild daughter to the extent that Helen will sit politely at dinner, eat normally, and fold her napkin at the end of the meal. But Anne knew Helen was capable of much, much more and that she had significant contributions to make.³³ Even so, we may be quite content with what we have done in our lives and that we simply are what we are, while our Savior comprehends a

glorious potential that we perceive only “through a glass, darkly.”³⁴ Each of us can experience the ecstasy of divine potential unfolding within us, much like the joy Helen Keller felt when words came to life, giving light to her soul and setting it free. Each of us can love and serve God and be empowered to bless our fellowman. “As it is written, 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.”³⁵

Let us consider the cost of God’s precious love. Jesus revealed that to atone for our sins and redeem us from death, both physical and spiritual, His suffering caused Himself, “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.”³⁶ His agony in Gethsemane and on the cross was greater than any mortal could bear.³⁷ Nevertheless, because of His love for His Father and for us, He endured, and as a consequence, He can offer us both immortality and eternal life.

It is poignantly symbolic that “blood [came] from every pore”³⁸ as Jesus suffered in Gethsemane, the place of the olive press. To produce olive oil in the Savior’s time, olives were first crushed by rolling a large stone over them. The resulting “mash” was placed in soft, loosely woven baskets, which were piled one upon another. Their weight expressed the first and finest oil. Then added stress was applied by placing a large beam or log on top of the stacked baskets, producing more oil. Finally, to draw out the very last drops, the beam was weighted with stones on one end to create the maximum, crushing pressure.³⁹ And yes, the oil is blooded as it first flows out.

I think of Matthew's account of the Savior as He entered Gethsemane that fateful night—that He “began to be sorrowful and very heavy. . . .

“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”⁴⁰

Then, as I imagine the distress grew even more severe, He pleaded a second time for relief and, finally, perhaps at the peak of His suffering, a third time. He endured the agony until justice was satisfied to the very last drop.⁴¹ This He did to redeem you and me.

What a precious gift is divine love! Filled with that love, Jesus asks, “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”⁴² Tenderly He reassures, “Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come . . . will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.”⁴³

Will you not love Him who first loved you?⁴⁴ Then keep His commandments.⁴⁵ Will you not be a friend to Him who laid down His life for His friends?⁴⁶ Then keep His commandments.⁴⁷ Will you not abide in His love and receive all that He graciously offers you? Then keep His commandments.⁴⁸ I pray that we will feel and fully abide in His love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

- 1 John 4:8. Glorious and reassuring as the love of Jesus Christ is, it is not His only attribute. His “character, perfections, and attributes” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 38) also include justice, truth, and invariableness; He is the same God yesterday, today, and forever (see *Lectures on Faith*, 41). Without these and the other traits and qualities that He possesses to absolute perfection, He would not be God.
- Thomas S. Monson, “We Never Walk Alone,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 124.
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:3.



- 1 John 4:18; Moroni 8:16.
- Alma 5:26.
- Jeremiah 31:3.
- John 15:9–10.
- See Moroni 10:32–33.
- See 2 Nephi 31:11–21; 3 Nephi 27:16–20; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:29–34.
- See Alma 11:32–37; see also Alma 42:13, 15, 22–27.
- See Helaman 5:10–11.
- Alma 11:37; see also Moses 6:57.
- Helaman 5:11.
- Alma 34:15–16.
- Matthew 5:45; see also 3 Nephi 12:45.
- Matthew 5:44–45; see also 3 Nephi 12:44–45.
- Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 24; *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 16. And again, “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21; see also 3 Nephi 14:21).
We are also taught:
“There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—
“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21).
Some forget that God “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31). At the same time, He assures us that “he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:32).
- 3 Nephi 27:22.
- See 3 Nephi 27:27; see also Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 108.
- Hebrews 12:6; see also Hebrews 12:5, 7–11; John 15:1–8.
- See John 15:12.
- Doctrine and Covenants 88:22.
- Mosiah 3:19.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40; emphasis in original.
- “Helen Keller,” perkins.org/history/people/helen-keller.
- “Helen Keller,” perkins.org/history/people/helen-keller.
- See Hebrews 4:15.
- See “Anne Sullivan,” perkins.org/history/people/anne-sullivan.
- “Helen Keller,” perkins.org/history/people/helen-keller.
- See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 93:28: “He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”
- “Helen Keller,” perkins.org/history/people/helen-keller.
- See William Gibson, *The Miracle Worker* (motion picture, 1962).
- 1 Corinthians 13:12.
- 1 Corinthians 2:9.
- Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
- See Mosiah 3:7.
- Mosiah 3:7.
- See Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and others, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (2006), 18; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and others, *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament* (2009), 281.
- Matthew 26:37, 39.
- See Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
- 3 Nephi 9:13.
- 3 Nephi 9:14.
- See 1 John 4:19.
- See John 14:15.
- See John 15:13.
- See John 15:14.
- See John 15:10.



By Elder W. Mark Bassett
Of the Seventy

For Our Spiritual Development and Learning

The mysteries of God are unfolded unto us only according to His will and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

When I was a young boy, my parents received a gift that became fascinating to my younger brother David and me. The gift was a miniature model of the golden plates the Prophet Joseph Smith received from the angel Moroni. As I recall, the model plates had 10 or so metal pages with words written on them. However, those pages weren't what caught our attention.

We had been raised hearing the stories of the Restoration. We knew of and had sung in Primary about golden plates hidden deep in a mountainside and delivered by the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith.¹ As the curiosity of our young minds stirred, there was one thing we really wanted to see: what was written on the small section of the model plates securely sealed with two small metal bands?

The plates sat on an end table for several days before our curiosity got the best of us. Although we clearly understood that these were not the actual plates Moroni had delivered, we

wanted to view the sealed portion. So on several occasions, my brother and I tried using butter knives, old spoons, and anything else we could imagine to pry apart the sealed portion of the plates just enough to see what they contained—but not enough to break the small bands. We were at least smart enough not to leave a trace of our mischievous boyhood curiosity. To our disappointment and frustration, these

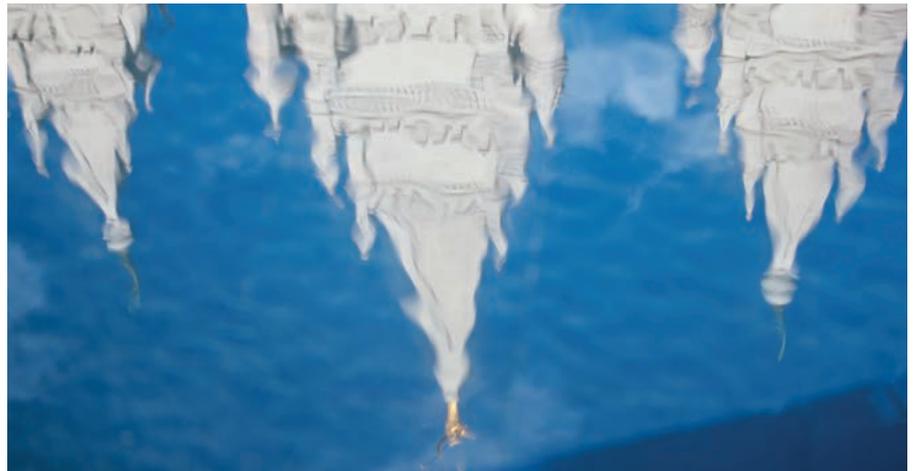
attempts to “pry at the plates” were always unsuccessful.

I still don't know what—if anything—was hidden under that sealed portion. But the embarrassing part of our story is that to this day, I have no idea what was written on the portion of the metal pages that was meant to be read. I can only imagine that these pages contained stories of the Restoration and testimonies of Joseph Smith and the Three and Eight Witnesses, who saw the actual plates Moroni delivered.

Since the Creation of this earth, our loving Father in Heaven has provided direction, leadership, and instruction to His children through prophets. His words have been passed down through these prophets and are saved as scripture for our development and learning. Nephi described it this way:

“For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.

“Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.”²





In addition, during past dispensations and in this last dispensation of the fulness of times, worthy members of the Lord's Church have been blessed with the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, who aids in our spiritual development and learning.

Knowing the diligent nature of my younger brother, I imagine it very likely that he read all the words written on the model plates in our parents' home. I, however, ignored those plain and precious truths and instead exerted my effort searching for those things that were not meant to be revealed.

Sadly, our development and learning can at times be slowed or even halted by an ill-conceived desire to "pry at the plates." These actions can lead us to seek after things that are not necessarily meant to be understood at this time, all the while ignoring the beautiful truths that are meant for us and our circumstances—the truths that Nephi described as written for our learning and profit.

Nephi's brother Jacob taught: "Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways."³

Jacob's words teach us that we cannot successfully "pry at the plates" or force the mysteries of God to be revealed unto us. Instead, the mysteries of God are unfolded unto us only according to His will and by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁴

Jacob continues:

"And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God.

"For behold, by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth. . . . O then, why not able to command the earth, or the workmanship of his hands upon the face of it, according to his will and pleasure?

"Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand."⁵

In order to understand the mysteries of God, or those things that can be understood only through revelation, we must follow the example of Nephi, who said, "Being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that

I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father."⁶ The Lord Himself further explained that Nephi had exercised faith, sought diligently with lowliness of heart, and kept His commandments.⁷

Nephi's example of seeking knowledge included (1) a sincere desire, (2) humility, (3) prayer, (4) trust in the prophet, and an exercise of (5) faith, (6) diligence, and (7) obedience. This method of seeking is in great contrast to my "prying at the plates," or trying to force an understanding of things meant to be revealed according to the Lord's timetable and through the power of the Holy Ghost.

In this modern age, we have come to expect that knowledge can and should be obtained immediately; when information is not easily known or accessible, it is often dismissed or mistrusted. Because of the abundance of information, some unwittingly give more credibility to available sources with an unknown origin rather than relying on the Lord's established pattern for receiving personal revelation. Jacob could have been describing our time when he said: "But behold, [they] were a stiffnecked people; and they



despised the words of plainness . . . and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it.”⁸

In contrast is President Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s counsel. He spoke of missionaries, but his words are equally applicable to all seekers of spiritual truth. “When . . . missionaries have faith in Jesus Christ,” he said, “they will trust the Lord enough to follow His commandments—even when they do not completely understand the reasons for them. Their faith will be manifest through diligence and through work.”⁹

During last April’s general conference, Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “The Church is making great efforts to be transparent with the records we have, but after all we can publish, our members are sometimes left with basic questions that cannot be resolved by study. . . . Some things can be learned only by faith.”¹⁰

Ancient prophets taught this same principle, demonstrating that over time human nature has not changed and that the Lord’s pattern for learning is timeless. Consider this Old Testament proverb: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”¹¹

Isaiah explained, speaking for the Lord, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”¹²

Nephi added another witness when he proclaimed, “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever.”¹³

Faith and trust in the Lord require us to acknowledge that His wisdom is superior to our own. We must also acknowledge that His plan provides the greatest potential for spiritual development and learning.

We were never expected “to have a perfect knowledge of things” during this mortal existence. Instead, we are expected to “hope for things which are not seen, which are true.”¹⁴

Even with Nephi’s great faith, he acknowledged his limited understanding when he responded to the angel who asked him, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” Nephi replied, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, *I do not know the meaning of all things.*”¹⁵

Similarly, Alma expressed to his son Helaman, “Now these mysteries are not yet fully made known unto me; therefore I shall forbear.”¹⁶

I express my witness that our Father in Heaven loves His children, and yet, like Nephi and Alma, I do not know the meaning of all things. Nor do I need to know all things; I *too* shall forbear and wait patiently upon the Lord, knowing “I have all things as a

testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true. . . .

“ . . . The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.”¹⁷

As we acknowledge that we are the workmanship of a wise and devoted Father in Heaven, “O then,” why not allow Him to guide our spiritual development and learning “according to his will and pleasure” rather than our own?¹⁸

He lives. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son and the Redeemer of mankind. Because of Christ’s infinite Atonement, He has the wisdom and foresight to guide us in these latter days. Joseph Smith is His prophet, chosen to restore His kingdom on earth to its fulness. Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet and spokesman today. Of this I bear my sincere witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “The Golden Plates,” *Children’s Songbook*, 86.
2. 2 Nephi 4:15–16.
3. Jacob 4:8.
4. See 1 Nephi 10:19.
5. Jacob 4:8–10.
6. 1 Nephi 2:16.
7. See 1 Nephi 2:19–20.
8. Jacob 4:14.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Lord’s Work” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2016), 6.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, “Opposition in All Things,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 117.
11. Proverbs 3:5.
12. Isaiah 55:9.
13. 2 Nephi 4:34.
14. Alma 32:21.
15. 1 Nephi 11:16–17; emphasis added.
16. Alma 37:11.
17. Alma 30:41, 44.
18. Jacob 4:9.



By Elder Kazuhiko Yamashita
Of the Seventy

Be Ambitious for Christ

We are ambitious for Christ when we serve faithfully, accept humbly, endure nobly, pray fervently, and partake worthily.

My dear brothers and sisters, today I would like to speak to the young people of the Church, including our wonderful missionaries. Of course, brothers and sisters who are young at heart are warmly invited to listen.

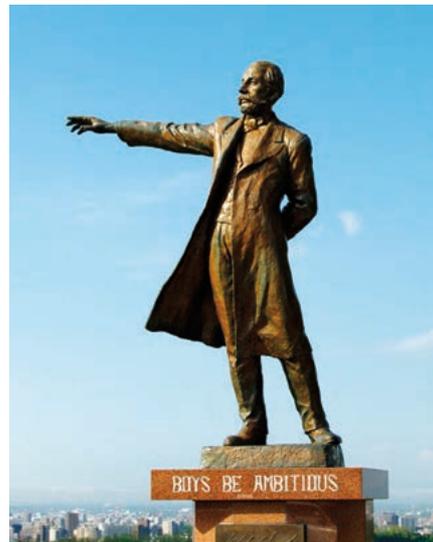
Last August 21, President Russell M. Nelson dedicated the beautiful Sapporo Temple—the third temple in Japan. The Sapporo Temple is built in northern Japan in a place called Hokkaido. Like Utah, Hokkaido was settled by industrious, hardworking pioneers.

In 1876, a renowned educator named Dr. William Clark¹ was invited to come to Hokkaido to teach. He lived in Japan for just eight months, but his Christian spirit left a lasting impression on his young non-Christian students. Before leaving, he gave his students a parting message that has become immortalized in this bronze statue.² He said, “Boys, be ambitious!”—“Be ambitious for Christ.”³ His injunction to “be ambitious for Christ” can help direct daily decisions for today’s Latter-day Saints.

What does it mean to “be ambitious for Christ”? Being ambitious for Christ means being motivated, focused, and dedicated to His work. Being ambitious for Christ will seldom mean that

we are singled out for public honor. Being ambitious for Christ means that we serve faithfully and diligently in our wards and branches without complaint and with joyful hearts.

Our missionaries serving throughout the world are beautiful examples of those who are truly ambitious for Christ. A few years ago, Sister Yamashita and I served in the Japan Nagoya Mission. Our missionaries were



Bronze statue of renowned educator Dr. William Clark, who encouraged boys to “be ambitious for Christ.”

so ambitious for Christ. One of those missionaries was a young man named Elder Cowan.

Elder Cowan did not have a right leg because of a bicycle accident as a youth. A few weeks after he entered the mission, I received a phone call from his companion. Elder Cowan’s prosthetic leg had broken while he was riding his bike. We took him to a good repair facility, and there in a private room, I saw his leg for the first time. I realized how much pain he had been suffering. His prosthetic leg was repaired, and he returned to his area.

However, as the weeks went by, the prosthesis continued to break again and again. The area medical adviser recommended that Elder Cowan return home for a possible mission reassignment. I resisted this advice because Elder Cowan was a great missionary and he had a strong desire to remain in Japan. Gradually, though, Elder Cowan began to approach his physical limit. In spite of this, he did not murmur or complain.

Again, I was advised that Elder Cowan be allowed to serve in a place that did not require him to ride a bike. I pondered this situation. I thought about Elder Cowan and his future, and I prayed about the matter. I felt impressed that, yes, Elder Cowan should return home and await reassignment. I phoned him and expressed my love and concern and told him of my decision. He did not say anything in reply. I could only hear him weeping on the other end of the phone. I said, “Elder Cowan, you don’t have to answer me right now. I will call you tomorrow. Please consider my recommendation with sincere prayer.”

When I called him the next morning, he humbly said he would follow my counsel.



During my final interview with him, I asked him this question: “Elder Cowan, did you request on your missionary application to be sent to a mission where you would not have to ride a bike?”

He said, “Yes, President, I did.”

I responded, “Elder Cowan, you were called to the Japan Nagoya Mission, where you would have to ride a bike. Did you tell this to your stake president?”

I was surprised by his answer. He said, “No, I didn’t. I determined that if *that* is where the Lord called me, I would go to the gym and train my body to be able to ride a bike.”

At the conclusion of our interview, he asked me this question with tears in his eyes: “President Yamashita, why did I come to Japan? Why am I here?”

I answered him without hesitation: “Elder Cowan, I know one reason you came here. You came here for my benefit. I have come to understand what a great young man I have been serving with. I am blessed to know you.”

I am happy to report that Elder Cowan returned to his loving home and was reassigned to serve in a mission where he could use a car for his travel. I am proud not only of Elder Cowan but also of all the missionaries throughout the world who serve

willingly without murmuring or complaining. Thank you, elders and sisters, for your faith, your focus, and your strong ambition for Christ.

The Book of Mormon contains many accounts of those who were ambitious for Christ. Alma the Younger, as a young man, persecuted the Church and its members. He later went through a dramatic change of heart and served as a powerful missionary. He sought the Lord’s direction, and he blessed his companions as he served with them. The Lord strengthened him, and he overcame the trials he faced.

This Alma gave his son Helaman the following counsel:

“Whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions. . . .

“ . . . Keep the commandments of God. . . .

“Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good.”⁴

Our second son lived much of his youth apart from the Church. When he turned 20, he had an experience that made him want to change his life. With love, prayers, and help from his family and members of the Church, and ultimately through the compassion and grace of the Lord, he returned to the Church.

He was later called to serve in the Washington Seattle Mission. He initially suffered great discouragement. Every night for the first three months, he would go into the bathroom and cry. Like Elder Cowan, he sought to understand “Why am I here?”

After he served for a year, he received an email that was an answer to our prayers. He wrote: “Right now I can really feel the love of God and of Jesus. I will work hard to become like the prophets of old. Though I am also



experiencing a lot of difficulties, I am truly happy. Serving Jesus really is the best thing ever. There is nothing as wonderful as this. I am so happy.”

He felt as Alma did: “And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!”⁵

In our lives we experience trials, but if we are ambitious for Christ, we can focus on Him and feel joy even in the midst of them. Our Redeemer is the ultimate example. He understood His holy mission and was obedient to the will of God the Father. What a choice blessing it is to bring His wonderful example to our remembrance each week as we partake of the sacrament.

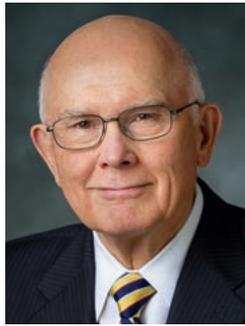
My dear brothers and sisters, we are ambitious for Christ when we serve faithfully, accept humbly, endure nobly, pray fervently, and partake worthily.

May we be ambitious for Christ as we accept our difficulties and trials with patience and faith and find joy in our covenant path.

I testify that the Lord knows you. He knows your struggles and concerns. He knows of your desires to serve Him with devotion and, yes, even ambition. May He guide and bless you as you do so. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. William Smith Clark (1826–86) was a professor of chemistry, botany, and zoology and served as a colonel during the American Civil War. He was a leader in agricultural education and president of Massachusetts Agricultural College. (See “William S. Clark,” wikipedia.com.)
2. Statue located at Sapporo Hitsujigaoka Observation Hill.
3. William S. Clark, in Ann B. Irish, *Hokkaido: A History of Ethnic Transition and Development on Japan's Northern Island* (2009), 156.
4. Alma 36:3; 37:35, 37.
5. Alma 36:20.



By Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Sharing the Restored Gospel

What we call “member missionary work” is not a program but an attitude of love and outreach to help those around us.

I.

Nearing the end of His earthly ministry, our Savior, Jesus Christ, commanded His disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19) and “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). All Christians are under these commands to share the gospel

with everyone. Many call this the “great commission.”

As Elder Neil L. Andersen described in the morning session, Latter-day Saints are surely among those most committed to this great responsibility. We should be because we know that God loves all of His children and that in these last days He has restored vital additional knowledge and power to bless all of them. The Savior taught us to love all as our brothers and sisters, and we honor that teaching by sharing the witness and message of the restored gospel “among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (D&C 112:1). This is a vital part of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint. We look on this as a joyful privilege. What could be more joyful than sharing the truths of eternity with God’s children?

Today we have many resources to share the gospel that were not available in earlier generations. We have TV, the internet, and social media channels. We have many valuable messages to introduce the restored gospel. We have the prominence of the Church in many nations. We have a greatly increased number of missionaries. But are we



using all these resources to maximum effect? I believe most of us would say no. We desire to be more effective in fulfilling our divinely appointed responsibility to proclaim the restored gospel in all the world.

There are many good ideas for sharing the gospel that will work in individual stakes or countries. However, because we are a worldwide Church, I wish to speak of ideas that will work everywhere, from the newest units to the most established, from cultures now receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ to cultures and nations that are increasingly hostile to religion. I want to speak of ideas that you can share with persons who are committed believers in Jesus Christ as well as with persons who have never heard His name, with persons who are satisfied with their current lives as well as with persons who are desperately seeking to improve themselves.

What can I say that will be helpful in your sharing the gospel, whatever

your circumstances? We need the help of every member, and every member can help, since there are many tasks to perform as we share the restored gospel with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

We all know that member participation in missionary work is vital to achieving both conversion and retention. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together . . . [and] labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work.”¹

Sharing the restored gospel is our lifelong Christian duty and privilege. Elder Quentin L. Cook reminds us, “Missionary work is not just one of the 88 keys on a piano that is occasionally played; it is a major chord in a compelling melody that needs to be played

continuously throughout our lives if we are to remain in harmony with our commitment to Christianity and the gospel of Jesus Christ.”²

II.

There are three things all members can do to help share the gospel, regardless of the circumstances in which they live and work. All of us should do all of these.

First, we can all pray for desire to help with this vital part of the work of salvation. All efforts begin with *desire*.

Second, we can keep the commandments ourselves. Faithful, obedient members are the most persuasive witnesses of the truth and value of the restored gospel. Even more important, faithful members will always have the Savior’s Spirit to be with them to guide them as they seek to participate in the great work of sharing the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Third, we can pray for inspiration on what *we* can do in our individual circumstances to share the gospel with others. This is different than praying for the *missionaries* or praying for what *others* can do. We should pray for what *we* can do personally. When we pray, we should remember that prayers for this kind of inspiration will be answered if accompanied by a commitment—something the scriptures call “real intent” or “full purpose of heart.” Pray with a commitment to act upon the inspiration you receive, promising the Lord that if He will inspire you to speak to someone about the gospel, you will do it.

We need the guidance of the Lord because at any particular time some are—and some are not—ready for the additional truths of the restored gospel. We should never set ourselves up as judges of who is ready and who is not.





The Lord knows the hearts of all of His children, and if we pray for inspiration, He will help us find persons He knows to be “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6).

As an Apostle of the Lord, I urge every member and family in the Church to pray for the Lord to help them find persons prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Elder M. Russell Ballard has given this important counsel, with which I concur: “Trust the Lord. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep. . . . If we are not engaged, many who would hear the message of the Restoration will be passed by. . . . The principles are pretty simple—pray, personally and in your family, for missionary opportunities.”³ As we demonstrate our faith, these opportunities will come without any “forced or . . . contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters.”⁴

I know this is true. I add my promise that with faith in the Lord’s help, we will be guided, be inspired, and find great joy in this eternally important work of love. We will come to

understand that success in sharing the gospel is inviting people with love and genuine intent to help them, no matter what their response.

III.

Here are some other things we can do to share the gospel effectively:

1. We need to remember “that people learn when they’re ready to learn, not when we’re ready to teach them.”⁵ What we are interested in, like the important additional doctrinal teachings in the restored Church, usually isn’t what others are interested in. Others typically want the results of the doctrine, not the doctrine. As they observe or experience the effects of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives, they feel the Spirit and begin to be interested in the doctrine. They may also be interested when they are seeking more happiness, closeness to God, or a better understanding of the purpose of life.⁶ Therefore, we must carefully and prayerfully seek discernment on how to inquire about others’ interest

to learn more. This will depend on various things, such as another person’s current circumstances and our relationship with him or her. This is a good subject to discuss in councils, quorums, and Relief Societies.

2. As we speak to others, we need to remember that an invitation to learn more about Jesus Christ and His gospel is preferable to an invitation to learn more about our Church.⁷ We want people to be converted to the gospel. That is the great role of the Book of Mormon. Feelings about our Church follow conversion to Jesus Christ; they do not precede it. Many who are suspicious of churches nevertheless have a love for the Savior. Put first things first.
3. When we seek to introduce people to the restored gospel, we should do this in ways that are authentic and in loving concern for the individual. This happens when we are trying to help others with problems they have identified or when we are working with them in community service activities, such as relieving suffering, caring for the poor and needy,



or enhancing the quality of life of others.

4. Our efforts to share the gospel should not be limited to our circle of friends and associates. During the Olympics we learned of an LDS taxi driver in Rio de Janeiro who carried copies of the Book of Mormon in seven different languages and gave one to whoever would receive them. He called himself the “cab driving missionary.” He said, “The streets of Rio de Janeiro . . . are [my] mission field.”⁸

Clayton M. Christensen, who has impressive experience as a member missionary, states that “over the past twenty years, we have observed no correlation between the depth of a relationship and the probability that a person will be interested in learning about the gospel.”⁹

5. Ward bishoprics can plan a special sacrament meeting to which members are urged to bring interested persons. Ward members will be less hesitant to bring their acquaintances to such a meeting because they will be more assured that the content of

the meeting will be well planned to enlist interest and represent the Church well.

6. There are many other opportunities to share the gospel. For example, just this summer I received a happy letter from a new member who learned about the restored gospel when an old classmate phoned her to inquire about an illness she was experiencing. She wrote: “I was enlightened by the way he presented himself to me. After [a] few months of learning from the missionaries, I was baptized. My life has improved since then.”¹⁰ We all know many whose lives would be improved by the restored gospel. Are we reaching out to them?
7. Our young members’ fascination and expertise with social media gives them unique opportunities to reach out to interest others in the gospel. Describing the Savior’s appearance to the Nephites, Mormon writes, “He did teach and minister unto the children . . . , and he did loose their tongues . . . that they could utter” (3 Nephi 26:14). Today I suppose we

would say “loose their [thumbs] that they could utter.” Go to it, youth!

Sharing the gospel is not a burden but a joy. What we call “member missionary work” is not a program but an attitude of love and outreach to help those around us. It is also an opportunity to witness how we feel about the restored gospel of our Savior. As Elder Ballard has taught, “A most significant evidence of our conversion and of how we feel about the gospel in our own lives is our willingness to share it with others.”¹¹

I testify of Jesus Christ, who is the Light and Life of the World (see 3 Nephi 11:11). His restored gospel lights our way in mortality. His Atonement gives us the assurance of life after death and the strength to persist toward immortality. And His Atonement gives us the opportunity to be forgiven of our sins and, under God’s glorious plan of salvation, to qualify for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 4.
2. Quentin L. Cook, “How to Be a Member Missionary,” *New Era*, Feb. 2015, 48.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “Put Your Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 44.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Put Your Trust in the Lord,” 44.
5. Clayton M. Christensen, *The Power of Everyday Missionaries* (2012), 30.
6. See Christensen, *Power of Everyday Missionaries*, 26–27.
7. See Gary C. Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism: Seven Steps to Improve Our Image* (2008), 34–35.
8. See Ashley Kewish, “Cab Driver Hands Out Copies of Book of Mormon to Rio Visitors,” Aug. 8, 2016, ksl.com.
9. Christensen, *Power of Everyday Missionaries*, 21.
10. Personal letter, Aug. 21, 2016.
11. M. Russell Ballard, “Now Is the Time,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 75; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 89.



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

Emissaries to the Church

We are asking you as home teachers to be God's emissaries to His children, to love and care and pray for the people you are assigned.

Not long ago a single sister, whom I will call Molly, came home from work only to find two inches (5 cm) of water covering her entire basement floor. Immediately she realized that her neighbors, with whom she shared drainage lines, must have done an inordinate amount of laundry and bathing because she got the backed-up water.

After Molly called a friend to come and help, the two began bailing and mopping. Just then the doorbell rang. Her friend cried out, "It's your home teachers!"

Molly laughed. "It is the last day of the month," she replied, "but I can assure you it is *not* my home teachers."

With bare feet, wet trousers, hair up in a bandana, and a very fashionable pair of latex gloves, Molly made her way to the door. But her stark appearance did not compare with the stark sight standing before her eyes. It *was* her home teachers!

"You could have knocked me over with a plumber's friend!" she later told me. "This was a home teaching miracle—the kind the Brethren share in general conference talks!" She went

on: "But just as I was trying to decide whether to give them a kiss or hand them a mop, they said, 'Oh, Molly, we are sorry. We can see you are busy. We don't want to intrude; we'll come another time.' And they were gone."

"Who was it?" her friend called out from the basement.

"I wanted to say, 'It certainly wasn't the Three Nephites,'" Molly admitted, "but I restrained myself and said very calmly, 'It was my home teachers, but they felt this was not an opportune time to leave their message.'"¹

Brethren, may we briefly examine the priesthood duty that has been described as "the Church's first source of help" to its individuals and families.² Entire forests have been sacrificed providing the paper to organize it and then reorganize it. A thousand pep talks have been given trying to encourage it. Certainly no Freudian travel agency anywhere could possibly arrange the number of guilt trips this subject has provoked. Yet still we struggle to achieve anywhere near an acceptable standard of performance regarding the Lord's commandment "to watch over



the church always”³ through priesthood home teaching.

Part of the challenge we face is the changing demographics of the Church. We know that with our membership now spread across more than 30,000 wards and branches, located in some 188 nations and territories, it is much more challenging to visit the homes of our brothers and sisters than it was in the early days of the Church when neighbor taught neighbor in something called “block teaching.”

Furthermore, in many units of the Church, there is a limited number of available priesthood bearers to do home teaching, leaving those who can serve with as many as 18 or 20 families—or more—to care for. There can also be issues of long distances to travel, the high cost and low availability of transportation, and the extended length of the local workday and workweek. Add to these some cultural taboos against uninvited home visits and the safety issues that exist in many of the world’s neighborhoods—well, we begin to see the complexity of the problem.

Brethren, in the best of all worlds and in those circumstances where it can be done, a monthly visit in each home is still the ideal the Church would strive for. But realizing that in many locations around the world achieving such an ideal is not possible and that we cause those brethren to feel like failures when we ask them to do what cannot realistically be done, the First Presidency wrote to the priesthood leaders of the Church in December 2001, giving this inspired, very helpful counsel: “There are some locations in the Church,” they wrote, “where . . . home teaching to every home each month may not be possible because of insufficient numbers



of active priesthood brethren and various other local challenges.” We’ve mentioned some of them. “When such circumstances prevail,” they go on, “leaders should do their best to use the resources they have available to watch over and strengthen each member.”⁴

Brethren, if in my ward or branch I faced these kinds of difficult circumstances, my Aaronic Priesthood companion and I would apply the First Presidency’s counsel (which is now handbook policy) in this way: First, however many months it took to achieve it, we would pursue the scriptural mandate to “visit the house of each member,”⁵ establishing a schedule that would get us to those homes on a calendar that was both possible and practical. Built into that schedule would be the prioritization of our available time and frequency of contacts to those who need us the most—investigators the missionaries are teaching, newly baptized converts, those who are ill, the lonely, the less active, single-parent families with children still at home, and so forth.

While working through our schedule to visit all homes, which may take some months to accomplish, we would make other kinds of contact with the individuals and families on our list

via any of the means the Lord has provided. Certainly we would watch for our families at church and, as the scripture says, would “speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.”⁶ In addition, we would make phone calls, send emails and text messages, even tap out a greeting through one of the many forms of social media available to us. To help address special needs, we might send a scriptural quote or a line from a general conference talk or a Mormon Message drawn from the wealth of material on LDS.org. In the language of the First Presidency, we would do the best we could in the circumstances we faced with the resources available to us.

Brethren, the appeal I am making tonight is for you to lift your vision of home teaching. Please, in newer, better ways see yourselves as emissaries of the Lord to His children. That means leaving behind the tradition of a frantic, law of Moses–like, end-of-the-month calendar in which you rush to give a scripted message from the Church magazines that the family has already read. We would hope, rather, that you will establish an era of genuine, gospel-oriented concern for the members, watching over and caring for each other, addressing spiritual and temporal needs in any way that helps.

Now, as for what “counts” as home teaching, every good thing you do “counts,” so report it all! Indeed, the report that matters most is how you have blessed and cared for those within your stewardship, which has virtually nothing to do with a specific calendar or a particular location. What matters is that you love your people and are fulfilling the commandment “to watch over the church always.”⁷

On May 30 of last year, my friend Troy Russell pulled his pickup truck



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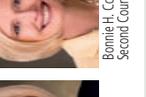
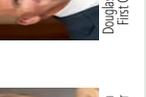
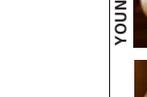
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slowly out of his garage on his way to donate goods to the local Deseret Industries. He felt his back tire roll over a bump. Thinking some item had fallen off the truck, he got out only to find his precious nine-year-old son, Austen, lying face down on the pavement. The screams, the priesthood blessing, the paramedic crew, the hospital staff—they were, in this case, to no avail. Austen was gone.

Unable to sleep, unable to find peace, Troy was inconsolable. He said it was more than he could bear and that he simply could not go on. But into that agonizing breach came three redeeming forces.

First was the love and reassuring spirit of our Father in Heaven, a presence communicated through the Holy Ghost that comforted Troy, taught him, loved him, and whispered that God knows everything about losing a beautiful and perfect Son. Second was his wife, Deedra, who held Troy in her arms and loved him and reminded him that she too had lost that son and was determined not to lose a husband also. Third in this story is John Manning, home teacher *extraordinaire*.

I frankly don't know on what schedule John and his junior companion made visits to the Russell home, or what message was given when they got there, or how they reported the experience. What I do know is that last spring Brother Manning reached down and picked Troy Russell up off the tragedy of that driveway just as if he were picking up little Austen himself. Like the home teacher or watchman or brother in the gospel he was supposed to be, John simply took over the priesthood care and keeping of Troy Russell. He started by saying, "Troy, Austen wants you back on your feet—including on the basketball court—so I will be here



every morning at 5:15 a.m. Be ready because I don't want to have to come in to get you up—and I *know* Deedra doesn't want me to do that either."

"I didn't want to go," Troy told me later, "because I had always taken Austen with me on those mornings and I knew the memories would be too painful. But John insisted, so I went. From that first day back, we talked—or rather I talked and John listened. I talked the entire drive to the church and then the entire drive home. Sometimes I talked while we parked in the driveway and watched the sun rising over Las Vegas. At first it was difficult, but over time I realized I had found my strength in the form of a very slow 6-foot-2-inch (1.88 m) Church ball player, with an absolutely pathetic jump shot, who loved me and listened to me until the sun finally rose again on my life."⁸

My brethren of the holy priesthood, when we speak of home teaching

or watchcare or personal priesthood ministry—call it what you will—this is what we are talking about. We are asking you as home teachers to be God's emissaries to His children, to love and care and pray for the people you are assigned, as we love and care and pray for you. May you be vigilant in tending the flock of God in ways consistent with your circumstances, I pray, in the name of the Good Shepherd of us all, whose witness I am, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Personal conversation, June 2016.
2. *Melchizedek Priesthood Leadership Handbook* (1990), 5.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
4. First Presidency letter, Dec. 10, 2001; this counsel has been incorporated into *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 7.4.3.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:47, 51.
6. Moroni 6:5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
8. Personal conversation and email exchange, Apr. 2016.



By Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.
Of the Seventy

There Is Power in the Book

The greatest power of the Book of Mormon is its impact in bringing us closer to Jesus Christ.

On June 14, 1989, due to some misinformation about the Church, the government of Ghana banned all activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints within that African country. The government seized all Church property, and all missionary activity stopped. The members of the Church, who refer to this period as “the freeze,” did their best to live the gospel without branch meetings or the support of missionaries. There are many inspiring stories about how the members kept the light of the gospel shining by worshipping in their homes and looking after each other as home and visiting teachers.

Eventually the misunderstanding was resolved, and on November 30, 1990, the freeze ended and normal Church activities resumed.¹ Since then there has been an excellent relationship between the Church and the government of Ghana.

Members who lived through the freeze are quick to point out the blessings that came from that unusual period. The faith of many was strengthened through the adversity that they

faced. But one blessing of the freeze came in an unusual way.

Nicholas Ofosu-Hene was a young policeman assigned to guard an LDS meetinghouse during the freeze. His duty was to watch over the building at night. When Nicholas first arrived at the meetinghouse, he saw that things had been scattered around, with papers, books, and furniture in disarray. In the midst of this disorder, he saw a copy of the Book of Mormon. He tried ignoring the book because he had been told that it was evil. But he felt strangely attracted to it. Finally, Nicholas could ignore the book no longer. He picked it up. He felt impelled to start reading it. He read through the night, tears running down his cheeks as he read.

The first time he picked it up, he read all of 1 Nephi. The second time, he read all of 2 Nephi. When he got to 2 Nephi chapter 25, he read the following: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”²

At that point, Nicholas felt the Spirit so strongly that he started sobbing. He realized that in the course of his reading he had received several spiritual promptings that this book was scripture, the most correct he had ever read. He realized that the Latter-day Saints, contrary to what he had heard, strongly believe in Jesus Christ. After the freeze ended and missionaries returned to Ghana, Nicholas, his wife, and his children joined the Church. When I saw him last year, he was a police commander and was serving as the president of the Tamale Ghana District of the Church. He says: “The Church has transformed my life. . . . I thank the Almighty God for leading me into this gospel.”³

Alibert Davies, another Ghanaian, accompanied a friend to one of our meetinghouses, where the friend had a presidency meeting. While he waited for his friend, Alibert read a book he found nearby. When the meeting ended, Alibert wanted to take the book home. He was given permission to take not only that book but also a copy of the Book of Mormon. When he got home, he started reading the Book of Mormon. He could not put it down. He read by candlelight until 3:00 a.m. He did that for several nights, overwhelmed by what he read and what he felt. Alibert is now a member of the Church.

Angelo Scarpulla started his theological studies in his native Italy when he was 10. He eventually became a priest and served his church with devotion. At a certain point his faith started to waver, and he sought and received opportunities for further study. The more he studied, however, the more concerned he became. What he read and felt convinced him that there had been a general apostasy from the true doctrine taught by Jesus and the early

Apostles. Angelo searched for God's true religion in various faiths but was left unsatisfied for many years.

One day he encountered two members of the Church who were helping the missionaries find more people to teach. He felt drawn to them and joyfully listened to their message. Angelo willingly accepted a copy of the Book of Mormon.

That evening he started reading the book. He felt overcome with joy. Through the Spirit, God gave Angelo an inner assurance that in the Book of Mormon he would find the truth for which he had been seeking for many years. Sweet feelings flooded through him. What he read and what he learned from the missionaries confirmed his conclusion that there had been a general apostasy, but he also learned that God's true Church had been restored to the earth. A short while later, Angelo was baptized into the Church.⁴ When I first met him, he was the president of the Rimini Branch of our Church in Italy.

What Nicholas, Alibert, and Angelo experienced with the Book of Mormon is reminiscent of Parley P. Pratt's experience:



"I opened [the book] with eagerness. . . . I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when . . . night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

"As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists. My joy was now full, as it were, and I rejoiced sufficiently to more than pay me for all the sorrows, sacrifices and toils of my life."⁵

Some people have such a powerful experience with the Book of Mormon

the first time they open it, but for others the witness of the truthfulness comes more gradually as they read and pray about it. That was my case. I first read the Book of Mormon as a teenage seminary student. This is the copy of the Book of Mormon that I read. I cannot tell you the exact time or place that it happened, but somewhere during that reading, I started sensing something. There was a warmth and a spirit that came every time I opened the book. The feeling grew as I continued my reading. That feeling continues to this day. Every time I open the Book of Mormon, it is like turning on a switch—the Spirit flows into my heart and soul.

For yet others, a testimony of the Book of Mormon comes more slowly, after much study and prayer. I have a friend who read the Book of Mormon searching to know if it was true. He applied the invitation in Moroni to ask God with a sincere heart, with real intent and faith in Christ, if the Book of Mormon is true.⁶ But he did not immediately get the promised spiritual answer. However, one day as he was deep in thought, driving down the road, the Spirit testified to him of the truth of the Book of Mormon. So happy and overwhelmed was he that





he rolled down the car window and yelled, to no one in particular and yet to all the world, “It’s true!”

Whether our testimony of the Book of Mormon comes the first time we open it or over a period of time, it will influence us all of our days if we continue to read it and apply its teachings. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path.”⁷

I encourage everyone receiving this message, including the Aaronic Priesthood bearers convened in this meeting tonight, to discover the power of the Book of Mormon. As President Thomas S. Monson has encouraged: “Read the Book of Mormon. Ponder its teachings. Ask Heavenly Father if it is true.”⁸ During that process you will feel the Spirit of God in your lives. That Spirit will be part of your testimony that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God,

and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s true Church on the earth today. That testimony will help you resist temptation.⁹ It will prepare you for “the great call of diligence . . . to labor in the vineyards of the Lord.”¹⁰ It will stand as a sure anchor when accusations or slanderous statements are used to challenge your faith, and it will be a rock-solid foundation when you are challenged with questions you cannot answer, at least immediately. You will be able to discern truth from error, and you will feel the assurance of the Holy Ghost reconfirming your testimony over and over again as you continue to read the Book of Mormon throughout your life.

I also encourage all parents hearing or reading this message to make the Book of Mormon an important part of your home. As our children were growing, we read the Book of Mormon as we ate breakfast. This is the bookmark that we used. On the front is a quote from President Benson promising that God would pour out a blessing upon us as we read the Book of Mormon.¹¹ On the back is this promise from President Marion G. Romney, formerly

a counselor in the First Presidency: “I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. . . . The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.”¹²

Now, many years after our children have left home and are raising their own families, we can see clearly the fulfillment of President Romney’s promise. Our family is far from perfect, but we can testify of the power of the Book of Mormon and the blessings that reading it has brought and continues to bring into the lives of our whole family.

The greatest power of the Book of Mormon is its impact in bringing us closer to Jesus Christ. It is a strong witness of Him and His redeeming mission.¹³ Through it we come to understand the majesty and power of His Atonement.¹⁴ It teaches His doctrine clearly.¹⁵ And because of the magnificent chapters describing the visit of the risen Christ to the Nephites, we see and experience Him loving, blessing, and teaching those people and come to understand that He will do the same for us if we come to Him by living His gospel.¹⁶

Brethren, I testify of the power in the Book of Mormon. Whether reading it in English, Italian, or French, in print or on an electronic device, I have found the same wonderful spirit

flowing from its chapters and verses into my life. I testify of its ability to draw us closer to Christ. I pray that each of us will take full advantage of the power that is in this wonderful book of scripture. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “‘You Can’t Close My Heart’: Ghanaian Saints and the Freeze,” Jan. 6, 2016, history.lds.org.
2. 2 Nephi 25:26.
3. Email from Nicholas Ofosu-Hene, Oct. 27, 2015.
4. See Angelo Scarpulla, “In Search of the Restoration,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, 20–21; Angelo Scarpulla, “My Search for the Restoration,” *Tambuli*, June 1993, 16–20; email from Ezio Caramia, Sept. 16, 2016.
5. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 37.
6. See Moroni 10:4–5.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 141.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 62; see also Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 66; *A Prophet’s Voice: Messages from Thomas S. Monson* (2012), 490–94.
9. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Every holder of the priesthood should participate in daily scripture study. . . . I promise you, whether you hold the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, that if you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased” (“Be Your Best Self,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 68).
10. Alma 28:14.
11. “I promise you that from this moment forward, if we will daily sup from [the Book of Mormon’s] pages and abide by its precepts, God will pour out upon each child of Zion and the Church a blessing hitherto unknown” (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 127).
12. Marion G. Romney, “The Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 67.
13. See, for example, the title page of the Book of Mormon; 1 Nephi 11; 2 Nephi 25; Mosiah 16; 18; Alma 5; 12; Helaman 5; 3 Nephi 9; Mormon 7.
14. See, for example, 2 Nephi 2; 9; Mosiah 3; Alma 7; 34.
15. See, for example, 2 Nephi 31; 3 Nephi 11; 27.
16. See 3 Nephi 11–28.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Learn from Alma and Amulek

It is my hope that those who have strayed from the path of discipleship will see with their hearts and learn from Alma and Amulek.

Alma the Younger

Among the most unforgettable characters in scripture is Alma the Younger. Though he was the son of a great prophet, he lost his way for a time and became a “wicked and an idolatrous man.” For reasons we can only guess, he actively opposed his father and sought to destroy the Church. And because of his eloquence and persuasiveness, he experienced great success.¹

But Alma’s life changed when an angel of the Lord appeared to him and spoke with a voice of thunder. For three days and three nights, Alma “was racked with eternal torment, . . . even

with the pains of a damned soul.” And then, somehow, a faint memory brought light to the darkness of his mind—an eternal truth, taught by his father: that Jesus Christ would come “to atone for the sins of the world.” Alma had long ago rejected such concepts, but now his “mind caught hold upon this thought,” and he humbly, earnestly placed his trust in Christ’s atoning power.²

When Alma emerged from this experience, he was a changed man. From that moment on, he devoted his life to undoing the damage he had caused. He is a powerful example of repentance, forgiveness, and enduring faithfulness.





Alma was eventually chosen to succeed his father as head of the Church of God.

Every citizen of the Nephite nation must have known Alma's story. The Twitters, Instagrams, and Facebooks of his day would have been filled with images and stories about him. He probably appeared regularly on the cover of the *Zarahemla Weekly* and was the subject of editorials and network specials. In short, he was perhaps the most well-known celebrity of his day.

But when Alma saw that his people were forgetting God and lifting themselves up in pride and contention, he chose to resign from public office and dedicate himself "wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God,"³ preaching repentance among the Nephites.

At first, Alma had great success—that is, until he traveled to the city of Ammonihah. The people of that city were well aware that Alma was no longer their political leader, and they had little respect for his priesthood authority. They reviled him, ridiculed him, and cast him out of their city.

Heartbroken, Alma turned his back on the city Ammonihah.⁴

But an angel told him to return.

Just think about it: he was told to return to the people who hated him and were hostile toward the Church. It was a dangerous and perhaps life-threatening assignment. But Alma did not hesitate. "He returned speedily."⁵

Alma had been fasting many days when he entered the city. There he asked a complete stranger if he would "give to an humble servant of God something to eat."⁶

Amulek

This man's name was Amulek.

Amulek was a well-to-do, well-known citizen of Ammonihah. Although he came from a long line of believers, his own faith had grown cold. He later confessed, "I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not [believe]; therefore I went on rebelling against God."⁷

But God was preparing Amulek, and when Amulek met Alma, he welcomed the Lord's servant into his home, where Alma stayed for many days.⁸ During that time, Amulek opened his heart to Alma's message, and a marvelous change came over him. From then on, Amulek not only believed, but he also became a champion of truth.

When Alma went out again to teach among the people of Ammonihah, he had a second witness at his side—Amulek, one of their own.

The events that followed constitute one of the most bittersweet narratives in all of scripture. You can read about it in Alma chapters 8–16.

Today, I would like to ask you to consider two questions:

First: "What can I learn from Alma?"

Second: "How am I like Amulek?"

What Can I Learn from Alma?

Let me begin by asking all past, current, or future leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ, "What can you learn from Alma?"

Alma was an exceptionally gifted and capable man. It may have been easy to think that he did not need anyone's help. Nevertheless, what did Alma do when he returned to Ammonihah?

Alma found Amulek and asked him for help.

And Alma received help.

For whatever reason, sometimes we as leaders are reluctant to find and ask our Amuleks. Perhaps we think that we can do the work better by ourselves, or we are reluctant to inconvenience others, or we assume that others would not want to participate. Too often we hesitate to invite people to use their God-given talents and engage in the great work of salvation.

Think of the Savior—did He begin to establish His Church all alone?

No.

His message was not "Stand back. I'll handle this." Rather it was "Come, follow me."⁹ He inspired, invited, instructed, and then trusted His followers "to do the things which ye have seen me do."¹⁰ In this way, Jesus Christ built up not only His Church but also His servants.

In whatever position you currently serve—whether you are a deacons quorum president, a stake president, or an Area President—to be successful, you must find your Amuleks.

It may be someone who is unassuming or even invisible within your congregations. It may be someone who *seems* unwilling or unable to serve. Your Amuleks may be young or old, men or women, inexperienced, tired, or not active in the Church. But what may

not be seen at first sight is that they are hoping to hear from you the words “The Lord needs you! I need you!”

Deep down, many want to serve their God. They want to be an instrument in His hands. They want to thrust in their sickle and strive with their might to prepare the earth for the return of our Savior. They want to build His Church. But they are reluctant to begin. Often they wait to be asked.

I invite you to think of those in your branches and wards, in your missions and stakes, who need to hear a call to action. The Lord has been working with them—preparing them, softening their hearts. Find them by seeing with your heart.

Reach out to them. Teach them. Inspire them. Ask them.

Share with them the words of the angel to Amulek—that the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon them and their house.¹¹ You may be surprised to discover a valiant servant of the Lord who otherwise would have remained hidden.

How Am I Like Amulek?

While some of us should be looking for an Amulek, for others the question might be “How am I like Amulek?”

Perhaps you have, over the years, become less committed in your discipleship. Perhaps the fire of your testimony has dimmed. Perhaps you have distanced yourself from the body of Christ. Perhaps you have become disillusioned or even angry. Like some of the ancient Church of Ephesus, you may have left your “first love”¹²—the sublime, eternal truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, like Amulek, you know in your heart that the Lord has “called [you] many times,” but you “would not hear.”

Nevertheless, the Lord sees in you what He saw in Amulek—the potential



of a valiant servant with an important work to do and with a testimony to share. There is service that no one else can give in quite the same way. The Lord has trusted you with His holy priesthood, which holds the divine potential to bless and lift others. Listen with your heart and follow the promptings of the Spirit.

One Member's Journey

I was touched by the journey of one brother who asked himself, “When the Lord calls, will I hear?” I will call this fine brother David.

David converted to the Church some 30 years ago. He served a mission and then attended law school. While he was studying and working to support a young family, he came across some information about the Church that confused him. The more he read these negative materials, the more unsettled he became. Eventually he asked to have his name removed from the records of the Church.

From that time on, like Alma in his rebellious days, David spent a great deal of time debating with members of the Church, engaging in online conversations with the purpose of challenging their beliefs.

He was very good at this.

One of the members he debated with I will call Jacob. Jacob was always kind and respectful to David, but he was also firm in his defense of the Church.

Over the years, David and Jacob developed a mutual respect and friendship. What David did not know is that Jacob was praying for David and did so faithfully for more than a decade. He even placed his friend's name for prayer in the temples of the Lord and hoped that David's heart would be softened.

Over time, slowly, David did change. He began to remember with fondness the spiritual experiences he once had, and he remembered the happiness he had felt when he was a member of the Church.

Like Alma, David had not completely forgotten the gospel truths he had once embraced. And like Amulek, David felt the Lord reaching out to him. David was now a partner in a law firm—a prestigious job. He had developed a reputation as a critic of the Church, and he had too much pride to ask to be readmitted.

Nevertheless, he continued to feel the pull of the Shepherd.

He took to heart the scripture “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask



of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”¹³ He prayed, “Dear God, I want to be a Latter-day Saint again, but I have questions that need answers.”

He began to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit and to inspired answers of friends as he never had before. One after another, his doubts turned to faith, until finally he realized that, once again, he could feel a testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored Church.

At that point, he knew that he would be able to overcome his pride and do whatever it took to be accepted back into the Church.

Eventually, David entered the waters of baptism and then began counting down the days until he could have his blessings restored.

I am happy to report that this past summer, David’s blessings were restored to him. He is again fully participating in the Church and serving as a Gospel Doctrine teacher in his ward. He takes every opportunity to speak to

others about his transformation, to heal the damage he caused, and to bear testimony of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

My dear brothers, my dear friends, let us seek out, find, inspire, and rely upon the Amuleks in our wards and stakes. There are many Amuleks in the Church today.

Perhaps you know one. Perhaps you are one.

Perhaps the Lord has been whispering to you, urging you to return to your first love, contribute your talents, worthily exercise the priesthood, and serve side by side with your fellow Saints in drawing closer to Jesus Christ and building the kingdom of God here on earth.

Our beloved Savior knows where you are. He knows your heart. He wants to rescue you. He will reach out to you. Just open your heart to Him. It is my hope that those who have strayed

from the path of discipleship—even by only a few degrees—will contemplate the goodness and grace of God, see with their hearts, learn from Alma and Amulek, and hear the life-changing words of the Savior: “Come, follow me.”

I urge you to heed His call, for surely you will receive the harvest of heaven. The blessings of the Lord will rest upon you and your house.¹⁴

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing as an Apostle of the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Mosiah 27:8–10.
2. See Alma 36:6–20.
3. Alma 4:20.
4. See Alma 8:24.
5. Alma 8:18.
6. Alma 8:19.
7. See Alma 10:2–6.
8. See Alma 8:27.
9. Luke 18:22.
10. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:25 (in the Bible appendix).
11. See Alma 10:7.
12. See Revelation 2:4.
13. James 1:5.
14. See Alma 10:7.



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

That He May Become Strong Also

I pray that we will rise to our call to lift others to prepare them for their glorious service.

I feel blessed to be in this meeting with those who hold the priesthood of God. The devotion, the faith, and the selfless service of this body of men and boys are a modern miracle. I speak tonight to priesthood holders, older and younger, united in wholehearted service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord grants His power to those in all priesthood offices who worthily serve in their priesthood duties.

Wilford Woodruff, as President of the Church, described his experience in the offices of the priesthood:

“I heard the first sermon I ever heard in this Church. The next day I was baptized. . . . I was ordained a Teacher. My mission immediately commenced. . . . I went through that whole mission as a Teacher. . . . At the conference I was ordained a Priest. . . . After I was ordained a Priest I was sent . . . on a mission to the southern country. That was in the fall of 1834. I had a companion with me, and we started out without purse and scrip. I traveled alone a good many miles and preached the Gospel, and I baptized a number that I could not confirm in the Church, because I was only a Priest.

. . . I traveled some time preaching the Gospel before I was ordained an Elder. . . .

“[Now] I have been some fifty-four years a member of the Twelve Apostles. I have traveled with that and other quorums now for sixty years; and I want to say to this assembly that I was just as much sustained by the power of God while holding the office of a Teacher, and especially while officiating in the vineyard as a Priest, as I ever was as an Apostle. There is no difference in this so long as we do our duty.”¹

That wonderful spiritual possibility of no difference is suggested in the Lord’s description of the Aaronic Priesthood as an “appendage” of the Melchizedek Priesthood.² The word *appendage* means the two are connected. This connection is important to the priesthood becoming the force and the blessing it can be, in this world and forever, for it “is without beginning of days or end of years.”³

The connection is a simple one. The Aaronic Priesthood prepares young men for an even more sacred trust.

“The power and authority of the higher, or 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.”⁴

Those priesthood keys are fully exercised by only one man at a time, the President and presiding high priest of the Lord’s Church. Then, by the President’s delegation, every man who





holds the Melchizedek Priesthood can be endowed with authority and the privilege of speaking and acting in the name of the Almighty. There is infinity to that power. It is concerned with life and death, with family and the Church, with the great nature of God Himself and His eternal work.

The Lord is preparing the Aaronic Priesthood holder to become an elder serving with faith, power, and gratitude in that glorious Melchizedek Priesthood.

For elders, deep gratitude will be essential to playing your part in full priesthood service. You will remember your days as a deacon, teacher, or priest when those who held the higher priesthood reached back to lift and encourage you in your priesthood journey.

Every holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood has such memories, but the sense of gratitude may have diminished with the years. My hope is to rekindle that feeling and with it a determination to give to all you can the same kind of help you once received.

I remember a bishop who treated me as if I were already what I had the potential to become in priesthood power. He called me one Sunday when I was a priest. He said he needed me to be his companion to visit some members of our ward. He made it sound as if I were his only hope for success. He didn't need me. He had excellent counselors in his bishopric.

We visited a penniless and hungry widow. He wanted me to help him

reach her heart, challenge her to make and use a budget, and promise her that she could rise to be in a position not only to take care of herself but also to help others.

We went next to comfort two little girls living in a difficult situation. As we walked away, the bishop said quietly to me, "Those children will never forget that we came to them."

At the next house, I saw how to invite a less-active man to come back to the Lord by convincing him the ward members needed him.

That bishop was a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who was raising my sights and giving me a boost by example. He taught me to have the power and the courage to go anywhere in service for the Lord. He is long gone to his reward, but I still remember him because he reached down to lift me up when I was an inexperienced Aaronic Priesthood holder. I learned later that he saw me on a future priesthood path of greater responsibilities, then beyond my own vision.

My father did the same thing for me. He was a seasoned and wise holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Once he was asked by an Apostle to write a short note about the scientific evidence for the age of the earth. He wrote it carefully, knowing that some who might read it had strong feelings that the earth was much younger than the scientific evidence suggested.

I still remember my father handing me what he had written and saying to me, "Hal, you have the spiritual wisdom to know if I should send this to the apostles and prophets." I can't remember much of what the paper said, but I will carry with me forever the gratitude I felt for a great Melchizedek Priesthood holder who saw in me spiritual wisdom that I could not see.

One night, some years later, after I had been ordained an Apostle, the prophet of God called me and asked me to read something that had been written about Church doctrine. He had spent the night reading the chapters of a book. He said with a chuckle, "I can't get through all of this. You shouldn't be resting while I'm working." And then he used almost the same words my father had years before: "Hal, you are the one who should read this. You will know if it is right to publish it."

That same pattern of a Melchizedek Priesthood holder raising sights and giving confidence came one night at a speech festival sponsored by the Church. At 17 years of age, I was asked to speak to a large audience. I had no idea what was expected of me. I wasn't given a subject, and so I prepared a talk that was way beyond what I knew about the gospel. As I spoke, I realized I had made a mistake. I can still remember that after I spoke, I had a sinking feeling of having failed.

The next and final speaker was Elder Matthew Cowley of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was a great orator—beloved across the Church. I still remember looking up at him from my seat next to the rostrum.

He began in a powerful voice. He said that my speech had made him feel that he was at a great conference. He smiled as he said it. My feelings of failure left and were followed by

confidence that I might someday become what he seemed to think I already was.

The memory of that night still leads me to listen carefully when an Aaronic Priesthood holder speaks. Because of what Elder Cowley did for me, I always expect that I will hear the word of God. I am seldom disappointed and often amazed, and I can't help but smile as Elder Cowley did.

Many things may help strengthen our younger brothers to rise up in the priesthood, but nothing will be more powerful than our helping them develop the faith and confidence that they can draw on the power of God in their priesthood service.

That faith and confidence won't stay with them from a single experience of being lifted by even the most gifted Melchizedek Priesthood holder. The ability to draw on those powers must be cultivated by many expressions of confidence from those who are more experienced in the priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood holders will also need daily and even hourly encouragement and correction from the Lord Himself through the Holy Ghost. That will be available to them as they *choose to remain worthy of it*. It will depend upon the choices they will make.

That is why we must teach by example and by testimony that the words of the great Melchizedek Priesthood leader King Benjamin are true.⁵ They are words of love spoken in the name of the Lord, whose priesthood this is. King Benjamin teaches what is required of us to remain pure enough to receive the encouragement and the correction of the Lord:

"And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.



"But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not."⁶

We all are aware of the fiery darts of the enemy of righteousness being sent like a terrible wind against the young priesthood holders we love so much. To us, they seem like the stripling warriors, who called themselves the sons of Helaman. They can survive, as those young warriors did, if they keep themselves safe, as King Benjamin urged them to do.

The sons of Helaman did not doubt. They fought bravely and came off conquerors because they believed the words of their mothers.⁷ We understand the power of the faith of a loving mother. Mothers provide that great support to their sons today. We holders of the priesthood can and must add to that support with our determination to answer the charge that as we are converted, we are to reach down to strengthen our brethren.⁸

My prayer is that every Melchizedek Priesthood holder will accept the opportunity offered by the Lord:

"And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also.

"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.

"Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me."⁹

You priesthood leaders and fathers of Aaronic Priesthood holders can work miracles. You can help the Lord fill the ranks of faithful elders with young men who accept the call to preach the gospel and do it with confidence. You will see many you have lifted and encouraged stay faithful, marry worthily in the temple, and in turn, lift and prepare others.

It will not take new activity programs, improved teaching materials, or better social media. It will not require



By President Thomas S. Monson

any call beyond what you have now. The oath and the covenant of the priesthood gives you power, authority, and direction. I pray you will go home and study carefully the oath and covenant of the priesthood, found in Doctrine and Covenants section 84.

All of us hope that more young men will have experiences like Wilford Woodruff, who as an Aaronic Priesthood holder taught the gospel of Jesus Christ with converting power.

I pray that we will rise to our call to lift others to prepare them for their glorious service. I thank with all my heart the wonderful people who have lifted me and shown me how to love and lift others.

I testify that President Thomas S. Monson holds all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time. I bear witness that he, over a lifetime of service, has been an example for us all of reaching to lift others as a holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood. I am personally grateful for the way he has lifted me and shown me how to lift others.

God the Father lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church and kingdom. This is His priesthood. I know this for myself by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Wilford Woodruff, "The Rights of the Priesthood," *Deseret Weekly*, Mar. 17, 1894, 381.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:30; 107:14.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:17.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 107:18–19.
5. Alma 13:6–9 suggests that Book of Mormon prophets held the Melchizedek Priesthood.
6. Mosiah 4:29–30.
7. See Alma 56:47.
8. See Luke 22:32.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:106–8.

Principles and Promises

May we care for our bodies and our minds by observing the principles set forth in the Word of Wisdom, a divinely provided plan.

Tonight, brethren, I pray for the guidance of our Heavenly Father as I share my message with you.

In 1833 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a plan for healthy living. That plan is found in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and is known as the Word of Wisdom. It gives specific direction regarding the food we eat, and it prohibits the use of substances which are harmful to our bodies.

Those who are obedient to the Lord's commandments and who faithfully observe the Word of Wisdom are

promised particular blessings, among which are good health and added physical stamina.¹

Recently I read the true account of a dramatic manifestation concerning these promises. A faithful member of the Church, John A. Larsen, served during World War II in the United States Coast Guard on the ship *USS Cambria*. During a battle in the Philippines, word came of an approaching squadron of bombers and kamikaze fighter planes. Orders were given for immediate evacuation. Since the *USS Cambria* was already gone, John and three





companions gathered their gear and hurried to the beach, hoping for a lift out to one of the departing ships. Fortunately, a landing craft picked them up and sped toward the last ship leaving the bay. The men on that departing ship, in an effort to evacuate as quickly as possible, were busy on deck and had time only to throw ropes to the four men, that they might hopefully be able to climb to the deck.

John, with a heavy radio strapped to his back, found himself dangling at the end of a 40-foot (12 m) rope, at the side of a ship headed out to the open sea. He began pulling himself up, hand over hand, knowing that if he lost his grip, he would almost certainly perish. After climbing only a third of the way,

he felt his arms burning with pain. He had become so weak that he felt he could no longer hold on.

With his strength depleted, as he grimly contemplated his fate, John silently cried unto God, telling Him that he had always kept the Word of Wisdom and had lived a clean life—and he now desperately needed the promised blessings.

John later said that as he finished his prayer, he felt a great surge of strength. He began climbing once again and fairly flew up the rope. When he reached the deck, his breathing was normal and not the least bit labored. The blessings of added health and stamina promised in the Word of Wisdom had been his. He gave thanks

to his Heavenly Father then, and throughout the remainder of his life, for the answer to his desperate prayer for help.²

Brethren, may we care for our bodies and our minds by observing the principles set forth in the Word of Wisdom, a divinely provided plan. With all my heart and soul, I testify of the glorious blessings which await us as we do. That this may be so, I pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
2. See John A. Larsen, in Robert C. Freeman and Dennis A. Wright, comps., *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saints in World War II* (2001), 350–51; used by permission.



By President Thomas S. Monson

The Perfect Path to Happiness

I testify of the great gift which is our Father's plan for us. It is the one perfect path to peace and happiness.

My beloved brothers and sisters, both here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, how grateful I am for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you this morning.

Fifty-two years ago, in July 1964, I had an assignment in New York City during the time the World's Fair was hosted there. Early one morning I visited the Mormon Pavilion at the fair. I arrived just prior to a showing

of the Church's film *Man's Search for Happiness*, a portrayal of the plan of salvation which has since become a Church classic. I sat next to a young man who was perhaps 35 years of age. We spoke briefly. He was not a member of our Church. Then the lights dimmed, and the show commenced.

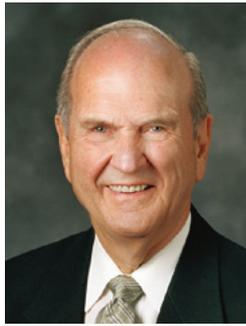
We listened to the voice of the narrator as he posed the poignant and universal questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where do I go when I leave this life? All ears strained to hear the answers, and all eyes were fixed on the images portrayed. A description of our premortal life was given, along with an explanation of our purpose on earth. We witnessed a touching depiction of the passing from this life of an elderly grandfather and of his glorious reunion with loved ones who had preceded him to the spirit world.

At the conclusion of this beautiful portrayal of our Heavenly Father's plan for us, the crowd silently filed out, many visibly touched by the message of the film. The young visitor next to me did not arise. I asked if he had enjoyed the presentation. His emphatic response: "This is the truth!"

Our Father's plan for our happiness and our salvation is shared by our missionaries throughout the world. Not all who hear this divine message accept and embrace it. However, men and women everywhere, just like my young friend at the New York World's Fair, recognize its truths, and they plant their feet on the path that will lead them safely home. Their lives are forever changed.

Essential to the plan is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His atoning sacrifice, all would be lost. It is not enough, however, merely to believe





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

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.

We are blessed to *have* the truth. We have a mandate to *share* the truth. Let us *live* the truth, that we might merit all that the Father has for us. He does nothing save it be for our benefit. He has told us, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹

From the depths of my soul and in all humility, 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.

My brothers and sisters, I leave with you my love and my blessing as I close, and I do so in the name of our Savior and Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTE

1. Moses 1:39.

Joy and Spiritual Survival

When the focus of our lives is on Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives.

My dear brothers and sisters, today I would like to discuss a principle that is key to our spiritual survival. It is a principle that will only become more important as the tragedies and travesties around us increase.

These are the latter days, so none of us should be surprised when we see prophecy fulfilled. A host of prophets, including Isaiah, Paul, Nephi, and Mormon, foresaw that perilous times

would come,¹ that in our day the whole world would be in commotion,² that men would "be lovers of their own selves, . . . without natural affection, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,"³ and that many would become servants of Satan who uphold the adversary's work.⁴ Indeed, you and I "wrestle . . . against the rulers of the darkness of this world, [and] against spiritual wickedness in high places."⁵



As conflicts between nations escalate, as cowardly terrorists prey on the innocent, and as corruption in everything from business to government becomes increasingly commonplace, what can help us? What can help each of us with our personal struggles and with the rigorous challenge of living in these latter days?

The prophet Lehi taught a principle for spiritual survival. First, consider his circumstances: He had been persecuted for preaching truth in Jerusalem and had been commanded by the Lord to leave his possessions and flee with his family into the wilderness. He had lived in a tent and survived on what food could be found on the way to an unknown destination, and he had watched two of his sons, Laman and Lemuel, rebel against the teachings of the Lord and attack their brothers Nephi and Sam.

Clearly, Lehi knew opposition, anxiety, heartache, pain, disappointment, and sorrow. Yet he declared boldly and without reservation a principle as revealed by the Lord: “Men are, that they might have joy.”⁶ Imagine! Of all the words he could have used to describe the nature and purpose of our lives here in mortality, he chose the word *joy*!

Life is filled with detours and dead ends, trials and challenges of every kind. Each of us has likely had times when distress, anguish, and despair almost consumed us. Yet we are here to have joy?

Yes! The answer is a resounding yes! But how is that possible? And what must we do to claim the joy that Heavenly Father has in store for us?

Eliza R. Snow, second General President of the Relief Society, offered a riveting answer. Because of Missouri’s infamous extermination order, issued at the onset of the grueling winter



of 1838,⁷ she and other Saints were forced to flee the state that very winter. One evening, Eliza’s family spent the night in a small log cabin used by refugee Saints. Much of the chinking between the logs had been extracted and burned for firewood by those who preceded them, so there were holes between the logs large enough for a cat to crawl through. It was bitter cold, and their food was frozen solid.

That night some 80 people huddled inside that small cabin, only 20 feet square (6.1 meters square). Most sat or stood all night trying to keep warm. Outside, a group of men spent the night gathered around a roaring fire, with some singing hymns and others roasting frozen potatoes. Eliza recorded: “Not a complaint was heard—all were cheerful, and judging from appearances, strangers would have taken us to be pleasure excursionists rather than a band of gubernatorial exiles.”

Eliza’s report of that exhausting, bone-chilling evening was strikingly optimistic. She declared: “That was a very merry night. None but saints can be happy under every circumstance.”⁸

That’s it! Saints can be happy under every circumstance. We can feel joy even while having a bad day, a bad week, or even a bad year!

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.

When the focus of our lives is on God’s plan of salvation, which President Thomas S. Monson just taught us, and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy. We feel it at Christmastime when we sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come.”⁹ And we can feel it all year round. For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!

That is why our missionaries leave their homes to preach His gospel. Their goal is not to increase the number of Church members. Rather, our missionaries teach and baptize¹⁰ to bring joy to the people of the world!¹¹

Just as the Savior offers peace that “passeth all understanding,”¹² He also offers an intensity, depth, and breadth of joy that defy human logic or mortal comprehension. For example, it doesn’t seem possible to feel joy when your child suffers with an incurable illness or when you lose your job or when your spouse betrays you. Yet that is precisely the joy the Savior offers. His joy is constant, assuring us that our “afflictions shall be but a small moment”¹³ and be consecrated to our gain.¹⁴

How, then, can we claim that joy? We can start by “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”¹⁵ “in every thought.”¹⁶ We can give thanks for Him in our prayers and by keeping covenants we’ve made with Him and our Heavenly Father. As our Savior becomes more and more real to us and as we plead for His joy to be given to us, our joy will increase.

Joy is powerful, and focusing on joy brings God’s power into our lives. As

in all things, Jesus Christ is our ultimate exemplar, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.”¹⁷ Think of that! In order for Him to endure the most excruciating experience ever endured on earth, our Savior focused on *joy*!

And what was the joy that was set before Him? Surely it included the joy of cleansing, healing, and strengthening us; the joy of paying for the sins of

all who would repent; the joy of making it possible for you and me to return home—clean and worthy—to live with our Heavenly Parents and families.

If we focus on the joy that will come to us, or to those we love, what can we endure that presently seems overwhelming, painful, scary, unfair, or simply impossible?

One father in a spiritually precarious situation focused on the joy of

finally being clean and right with the Lord—the joy of being freed from guilt and shame—and the joy of having peace of mind. That focus gave him the courage to confess to his wife and bishop about his problem with pornography and his subsequent infidelity. He is now doing everything his bishop counsels him to do, striving with all his heart to regain the trust of his dear wife.

A young woman focused on the joy of staying sexually pure to help her endure the mocking of friends as she walked away from a popular and provocative, but spiritually dangerous, situation.

A man who frequently demeaned his wife and indulged in angry outbursts at his children focused on the joy of being worthy to have the Holy Ghost as his constant companion. That focus motivated him to put off the natural man,¹⁸ to which he had too often succumbed, and make needed changes.

A dear colleague recently told me of his past two decades of heavy trials. He said, “I have learned to suffer with joy. My suffering was swallowed up in the joy of Christ.”¹⁹

What will you and I be able to endure as we focus on the joy that is “set before” us?²⁰ What repenting will then be possible? What weakness will become a strength?²¹ What chastening will become a blessing?²² What disappointments, even tragedies, will turn to our good?²³ And what challenging service to the Lord will we be able to give?²⁴

As we diligently focus on the Savior and then follow His pattern of focusing on joy, we need to avoid those things that can interrupt our joy. Remember Korihor, the anti-Christ? Spewing falsehoods about the Savior, Korihor





went from place to place until he was brought before a high priest who asked him: “Why do ye go about perverting the ways of the Lord? Why do ye teach this people that there shall be no Christ, to interrupt their rejoicings?”²⁵

Anything that opposes Christ or His doctrine will interrupt our joy. That includes the philosophies of men, so abundant online and in the blogosphere, which do exactly what Korihor did.²⁶

If we look to the world and follow its formulas for happiness,²⁷ we will never know joy. The unrighteous may experience any number of emotions and sensations, but they will never experience joy!²⁸ Joy is a gift for the faithful.²⁹ It is the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ.³⁰

He taught us how to have joy. When we choose Heavenly Father to be our God³¹ and when we can feel the Savior’s Atonement working in our lives, we will be filled with joy.³² Every time we nurture our spouse and guide our children, every time we forgive someone or ask for forgiveness, we can feel joy.

Every day that you and I choose to live celestial laws, every day that we keep our covenants and help others to do the same, joy will be ours.

Heed these words of the Psalmist: “I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall

not be moved. . . . In [His] presence is fulness of joy.”³³ As this principle is embedded in our hearts, each and every day can be a day of joy and gladness.³⁴ I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See 2 Timothy 3:1–5.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
3. 2 Timothy 3:2–4.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
5. Ephesians 6:12.
6. 2 Nephi 2:25.
7. Governor Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri issued the order of Mormon extermination on October 27, 1838 (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 349).
8. See Eliza R. Snow, in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (1877), 145–46.
9. “Joy to the World,” *Hymns*, no. 201.
10. Missionaries do as the Lord has commanded: they preach, teach, and baptize in His name (see Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Mormon 9:22; Doctrine and Covenants 68:8; 84:62; 112:28). In His Intercessory Prayer, Jesus proclaimed His relationship to the joy of His disciples. He said, “These things I speak in the world, that they might have *my* joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13; emphasis added).
11. See Alma 13:22.
12. Philippians 4:7.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:2.
15. Hebrews 12:2.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
17. Hebrews 12:2.
18. See Mosiah 3:19. Note: the “natural man” is not only an enemy to God; he is also an enemy to his wife and children.
19. See Alma 31:38.
20. Hebrews 12:2.
21. See Ether 12:27.

22. See Hebrews 12:6.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
24. See Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27.
25. Alma 30:22. The Book of Mormon is filled with examples of men and women who experience joy and rejoicing *because they choose to follow Jesus Christ*. Any other choice, as in the case of Korihor, leads to eventual destruction.
26. *Calumny*, meaning a misrepresentation, is defined as a false and malicious statement designed to injure the reputation of someone or something. Calumny was happening in the days of Korihor, and it is happening now. The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the invincibility of the Church even in the face of calumny. He said: “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 444).
27. The world teaches that the purchase of *things* will bring joy. And if that doesn’t work, buy more! It also teaches that you can sin your way to joy. And if that doesn’t work, sin more! The promise is that at the end of every hedonistic rainbow is a pot of joy. Not true!
28. Not in this world or in the world to come.
29. Righteous Saints “who have endured the crosses of the world . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever” (2 Nephi 9:18).
30. For examples, see 2 Nephi 27:30; Alma 27:16–18.
31. See 1 Nephi 17:40.
32. See Mosiah 4:2–3.
33. Psalm 16:8, 11.
34. See Isaiah 35:10; 2 Nephi 8:3.



By Elder Peter F. Meurs
Of the Seventy

The Sacrament Can Help Us Become Holy

Consider five ways to increase the impact and power of our regular participation in the sacred ordinance of the sacrament.

One of my earliest memories is of sacrament meetings held in our home in Warrnambool, Australia. Between 10 and 15 people attended our branch, and my father, one of three priesthood holders, regularly had the opportunity to bless the sacrament. I remember the feelings I had as he humbly and carefully read the words of the sacrament prayers. Often his voice trembled as he felt the Spirit. He sometimes had to pause to control his emotions before completing the prayer.

As a five-year-old, I could not understand the full meaning of what was being said or done; however, I knew something special was occurring. I could feel the calm and reassuring influence of the Holy Ghost as my father contemplated the Savior's love for us.

The Savior taught: "This shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you" (3 Nephi 18:11).

I invite all of us to consider five ways to increase the impact and power of our regular participation in the sacred ordinance of the sacrament, an ordinance that can help us become holy.

1. Prepare in Advance

We can begin our preparation for the sacrament well before sacrament meeting begins. Saturday may be a good time to contemplate our spiritual progress and preparation.

Mortality is an essential gift in our journey to become like our Heavenly Father. Of necessity, it includes trials and challenges that provide opportunities for us to change and grow. King Benjamin taught that "the natural man is an enemy to God, . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19). Participation in the sacrament ordinance provides an opportunity to more fully yield our hearts and souls to God.

In our preparation, our hearts become broken as we express gratitude for Christ's Atonement, repent of our mistakes and shortcomings, and ask for the Father's help in our continuing journey to become more like Him. We can then look forward to the opportunity the sacrament provides to remember His sacrifice and renew our commitments to all the covenants we have made.

2. Arrive Early

Our sacrament experience can be enhanced when we arrive well before





the meeting and ponder as the prelude music is played.

President Boyd K. Packer taught: “Prelude music, reverently played, is nourishment for the spirit. It invites inspiration.”¹ “This is not a time,” President Russell M. Nelson explained, “for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of prayerful meditation as leaders and members prepare spiritually for the sacrament.”²

3. Sing and Learn from the Words of the Sacrament Hymn

The sacrament hymn is an especially important part of our sacrament experience. Music elevates our thoughts and feelings. The sacrament hymn has even greater influence when we focus on the words and the powerful doctrine taught. We learn much from words

such as “Bruised, broken, torn for us,”³ “Let us remember and be sure our hearts and hands are clean and pure,”⁴ and “Where justice, love, and mercy meet in harmony divine!”⁵

As we sing a hymn in preparation to partake of the emblems, the words can become part of our covenant commitment. Consider, for example: “We love thee, Lord; our hearts are full. We’ll walk thy chosen way.”⁶

4. Spiritually Participate in the Sacrament Prayers (See Moroni 4–5)

Instead of tuning out the familiar words of the sacrament prayers, we can learn much and feel even more as we participate spiritually by considering the commitments and associated blessings included in these sacred prayers.

The bread and water are blessed and sanctified to our souls. They remind us of the sacrifice of the Savior and that He can help us to become holy.

The prayers explain that we partake of the bread in remembrance of the body of the Son, which He gave as a ransom to qualify all for resurrection, and we drink of the water in remembrance of the blood of the Son, which He freely shed so that we might be redeemed on condition of repentance.

The prayers introduce the covenants with the phrase “that they are willing” (Moroni 4:3). This phrase has so much potential power for us. Are we willing to serve and participate? Are we willing to change? Are we willing to address our weaknesses? Are we willing to reach out and bless others? Are we willing to trust the Savior?

As the promises are stated and as we partake, we confirm in our hearts that we are willing to:

- Take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ.
- Strive to keep all of His commandments.
- Always remember Him.

The prayer concludes with a sublime invitation and promise: “That they may always have his Spirit to be with them” (Moroni 4:3).

Paul wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23). Beautiful blessings and gifts are available to us as we keep our covenants.

5. Ponder and Remember Him as the Sacrament Emblems Are Passed

The reverent moments as priesthood holders pass the sacrament can become sacred to us.

As the bread is passed, we may contemplate that in the ultimate act of love for us, the Savior took “upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people” (Alma 7:12).

We may remember the glorious blessing of the Resurrection that “shall come to all, . . . both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame” (Alma 11:44).

As the water is passed, we may remember the plea of the Savior:

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

“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—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:16, 18).

We remember that He took “upon him [our] infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to [our] infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

As we consider our sacrament experience, we might ask ourselves:

- What will I do this week to better prepare for the sacrament?
- Could I contribute more to the reverence and revelation that can accompany the beginning of sacrament meeting?



- What doctrine was taught in the sacrament hymn?
- What did I hear and feel as I listened to the sacrament prayers?
- What did I think about as the sacrament was passed?

Elder David A. Bednar taught: “The ordinance of the sacrament is a holy and repeated invitation to repent sincerely and to be renewed spiritually. The act of partaking of the sacrament, in and of itself, does not remit sins. But as we prepare conscientiously and participate in this holy ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then the promise is that we may *always* have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. And by the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we can *always* retain a remission of our sins.”⁷

I testify of the multitude of blessings available to us as we increase our preparation for and spiritual participation in the ordinance of the sacrament. I further testify that these blessings are available to us because of the love of our Father in Heaven and the infinite atoning sacrifice of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 61.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Worshiping at Sacrament Meeting,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 27; *Liahona*, Aug. 2004, 13.
3. “Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King,” *Hymns*, no. 181.
4. “While of These Emblems We Partake,” *Hymns*, no. 173.
5. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
6. “As Now We Take the Sacrament,” *Hymns*, no. 169.
7. David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 61–62.



By **Linda S. Reeves**
Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The Great Plan of Redemption

I know that when we sincerely repent of our sins, they are truly gone—without a trace!

A few months before President Boyd K. Packer passed away, general priesthood and auxiliary leaders had the precious opportunity of having him speak to us. I have not been able to quit thinking about what he said. He shared that he had searched backward throughout his lifetime, looking for evidence of the sins that he had committed and sincerely repented of, and he could find *no trace* of them. Because of the atoning sacrifice of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, and through sincere repentance, his sins were completely gone, as if they had never happened. President Packer then charged us as leaders that day to testify that this is true for each one of us who sincerely repents.

I'm aware of a man who was involved in moral transgressions several years ago. For some time, this man felt too ashamed and too worried to approach his wife and his priesthood leaders. He wanted to fully repent but actually expressed that he was willing to give up his own eternal salvation rather than put his spouse and children through the sorrow, shame, or other consequences that might be caused by his confession.

When we have sinned, Satan often tries to convince us that the unselfish thing to do is to protect others from the devastation of the knowledge of our sins, including avoiding confessing to our bishop, who can bless our lives through his priesthood keys as a common judge in Israel. The truth, however, is that the unselfish and Christlike thing to do is to confess and repent. This is Heavenly Father's great plan of redemption.

Finally, this dear man confessed to his faithful wife and his Church leaders,

expressing deep remorse. Though it was the most difficult thing he had ever done, feelings of relief, peace, gratitude, love for our Savior, and a knowledge that the Lord was lifting his heavy burden and carrying him caused joy beyond expression, regardless of the outcome and his future.

He had been certain that his wife and children would be devastated—and they were; and that there would be disciplinary action and a release from his calling—and there was. He was certain that his wife would be brokenhearted, hurt, and angry—and she was. And he was convinced that she would leave, taking the children with her—but she didn't.

Sometimes serious transgression leads to divorce, and depending on circumstances, that might be necessary. But to this man's amazement, his wife embraced him and dedicated herself to helping him in any way that she could. Over time, she was able to fully forgive him. She had felt the healing power of the Savior's Atonement for her. Years later, this couple and their three children are strong and faithful. The husband and wife serve in the temple and have a wonderful, loving marriage. The depth of this man's testimony and



his love and gratitude for the Savior are so evident in his life.

Amulek testified, “I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; . . . if ye will repent . . . , immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.”¹

When I served with my husband as he presided over a mission, we went to the airport to pick up a large group of missionaries one morning. One particular young man caught our eye. He seemed sad, weighed down, almost distraught. We watched him carefully that afternoon. By evening, this young man made a belated confession, and his leaders determined that he needed to return home. Although we were very sad that he had been dishonest and had not repented before coming on his mission, on the way to the airport we sincerely and lovingly praised him for having the courage to come forward, and we pledged to stay in close contact with him.

This great young man was blessed to have wonderful parents, great priesthood leaders, and a supportive, loving ward. After a year of working hard to fully repent and partake of the Savior’s Atonement, he was able to return to our mission. It is difficult for me to describe the feelings of joy we felt as we picked up this young man from the airport. He was full of the Spirit, happy, confident before the Lord, and anxious to fulfill a faithful mission. He became an outstanding missionary, and later my husband and I had the privilege of attending his temple sealing.

By contrast, I’m aware of another missionary who, knowing her unconfessed sin from before her mission would surely cause her to be sent home early, made her own plan to work extra hard during her mission



and confess to the mission president just days before completing her mission. She lacked godly sorrow and tried to circumvent the plan that our loving Savior has offered each one of us.

During our mission, I once accompanied my husband when he went to interview a man for baptism. While my husband conducted the interview, I waited outside with the sister missionaries who had taught this man. When the interview was finished, my husband informed the missionaries that the man would be able to be baptized. This dear man wept and wept as he explained that he had been certain that the serious sins he had committed in his life would prevent him from being able to be baptized. I have seldom witnessed the joy and happiness of someone coming out of the darkness and into the light equal to what I witnessed that day.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson testified:

“With faith in [our] merciful Redeemer and His power, potential despair turns to hope. One’s very heart and desires change, and the once-appealing sin becomes increasingly abhorrent. . . .

“ . . . Whatever the cost of repentance, it is swallowed up in the joy of forgiveness.”²

These experiences remind me of Enos in the Book of Mormon, who “cried unto [the Lord] in mighty prayer” and then heard a voice saying, “Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee. . . .

“And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

“And I said: Lord, how is it done?

“And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ. . . . Go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.”³

In preparing this talk, I wanted to get a feeling for how our grandchildren understand repentance and how they feel about the Savior, so I asked our children to ask them the following questions. I was touched by our grandchildren’s responses.

What is repentance? “When you hit someone, you can say ‘sorry’ and help them up.”

How do you feel when you repent? “You can feel Him; you can feel His warmness, and the bad feeling goes away.”

How do you feel about Jesus and Heavenly Father when you repent? “I feel that Jesus feels it was worth it to do the Atonement, and He’s happy that we can live with Him again.”

Why do Jesus and Heavenly Father want me to repent? In the words of my teenage grandchild: “Because They love me! In order to progress and become like Them, I need to repent. I also want the Spirit to be with me, so I need to repent daily to have His wonderful companionship. I will never be able to thank Them enough.”

When four-year-old Brynlee heard these questions, she said, “I don’t know, Daddy. You teach me.”



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

In a past general conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland declared: “However late you think you are, however many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made . . . , or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”⁴

Oh, how I want each of my children, grandchildren, and each of you, my brothers and sisters, to feel the joy and closeness to Heavenly Father and to our Savior as we daily repent of our sins and weaknesses. Each accountable child of Heavenly Father needs repentance. Consider what sins we need to repent of. What is holding us back? In what ways do we need to improve?

I know, as President Packer experienced and testified, that when we sincerely repent of our sins, they are truly gone—without a trace! I have personally felt the love, the joy, the relief, and the confidence before the Lord as I have sincerely repented.

To me, the greatest miracles in life are not the parting of the Red Sea, the moving of mountains, or even the healing of the body. The greatest miracle happens when we humbly approach our Father in Heaven in prayer, fervently plead to be forgiven, and then are cleansed of those sins through the atoning sacrifice of our Savior. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Alma 34:31.
2. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 40.
3. Enos 1:4–8.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 33.

To Whom Shall We Go?

In the end, each one of us must respond to the Savior’s question: “Will ye also go away?”

Several years ago my family and I visited the Holy Land. One of my vivid memories from our trip was a visit to the upper room in Jerusalem, the traditional site of the Last Supper.

As we stood in that place, I read to them from John 17, where Jesus pleads with His Father for His disciples:

“I pray for them . . . that they may be one, as we are. . . .

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”¹

I was deeply moved while reading these words and found myself praying in that sacred place that I could ever be one with my family and with my Heavenly Father and with His Son.

Our precious relationships with families, friends, the Lord, and His restored Church are among the things that matter most in life. Because these relationships are so important, they should be cherished, protected, and nurtured.

One of the most heart-wrenching stories in scripture occurred when “many of [the Lord’s] disciples” found it hard to accept His teachings and doctrine, and they “went back, and *walked no more with him.*”²

As these disciples left, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?”³

Peter responded:

“Lord, *to whom shall we go?* thou hast the words of eternal life.

“And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”⁴

In that moment, when others focused on what they could not accept, the Apostles chose to focus on what they *did* believe and know, and as a result, they remained with Christ.

Later, on the day of Pentecost, the Twelve received the gift of the Holy Ghost. They became bold in their witness of Christ and began to understand more fully Jesus’s teachings.

Today is no different. For some, Christ’s invitation to believe and remain continues to be hard—or difficult to accept. Some disciples struggle to understand a specific Church policy or teaching. Others find concerns in our history or in the imperfections of some members and leaders, past and present. Still others find it difficult to live a religion that requires so much. Finally, some have become “weary in well-doing.”⁵ For these and other reasons, some Church members vacillate in their faith, wondering if perhaps they should

follow those who “went back, and walked no more” with Jesus.

If any one of you is faltering in your faith, I ask you the same question that Peter asked: “To whom shall [you] go?” 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. There may be some doctrine, some policy, some bit of history that puts you at odds with your faith, and you may feel that the only way to resolve that inner turmoil right now is to “walk no more” with the Saints. If you live as long as I have, you will come to know that things have a way of resolving themselves. An inspired insight or revelation may shed new light on an issue. Remember, the Restoration is not an event, but it continues to unfold.

Never abandon the great truths revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Never stop reading, pondering, and applying the doctrine of Christ contained in the Book of Mormon.

Never fail to give equal time to the Lord through honest attempts to understand what the Lord has revealed. As my dear friend and former colleague Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said, “We should not assume . . . that just because something is unexplainable by us it is unexplainable.”⁶

So before you make that spiritually perilous choice to leave, I encourage you to stop and think carefully before giving up whatever it was that brought you to your testimony of the restored Church of Jesus Christ in the first place. Stop and think about what you have felt here and why you felt it. Think about the times when the Holy



Ghost has borne witness to you of eternal truth.

Where will you go to find others who share your belief in personal, loving Heavenly Parents, who teach us how to return to Their eternal presence?

Where will you go to be taught about a Savior who is your best friend, who not only suffered for your sins but who also suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” so “that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities,”⁷ including, I believe, the infirmity of loss of faith?

Where will you go to learn more about Heavenly Father’s plan for our eternal happiness and peace, a plan that is filled with wondrous possibilities, teachings, and guidance for our mortal and eternal lives? Remember, the plan of salvation gives mortal life meaning, purpose, and direction.

Where will you go to find a detailed and inspired Church organizational structure through which you are taught and supported by men and women who are deeply committed to serving

the Lord by serving you and your family?

Where will you go to find living prophets and apostles, who are called by God to give you another resource for counsel, understanding, comfort, and inspiration for the challenges of our day?

Where will you go to find people who live by a prescribed set of values and standards that you share and want to pass along to your children and grandchildren?

And where will you go to experience the joy that comes through the saving ordinances and covenants of the temple?

Brothers and sisters, accepting and living the gospel of Christ can be challenging. It has always been thus, and it ever will be. Life can be like hikers ascending a steep and arduous trail. It is a natural and normal thing to occasionally pause on the path to catch our breath, to recalculate our bearings, and to reconsider our pace. Not everyone needs to pause on the path, but there is nothing wrong with doing so when your circumstances require. In fact, it can be a positive thing for those who take full advantage of the opportunity



to refresh themselves with the living water of the gospel of Christ.

The danger comes when someone chooses to wander away from the path that leads to the tree of life.⁸ Sometimes we can learn, study, and know, and sometimes we have to believe, trust, and hope.

In the end, each one of us must respond to the Savior's question: "Will ye also go away?"⁹ We all have to search for our own answer to that question. For some, the answer is easy; for others, it is difficult. I don't pretend to know why faith to believe comes easier for some than for others. I'm just so grateful to know that the answers are always there, and if we seek them—really seek with real intent and with full purpose of a prayerful heart—we will eventually find the answers to our questions as we continue on the gospel path. In my ministry, I have known those who have drifted and returned after their trial of faith.

My sincere hope is that we will invite an increasing number of God's children to find and stay on the gospel path so they too can "partake of the

fruit, which [is] desirable above all other fruit."¹⁰

My heartfelt plea is that we will encourage, accept, understand, and love those who are struggling with their faith. We must never neglect any of our brothers and sisters. We are all at different places on the path, and we need to minister to one another accordingly.

Just as we should open our arms in a spirit of welcoming new converts, so too should we embrace and support those who have questions and are faltering in their faith.

Utilizing another familiar metaphor, I pray that anyone thinking of leaving the "Old Ship Zion," where God and Christ are at the helm, will pause and think carefully before doing so.

Please know that even though great storms of wind and waves beat upon the old ship, the Savior is on board and is able to rebuke the storm with His command "Peace, be still." Until then, we must not fear, and we must have unwavering faith and know that "even the wind and the sea obey him."¹¹

Brothers and sisters, I promise you in the name of the Lord that He will

never abandon His Church and that He will never abandon any one of us. Remember Peter's response to the Savior's question and words:

"To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."¹²

I testify that there is "no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ."¹³

I also testify that Jesus Christ has called apostles and prophets in our day and restored His Church with teachings and commandments as "a refuge from the storm, and from wrath" that will surely come unless the people of the world repent and return to Him.¹⁴

I further testify that the Lord "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and all are alike unto God."¹⁵

Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer, and His restored gospel will lead us safely back to the presence of our Heavenly Parents if we remain on the gospel path and follow in His footsteps. To which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 17:9, 11, 20–21.
2. John 6:66; emphasis added.
3. John 6:67.
4. John 6:68–69; emphasis added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
6. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine* (1988), 124.
7. Alma 7:11–12.
8. See 1 Nephi 8:20–30.
9. John 6:67.
10. 1 Nephi 8:15.
11. See Mark 4:35–41.
12. John 6:68–69.
13. Mosiah 3:17.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
15. 2 Nephi 26:33.



By Bishop Dean M. Davies
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

The Blessings of Worship

Worship is essential and central to our spiritual life. It is something we should yearn for, seek out, and strive to experience.

His Visit

One of the most remarkable and tender experiences recorded in holy scripture is the account of the visit of the Savior to people in the Americas following His death and Resurrection. The people had suffered a destruction so great that it caused “the whole earth [to become] deformed.”¹ The record of those events relates that following the catastrophe, all the people wept continually,² and in the midst of their deep grief, they hungered for healing, peace, and deliverance.

When the Savior descended from heaven, the people twice fell at His feet. The first time occurred after He pronounced, with divine authority:

“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.”³

He then invited those present to “arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. . . .

“And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

“Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!”⁴



And then, for a second time, “they did fall down at the feet of Jesus.” But this time with purpose, for we learn that they “did worship him.”⁵

Present Day

Earlier this year I was on assignment visiting a stake in the western United States. It was a normal Sunday, a normal meeting, with normal members of the Church. I watched as people entered the chapel and reverently moved to available seats. Last-second, whispered conversations echoed throughout the hall. Mothers and fathers tried—sometimes in vain—to quiet energetic children. Normal.

But then, before the meeting began, words inspired of the Spirit came into my mind.

These members had not come just to fulfill a duty or listen to speakers.

They had come for a deeper and far more significant reason.

They had come to worship.

As the meeting progressed, I observed various members in the congregation. They had an almost heavenly expression, an attitude of reverence and peace. Something about them warmed my heart. The experience they were having that Sunday was something quite extraordinary.

They were worshipping.

They were experiencing heaven.

I could see it in their countenances.

And I rejoiced and worshipped with them. And as I did so, the Spirit spoke to my heart. And on that day, I learned something about myself, about God, and about the role of true worship in our lives.

Worship in Our Everyday Lives

Latter-day Saints are exceptional when it comes to serving in Church callings. But sometimes we may go



about our work routinely, as though we are merely performing a job. Sometimes our attendance at meetings and our service in the kingdom may lack the holy element of worship. And without that, we are missing an incomparable spiritual encounter with the infinite—one we are entitled to as children of a loving Heavenly Father.

Far from being an accidental, happy occurrence, worship is essential and central to our spiritual life. It is something we should yearn for, seek out, and strive to experience.

What Is Worship?

When we worship God, we approach Him with reverent love, humility, and adoration. We acknowledge and accept Him as our sovereign King, the Creator of the universe, our beloved and infinitely loving Father.

We respect and revere Him.

We submit ourselves to Him.

We lift our hearts in mighty prayer, cherish His word, rejoice in His grace, and commit to follow Him with dedicated loyalty.

Worshipping God is such an essential element in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ that if we fail to receive Him in our hearts, we will seek for Him in vain in our councils, churches, and temples.

True disciples are drawn to “worship him that made heaven, and earth, and

the sea, and the fountains of waters—calling upon the name of the Lord day and night.”⁶

We can learn much about true worship by examining how others—people who perhaps were not so different from ourselves—encountered, behaved, and worshipped in the presence of the divine.

Wonder, Gratitude, and Hope

In the first part of the 19th century, the Christian world had all but abandoned the idea that God still spoke to man. But in the spring of 1820, that changed forever when a humble farm boy entered a grove of trees and knelt to pray. From that day on, a stream of remarkable visions, revelations, and heavenly appearances have bathed the earth, endowing its inhabitants with precious knowledge regarding the nature and purpose of God and His relationship with man.

Oliver Cowdery described those days as “never to be forgotten. . . . What joy! what wonder! what amazement!”⁷

Oliver’s words convey the first elements that accompany true worship of the divine—a sense of majestic awe and profound thanksgiving.

Every day, but especially on the Sabbath day, we have the extraordinary opportunity to experience the wonder and awe of heaven and offer our praises to God for His blessed goodness and overwhelming mercy.

This will lead us to hope. These are the first elements of worship.

Light, Knowledge, and Faith

On the blessed day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit entered into the hearts and minds of the disciples of Christ, filling them with light and knowledge.

Until that day they were at times unsure of what they should do. Jerusalem had become a dangerous place for a follower of the Savior, and they must have wondered what would become of them.

But when the Holy Spirit filled their hearts, doubt and reluctance vanished. Through the transcendent experience of true worship, the Saints of God received heavenly light, knowledge, and a strengthened testimony. And that led to faith.

From that moment on, the Apostles and Saints acted with determined direction. With boldness they preached Christ Jesus to all the world.

When we worship in spirit, we invite light and truth into our souls, which strengthens our faith. These too are necessary elements of true worship.

Discipleship and Charity

In the Book of Mormon we learn that from the moment Alma the Younger was delivered from suffering the consequences of his own rebelliousness, he was never the same. He boldly “traveled throughout all the land . . . and among all the people . . . , zealously striving to repair all the injuries which [he] had done to the church.”⁸

His constant worship of the Almighty God took the form of energetic discipleship.

True worship transforms us into sincere and earnest disciples of our beloved Master and Savior, Jesus Christ. We change and become more like Him.

We become more understanding and caring. More forgiving. More loving.

We understand that it is impossible to say that we love God while at the same time hating, dismissing, or disregarding others around us.⁹

True worship leads to an unwavering determination to walk the path of discipleship. And that leads inevitably to charity. These too are necessary elements of worship.

Enter into His Gates with Thanksgiving

When I reflect back on what began as a normal Sunday morning, in that normal meetinghouse, in that normal stake, even today I am moved by that extraordinary spiritual experience that will forever bless my life.

I learned that even if we are exceptional managers of our time, callings, and assignments—even if we check all the boxes on our list of the “perfect” individual, family, or leader—if we fail to worship our merciful Deliverer,

heavenly King, and glorious God, we are missing much of the joy and peace of the gospel.

When we worship God, we acknowledge and receive Him with the same reverence as those ancient people of the Americas. We approach Him with incomprehensible feelings of wonder and awe. We marvel in gratitude at the goodness of God. And thus, we acquire hope.

We ponder God’s word, and that fills our souls with light and truth. We comprehend spiritual vistas that can be seen only through the light of the Holy Ghost.¹⁰ And thus, we acquire faith.

As we worship, our souls are refined and we commit to walk in the footsteps of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ. And from this resolve, we acquire charity.

When we worship, our hearts are drawn out in praise to our blessed God morning, noon, and night.

We hallow and honor Him continually—in our meetinghouses, homes, temples, and all our labors.

When we worship, we open our hearts to the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Our lives become the token and expression of our worship.

My brothers and sisters, spiritual experiences have less to do with what is happening around us and everything to do with what is happening within our hearts. It is my witness that true worship will transform ordinary Church meetings into extraordinary spiritual feasts. It will enrich our lives, broaden our understanding, and strengthen our testimonies. For as we incline our hearts to God, like the ancient Psalmist, we “enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: [we are] thankful unto him, and bless his name.

“For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”¹¹

Through sincere and heartfelt worship, we blossom and mature in hope, faith, and charity. And through that process, we gather heavenly light into our souls that infuses our lives with divine meaning, abiding peace, and everlasting joy.

That is the blessing of worship in our lives. Of this I humbly testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 8:17.
2. See 3 Nephi 8:23.
3. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
4. 3 Nephi 11:14, 16–17.
5. 3 Nephi 11:17.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 133:39–40.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.
8. Mosiah 27:35.
9. See 1 John 4:20.
10. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.
11. Psalm 100:4–5.





By Elder Lynn G. Robbins
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

The Righteous Judge

There is only one way to judge righteous judgment, as Jesus Christ does, and that is to be as He is.

In His mortal life, Jesus Christ was a loving judge, uncommonly wise and patient. He is known in the scriptures as “the righteous judge” (2 Timothy 4:8; Moses 6:57), and His counsel to us is to also “judge righteous judgment” (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1–2 [in Matthew 7:1, footnote *a*]) and to “put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good . . . [and] to judge righteously” (D&C 11:12).

This counsel to the Nephite Twelve will help us judge as the Lord does: “Ye shall be judges of this people, *according to the judgment which I shall give unto you*, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27; emphasis added). We sometimes forget that when He gave the counsel to be as He is, it was in the context of how to judge righteously.

Unrighteous Judgment

A shameful example of unrighteous judgment comes from the parable of the lost sheep, when the Pharisees and scribes ill-judged both the Savior and His dinner company, saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2)—they were oblivious to the fact that they were sinners

themselves. Possessed of condemning hearts, the scribes and Pharisees never knew the joy of rescuing lost sheep.

It was also “the scribes and Pharisees” who brought “a woman taken in adultery” (John 8:3) to the Savior to see if He would judge her according to the law of Moses (see verse 5). You know the rest of the story, how He humbled them for their unrighteous judgment and how they were “convicted by *their own* conscience” and departed “one by



one” (verse 9; emphasis added). He then said to the woman, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:11 [in John 8:11, footnote *c*]).

The natural man and woman in each of us has a tendency to condemn others and to judge unrighteously, or self-righteously. This even happened to James and John, two of the Savior’s Apostles. They were infuriated when the people of a Samaritan village treated the Savior disrespectfully (see Luke 9:51–54):

“And when [they] saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?”

“But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

“For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (verses 54–56).

Today’s “common judge[s]” (D&C 107:74), our bishops and branch presidents, should avoid any similar impulse to condemn, as James and John did on that occasion. A righteous judge would respond to confessions with compassion and understanding. An erring youth, for example, should leave the bishop’s office feeling the love of the Savior through the bishop and enveloped in the joy and healing power of the Atonement—never shamed or held in contempt. Otherwise, the bishop may unwittingly drive the lost sheep further into the wilderness (see Luke 15:4).

Discipline

However, compassion doesn’t nullify the need for discipline. The word *discipline* comes from the Latin word *discere*, “to learn,” or *discipulus*,

“learner,” making a disciple a student and follower.¹ To discipline in the Lord’s way is to lovingly and patiently teach. In the scriptures the Lord often uses the word *chasten* when speaking of discipline (see, for example, Mosiah 23:21; D&C 95:1). The word *chasten* comes from the Latin *castus*, meaning “chaste or pure,” and *chasten* means “to purify.”²

In the world, it is an earthly judge who condemns a man and *locks* him in prison. In contrast, the Book of Mormon teaches us that when we willfully sin, we become our “own judges” (Alma 41:7) and consign ourselves to spiritual prison. Ironically, the common judge in this case holds the keys that *unlock* the prison gates; “for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their *deliverance* in all things out of temptation” (D&C 95:1; emphasis added). The proceedings of a righteous judge are merciful, loving, and redemptive, not condemning.

Young Joseph Smith was disciplined with a four-year probation before obtaining the golden plates, “because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord.”³ Later, when Joseph lost the 116 manuscript pages, he was disciplined again. Though Joseph was truly remorseful, the Lord still withdrew his privileges for a short season because “whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven” (D&C 95:1).

Joseph said, “The angel was rejoiced when he gave me back the Urim and Thummim and said that God was pleased with my faithfulness and humility, and loved me for *my penitence* and diligence in prayer.”⁴ Because the Lord wanted to teach Joseph a heart-changing lesson, He required a heartrending sacrifice of him—sacrifice being an essential part of discipline.



Sacrifice

“In ancient days, *sacrifice* meant to make something or someone holy,”⁵ which links it, in an interdependent way, to the definition of the word *chasten*—“to purify.” Likewise, in ancient Israel, forgiveness came through a sin or trespass offering, or sacrifice.⁶ The sacrifice not only “point[ed] to that great and last sacrifice” (Alma 34:14) but also helped engender a deeper sense of gratitude for the Savior’s Atonement. An unwillingness to sacrifice as part of our penitence mocks or belittles Christ’s greater sacrifice for the same sin and trivializes His suffering—a callous sign of ingratitude.

On the other hand, through the sweet irony of sacrifice, we actually *gain* something of eternal worth—His mercy and forgiveness and eventually “all that [the] Father hath” (D&C 84:38). As part of the repentance process, sacrifice also acts as a healing balm to help replace “remorse of

conscience” (Alma 42:18) with “peace of conscience” (Mosiah 4:3). Without sacrifice, a person may find it hard to forgive himself or herself, because of a lingering consciousness of something withheld.⁷

The Parent as a Righteous Judge

While few of us will be called to be common judges, the principles of righteous judgment apply to all of us, especially to parents who have a daily opportunity to use these principles with their children. To effectively teach a child is the very essence of good parenting, and to lovingly discipline is the very essence of being a righteous judge.

President Joseph F. Smith taught, “If children are defiant and difficult to control, be patient with them until you can conquer by love, . . . and you can then [mold] their characters as you please.”⁸

It is insightful that in teaching how to discipline, the prophets seem to



always refer to Christlike attributes. The Doctrine and Covenants gives us this well-known advice on discipline:

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

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love” (D&C 121:41–43).

This scripture teaches us to reprove “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost,” *not* when moved upon by anger. The Holy Ghost and anger are incompatible because “he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger” (3 Nephi 11:29). President George Albert Smith taught that “unkind things are not usually said under the inspiration of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord is a spirit of kindness; it is a spirit of patience; it is a spirit of charity and love and forbearance and long suffering. . . .

“ . . . But if we have the spirit of fault finding . . . in a destructive manner, that *never* comes as a result of the companionship of the Spirit of our Heavenly Father and is *always* harmful.

“ . . . Kindness is the power that God has given us to unlock hard hearts and subdue stubborn souls.”⁹

Our Children’s True Identity

When the Savior visited the Nephites, He did something extraordinary with the children:

“And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude . . . , and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things. . . .

“ . . . And they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things” (3 Nephi 26:14, 16).

Perhaps more than *opening the mouths* of babes, the Lord was *opening the eyes and ears* of their astonished parents. Those parents had been granted the extraordinary gift of a glimpse into eternity and of beholding the true identity and premortal stature of their children. Would that not forever change the way the parents *saw* and

treated their children? I like this variation of a quote attributed to Goethe: “The way you see [a child] is the way you treat them, and the way you treat them is [who] they [will] become.”¹⁰ To remember a child’s true identity is a gift of foresight that divinely inspires the vision of a righteous judge.

Conclusion

President Thomas S. Monson has taught us, “Never let a problem to be solved become more important than a person to be loved.”¹¹ How vital that principle is in becoming righteous judges, especially with our own children.

There is only one way to judge righteous judgment, as Jesus Christ does, and that is to be as He is. Therefore, “what manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “disciple,” etymonline.com.
2. See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), “chasten.”
3. Karen Lynn Davidson and others, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2012), 83.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 71; emphasis added.
5. Guide to the Scriptures, “Sacrifice,” scriptures.lds.org.
6. See Bible Dictionary, “Sacrifices.”
7. The sacrifice we offer on the altar of the sacrament table each week is a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 9:20; Doctrine and Covenants 59:8). A broken heart is a repentant heart; a contrite spirit is an obedient spirit (see D. Todd Christofferson, “When Thou Art Converted,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 12).
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 299.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 225, 226, 228; emphasis added.
10. Attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, brainyquote.com.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 86.



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

Gratitude on the Sabbath Day

For Latter-day Saints, the Sabbath is a day of gratitude and love.

My dear brothers and sisters who are spread across the world in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I am grateful that President Thomas S. Monson has asked me to speak in conference on this Sabbath day. I pray that the Holy Ghost will carry my words into your heart.

Today I desire to speak about feelings of the heart. The one I will focus on is gratitude—particularly on the Sabbath day.

We feel grateful for many things: a kindness from a stranger, a meal when we are hungry, a dry roof over

our heads when storms arise, a broken bone that heals, and the hearty cry of a newborn baby. Many of us will remember feeling gratitude at such moments.

For Latter-day Saints, the Sabbath is such a moment, actually a day, of gratitude and love. The Lord instructed the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, in 1831 that their prayers and thanks should be directed heavenward. The early Saints were given a revelation about how to keep the Sabbath day and how to fast and pray.¹

They, and we, were told by the Lord how to worship and give thanks on the

Sabbath. As you can tell, what matters most is the love we feel for the givers of the gifts. Here are the Lord’s words of how to give thanks and how to love on the Sabbath:

“I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him. . . .

“Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.

“Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”²

And then the Lord goes on to warn of danger should we fail to thank Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as the givers of the gifts: “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.”³

Many of you listening already find joy in the Sabbath as a day to remember and give thanks to God for blessings. You remember the familiar song:

*When upon life’s billows you are
tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking
all is lost,
Count your many blessings; name them
one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord
has done.*

*Count your blessings;
Name them one by one.
Count your blessings;
See what God hath done. . . .*

*Are you ever burdened with a load
of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are
called to bear?*



*Count your many blessings; ev'ry doubt
will fly,
And you will be singing as the days
go by.*⁴

I receive letters and visits from faithful Latter-day Saints who feel burdened with a load of care. Some are close to feeling that, at least for them, all is lost. I hope and pray that what I say about being grateful on the Sabbath will be helpful to make doubts fly and for singing to start in your hearts.

One blessing for which we can be grateful is that we are there in that sacrament meeting at all, gathered with more than one or two of His disciples in His name. There are some at home unable to rise from their beds. There are some who would like to be where we are but are instead serving in hospitals and providing public safety or are defending us at the risk of their own lives in some desert or jungle. The fact that we are able to gather with

even one other Saint and partake of the sacrament will help us begin to feel gratitude and love for God's kindness.

Because of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restored gospel, another blessing we can count is that we have the opportunity to take the sacrament each week—prepared, blessed, and passed by authorized servants of God. We can be grateful when the Holy Spirit confirms to us that the words of the sacrament prayers, offered by those authorized priesthood holders, are honored by our Heavenly Father.

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. As we partake of the bread and water, we remember that He suffered for us. And when we feel gratitude for what He has done for us, we will feel His love for us and our love for Him.

The blessing of love we receive will make it easier for us to keep the commandment to “always remember him.”⁵ You may even feel love and gratitude, as I do, for the Holy Ghost, who Heavenly Father has promised will always be with us as we remain faithful to the covenants we have made. We can count all those blessings every Sunday and feel grateful.

The Sabbath is also a perfect time to remember the covenant we made at the waters of baptism to love and serve Heavenly Father's children. Fulfilling that promise on the Sabbath will include participating in a class or quorum with full purpose of heart to build faith and love among our brothers and sisters who are there with us. That promise will include cheerfully fulfilling our callings.

I am grateful for the many Sundays I taught a deacons quorum in Bountiful, Utah, as well as a Sunday School class in Idaho. And I even remember the times I served as an assistant to my wife in the nursery, where my main task was to hand out toys and pick them up.

It was years before I recognized through the Spirit that my simple service for the Lord mattered in the lives of Heavenly Father's children. To my surprise, some of them have remembered and thanked me for my fledgling attempts to serve them for the Master on those Sabbath days.

Just as we sometimes cannot see the results of our own service given on the Sabbath, we may not be able to see the cumulative effects of other servants of the Lord. But the Lord is building His kingdom quietly through His faithful and humble servants, with little fanfare, toward its glorious millennial future. It takes the Holy Spirit to see the growing grandeur.



I grew up going to sacrament meetings in a tiny New Jersey branch with only a few members and one family, my own. Seventy-five years ago, I was baptized in Philadelphia in the only Church-built chapel we could get to in Pennsylvania or New Jersey. Yet where there was one little branch in Princeton, New Jersey, there are now two large wards. And just days ago, thousands of young people performed in a celebration preceding the dedication of the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple.

As a young man, I was called as a district missionary where we worshipped on Sundays in the only chapel in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Today there is a temple and four stakes.

I left Albuquerque to go to school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There was one chapel and a district that stretched across much of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. I drove the hills of that beautiful country to sacrament meetings in tiny branches, most in small rented facilities or little remodeled homes. Now there is a sacred temple of God in Belmont, Massachusetts, and stakes that spread across the countryside.

What I could not see clearly then was that the Lord was pouring out His Spirit on people in those little sacrament meetings. I could feel it, but I could not see the extent and the timing of the Lord's intentions to build and glorify His kingdom. A prophet, by revelation, saw and recorded what we can now see ourselves. Nephi said that our total numbers would not be great but that the cumulative light would be a sight to see:

“And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few. . . .

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of



the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”⁶

In this dispensation, a similar prophetic description of our condition and the opportunities ahead is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

“And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

“And he who receiveth all things with *thankfulness* shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more.”⁷

I have felt that transformation of growing gratitude for blessings and a love of God increasing across the Church. It seems to accelerate among members of the Church in times and places where there are trials of their faith, where they have to plead to God for help to even carry on.

The times we will pass through will have in them hard trials, as they did for the people of Alma under the cruel

Amulon, who put burdens on their backs too heavy for them to bear:

“And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

“And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”⁸

You and I are witnesses that whenever we have kept our covenants with God, especially when it was hard, He has heard our prayers of thanks for what He has already done for us and has answered our prayer for strength to endure faithfully. And more than once He has made us cheerful as well as strong.



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

You might well be wondering what you could do to live and worship on this Sabbath day to demonstrate your gratitude and to strengthen yourself and others for trials that lie ahead.

You could begin today with a private and family prayer of thanks for all God has done for you. You could pray to know what the Lord would have you do to serve Him and others. Particularly, you could pray to have the Holy Ghost tell you of someone who is lonely or in need to whom the Lord would have you go.

I can promise you your prayers will be answered, and as you act on the answers you will receive, you will find joy in the Sabbath, and your heart will overflow with thankfulness.

I testify that God the Father knows and loves you. The Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, atoned for your sins out of love for you. They, the Father and the Son, know your name as They knew the name of the Prophet Joseph Smith when They appeared to him. I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and that He will honor the covenants you make and renew with God. Your very nature will be changed to become more like the Savior. You will be fortified against temptation and against feelings of doubt about the truth. You will find joy in the Sabbath. I so promise you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 59.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5, 7–8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
4. “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
5. Moroni 4:3; 5:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
6. 1 Nephi 14:12, 14.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 78:17–19; emphasis added.
8. Mosiah 24:13–15.

“If Ye Had Known Me”

Do we only know about the Savior, or are we increasingly coming to know Him? How do we come to know the Lord?

As the Savior concluded the Sermon on the Mount, He emphasized the eternal truth that “only by doing the will of the Father is the saving grace of the Son obtainable.”¹

He declared:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

“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.”²

Our understanding of this episode is enlarged as we reflect upon an inspired revision to the text. Significantly, the Lord’s phrase reported in the King James Version of the Bible, “I never knew you,” was changed in the Joseph Smith Translation to “Ye never knew me.”³

Consider also the parable of the ten virgins. Recall that the five foolish and unprepared virgins went to obtain oil for their lamps after hearing the cry to go and meet the bridegroom.



“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

“Afterward came also the [five foolish] virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”⁴

The implications of this parable for each of us are expanded by another inspired revision. Importantly, the phrase “I know you not,” as reported in the King James Version of the Bible, was clarified in the Joseph Smith Translation to “Ye know me not.”⁵

The phrases “Ye never knew me” and “Ye know me not” should be a cause of deep spiritual introspection for each of us. Do we only know about the Savior, or are we increasingly coming to know Him? How do we come to know the Lord? These questions of the soul are the focus of my message. I earnestly invite the assistance of the Holy Ghost as we consider together this vital subject.

Coming to Know

Jesus said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”⁶

We come to know the Father as we come to know His Beloved Son.

A grand objective of mortality is not merely learning about the Only Begotten of the Father but also striving to know Him. Four essential steps that can help us come to know the Lord are exercising faith in Him, following Him, serving Him, and believing Him.

Exercising Faith in Him

The exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is relying upon His merits, mercy, and



grace.⁷ We begin to come to know the Savior as we arouse our spiritual faculties and experiment upon His teachings, even until we can give place in our souls for a portion of His words.⁸ As our faith in the Lord increases, we trust in Him and have confidence in His power to redeem, heal, and strengthen us.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord and always leads to righteous action. “Faith [in Christ is] the first principle in revealed religion, . . . the foundation of all righteousness, . . . and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.”⁹ Because acting in accordance with the correct principles the Redeemer proclaimed is central to receiving and exercising true faith, “faith without works is dead.”¹⁰ We are to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”¹¹

Hearing God’s word and receiving the spiritual gift of faith in the Savior are closely related, as “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”¹² We become acquainted with Him and His voice as we study and feast upon His word in the scriptures,¹³ pray to the Father in His name with real intent,¹⁴ and seek for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.¹⁵ Learning and applying in

our lives the doctrine of Christ is a prerequisite to receiving the gift of faith in Him.¹⁶

Exercising faith in the Lord is a necessary preparation for following Him.

Following Him

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”¹⁷

Peter and Andrew are strong examples of hearing and following the Master.

The Savior likewise instructs you and me, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”¹⁸ To take up one’s cross is to deny oneself of all ungodliness and every worldly lust and to keep the commandments of the Lord.¹⁹

The Savior has admonished us to become as He is.²⁰ Thus, following the Lord includes emulating Him. We continue to come to know the Lord as we seek through the power of His Atonement to become like Him.

In His mortal ministry, Jesus marked the path, led the way, and set the



Serving Him requires all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.²⁹ Consequently, selflessly serving others counteracts the self-centered and selfish tendencies of the natural man. We grow to love those whom we serve. And because serving others is serving God, we grow to love Him and our brothers and sisters more deeply. Such love is a manifestation of the spiritual gift of charity, even the pure love of Christ.³⁰

“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 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.”³¹

We come to know the Lord as we are filled with His love.

Believing Him

Is it possible to exercise faith in Him, follow Him, serve Him, but not believe Him?

I am acquainted with Church members who accept as true the doctrine and principles contained in the scriptures and proclaimed from this pulpit. And yet they have a hard time believing those gospel truths apply specifically in their lives and to their circumstances. They seem to have faith in the Savior, but they do not believe His promised blessings are available to them or can operate in their lives. I also encounter brothers and sisters who fulfill their callings dutifully but for whom the restored gospel has not yet become a living and transforming reality in their lives. We come to know the Lord as we not only believe in Him but also believe Him and His assurances.

perfect example. “A correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes”²¹ provides enduring purpose and clear direction as we follow Him on the road of devoted discipleship.

Following the Savior also enables us to receive “an actual knowledge that the course of life [we are] pursuing”²² is in accordance with God’s will. Such knowledge is not an unknowable mystery and is not focused primarily upon our temporal pursuits or ordinary mortal concerns. Rather, steady and sustained progress along the covenant pathway is the course of life that is pleasing to Him.

Lehi’s dream in the Book of Mormon identifies the path we should follow, the challenges we will encounter, and the spiritual resources available to assist us in following and coming unto the Savior. Pressing forward on the strait and narrow path is what He would have us do. Tasting the fruit of the tree and becoming deeply “converted unto the Lord”²³ are the blessings He yearns for us to receive. Hence, He beckons us, “Come, follow me.”²⁴

Both exercising faith in and following Jesus Christ are necessary preparations for serving Him.

Serving Him

“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?”²⁵

We more fully come to know the Lord as we serve Him and labor in His kingdom. As we do so, He generously blesses us with heavenly help, spiritual gifts, and increased capacity. We are never left alone as we work in His vineyard.

He declared: “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.”²⁶

We come to know the Savior as we do our best to go where He wants us to go, as we strive to say what He wants us to say, and as we become what He wants us to become.²⁷ As we submissively acknowledge our total dependence upon Him, He enlarges our capacity to serve ever more effectively. Gradually, our desires align more completely with His desires, and His purposes become our purposes, such that we would “not ask that which is contrary to [His] will.”²⁸



In the New Testament, a father asked the Savior to heal his child. Jesus answered:

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”³²

I have reflected many times on this father’s request: “Help thou mine unbelief.” I wonder if the intent of the man’s pleading was not primarily to help him believe in Jesus as our Redeemer and in His healing power. He already may have acknowledged Christ as the Son of God. But perhaps he needed help to believe the Master’s healing power indeed could be so individual and so personalized as to bless his own beloved son. He may have believed in Christ generally but not believed Christ specifically and personally.

We often testify of what we know to be true, but perhaps the more relevant question for each of us is whether we believe what we know.

Sacred ordinances performed by proper priesthood authority are essential to believing the Savior, coming to know Him, and ultimately, believing what we know.

“And [the Melchizedek] priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even *the key of the knowledge of God*.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”³³

We believe and come to know the Lord as the key of the knowledge of God administered through the Melchizedek Priesthood unlocks the door and makes it possible for each of us to receive the power of godliness in our lives. We believe and come to know the Savior as we follow Him by receiving and faithfully honoring

holy ordinances and increasingly have His image in our countenances.³⁴ We believe and come to know Christ as we experience personally the transforming, healing, strengthening, and sanctifying power of His Atonement. We believe and come to know the Master as “the power of his word [takes root] in us”³⁵ and is written in our minds and hearts³⁶ and as we “give away all [our] sins to know [Him].”³⁷

Believing Him is trusting that His bounteous blessings are available and applicable in our individual lives and families. Believing Him with our whole soul³⁸ comes as we press forward along the covenant pathway, surrender our will to His, and submit to His priorities and timing for us. Believing Him—accepting as true His power and promises—invites perspective, peace, and joy into our lives.

Promise and Testimony

On a future day, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess”³⁹ that Jesus is the Christ. On that blessed day, we will know He knows each of us by name. And I witness and promise we can not only know about the Lord but also come to know Him as we exercise faith in, follow, serve, and believe Him. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 245–46.

2. Matthew 7:21–23.

3. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:33 (in Matthew 7:23, footnote *a*).

4. Matthew 25:10–12.

5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 25:11 (in Matthew 25:12, footnote *a*).

6. John 14:6–7.

7. See 2 Nephi 2:8; 31:19; Moroni 6:4.

8. See Alma 32:27.

9. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1.

10. James 2:20.

11. James 1:22.

12. Romans 10:17.

13. See 2 Nephi 32:3; Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36.

14. See Moroni 10:4.

15. See John 14:26; Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.

16. See John 7:17. Each of us has a responsibility to seek after and do all that we can do to qualify for the gift of faith. Ultimately, however, a loving and caring God bestows the gift upon us.

17. Matthew 4:18–20.

18. Matthew 16:24.

19. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26 (in the Bible appendix).

20. See 3 Nephi 27:27.

21. *Lectures on Faith*, 38.

22. *Lectures on Faith*, 38.

23. Alma 23:6.

24. Luke 18:22.

25. Mosiah 5:13.

26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.

27. See “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270.

28. Helaman 10:5.

29. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.

30. See Moroni 7:47.

31. Moroni 7:48.

32. Mark 9:23–24.

33. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20; emphasis added.

34. See Alma 5:14, 19.

35. Alma 26:13.

36. See Hebrews 8:10.

37. Alma 22:18.

38. See Omni 1:26.

39. Mosiah 27:31.



By **Brian K. Ashton**
Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

The Doctrine of Christ

The doctrine of Christ allows us to access the spiritual power that will lift us from our current spiritual state to a state where we can become perfected.

Jesus’s visit to the Nephites after His Resurrection was carefully organized to teach us the things of greatest importance. It began with the Father testifying to the people that Jesus was His “Beloved Son, in whom [He was] well pleased.”¹ Then Jesus Himself descended and testified of His atoning sacrifice,² inviting the people to “know of a surety” that He was the Christ by coming forth and feeling the wound mark in His side and the prints of the nails in His hands and feet.³ These testimonies established without doubt that Jesus’s Atonement was complete and that the Father had fulfilled His covenant to provide a Savior. Jesus then taught

the Nephites how to obtain all the blessings of the Father’s plan of happiness, which are made available to us because of the Savior’s Atonement, by teaching them the doctrine of Christ.⁴

My message today focuses on the doctrine of Christ. The scriptures define the doctrine of Christ as exercising faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repenting, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.⁵

The Doctrine of Christ Allows Us to Obtain the Blessings of Christ’s Atonement

The Atonement of Christ creates the conditions upon which we may rely

upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah,”⁶ “be perfected in [Christ],”⁷ obtain every good thing,⁸ and gain eternal life.⁹

The doctrine of Christ on the other hand is the means—the only means—by which we can obtain all of the blessings made available to us through Jesus’s Atonement. It is the doctrine of Christ that allows us to access the spiritual power that will lift us from our current spiritual state to a state where we can become perfected like the Savior.¹⁰ Of this process of rebirth, Elder D. Todd Christofferson has taught: “Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.”¹¹

Let’s explore each element of the doctrine of Christ.

First, faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. The prophets have taught that faith begins by hearing the word of Christ.¹² The words of Christ testify of His atoning sacrifice and tell us how we may obtain forgiveness, blessings, and exaltation.¹³

Upon hearing the words of Christ, we exercise faith by choosing to follow the teachings and example of the Savior.¹⁴ To do this, Nephi taught that we must rely “wholly upon the merits of [Christ,] who is mighty to save.”¹⁵ Because Jesus was a God in the premortal existence,¹⁶ lived a sinless life,¹⁷ and during His Atonement satisfied all the demands of justice for you and me,¹⁸ He has the power and keys to bring about the resurrection of all men,¹⁹ and He made it possible for mercy to overpower justice upon conditions of repentance.²⁰ Once we understand that we can obtain mercy through Christ’s merits, we are able to “have faith unto repentance.”²¹ To rely wholly upon Christ’s merits then



is to trust that He did what was necessary to save us and then to act upon our belief.²²

Faith also causes us to stop worrying so much about what others think of us and begin to care far more about what God thinks of us.

Second, repentance. Samuel the Lamanite taught, “If ye believe on [Christ’s] name ye will repent of all your sins.”²³ Repentance is a precious gift from our Heavenly Father that is made possible through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son. It is the process that the Father has given us by which we change, or turn, our thoughts, actions, and our very being so that we become more and more like the Savior.²⁴ It is not just for big sins but is a daily process of self-evaluation and improvement²⁵ that helps us to overcome our sins, our imperfections, our weaknesses, and our inadequacies.²⁶ Repentance causes us to become “true followers” of Christ, which fills us with love²⁷ and casts out our fears.²⁸ Repentance is not a backup plan just in case our plan to live perfectly fails.²⁹ Continual repentance is the only path that can bring us lasting joy and enable us to return to live with our Heavenly Father.

Through repentance we become submissive and obedient to God’s will. Now, this is not done alone. A recognition of God’s goodness and our nothingness,³⁰ combined with our best efforts to align our behavior with God’s will,³¹ brings grace into our lives.³² Grace “is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ . . . to do good works that [we] otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to [our] own means.”³³ Because repentance is really about becoming like the Savior, which is impossible on our



own, we desperately need the Savior’s grace in order to make necessary changes in our lives.

As we repent, we replace our old, unrighteous behaviors, weaknesses, imperfections, and fears with new behaviors and beliefs that draw us closer to the Savior and help us to become like Him.

Third, baptism and the sacrament. The prophet Mormon taught that “the first fruits of repentance is baptism.”³⁴ To be complete, repentance must be combined with the ordinance of baptism administered by someone who holds the priesthood authority of God. For members of the Church, the covenants made at baptism and other occasions are renewed as we partake of the sacrament.³⁵

In the ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, we covenant to keep the commandments of the Father and the Son, always remember Christ, and be willing to take Christ’s name (or His work and attributes³⁶) upon us.³⁷ The Savior, in return, covenants to forgive,

or remit, our sins³⁸ and “pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon [us].”³⁹ Christ also promises to prepare us for eternal life by helping us become like Him.⁴⁰

Douglas D. Holmes, First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency, has written: “The ordinances of baptism and the sacrament symbolize both the end result and process of being born again. In baptism, we bury the old man of flesh and come forth to a newness of life.⁴¹ In the sacrament, we learn that this change is a step-by-step process, [where] little by little, week by week, we are transformed as we repent, covenant, and through increased endowments of the Spirit [become like the Savior].”⁴²

Ordinances and covenants are essential within the doctrine of Christ. It is through worthily receiving the ordinances of the priesthood and keeping the associated covenants that the power of godliness is manifest in our lives.⁴³ Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained that “this ‘power of godliness’



comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁴

Fourth, the gift of the Holy Ghost. After baptism we are given the gift of the Holy Ghost through the ordinance of confirmation.⁴⁵ This gift, if we receive it, allows us to have the constant companionship of a God⁴⁶ and continual access to the grace that inherently comes with His influence.

As our constant companion, the Holy Ghost gives us additional power or strength to keep our covenants.⁴⁷ He also sanctifies us,⁴⁸ which means to make us “free from sin, pure, clean, and holy through the atonement of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁹ The process of sanctification not only cleanses us, but it also endows us with needed spiritual gifts or divine attributes of the Savior⁵⁰ and changes our very nature,⁵¹ such “that we have no more disposition to do evil.”⁵² Each time we receive the Holy Ghost into our lives through faith, repentance, ordinances, Christlike service, and other righteous endeavors, we are changed until step by step, little by little we become like Christ.⁵³

Fifth, enduring to the end.

The prophet Nephi taught that after receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we must “endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God.”⁵⁴ Elder Dale G. Renlund described the process of enduring to the end as follows: “We may be perfected by repeatedly and iteratively . . . exercising faith in [Christ], repenting, partaking of the sacrament to renew the covenants and blessings of baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost as a constant companion to a greater degree. As we do so, we become more like Christ and are able to endure to the end, with all that that entails.”⁵⁵

In other words, the reception of the Holy Ghost and the change that reception creates in us further builds our faith. Increased faith leads to additional repentance. As we then symbolically sacrifice our hearts and our sins upon the sacrament altar, we receive the Holy Ghost to a greater degree. Receiving the Holy Ghost to a greater degree further moves us along the path of being born again. As we continue in

this process and obtain all the saving ordinances and covenants of the gospel, we receive “grace for grace” until we receive a fulness.⁵⁶

We Must Apply the Doctrine of Christ in Our Lives

Brothers and sisters, as we apply the doctrine of Christ in our lives, we are blessed both temporally and spiritually, even in trials. Eventually we are able to “lay hold upon every good thing.”⁵⁷ I testify that this process has happened and continues to happen in my own life, step by step, little by little.

But more importantly, we must apply the doctrine of Christ in our lives because it provides the only path back to our Heavenly Father. It is the only way to receive the Savior and become His sons and daughters.⁵⁸ In fact, the only way to be redeemed from sin and progress spiritually is to apply the doctrine of Christ in our lives.⁵⁹ Alternatively, the Apostle John taught that “whosoever . . . abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.”⁶⁰ And Jesus Himself told the Nephite Twelve that if we fail to exercise faith in Christ, repent, be baptized, and endure to the end, we will be “hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence [we] can no more return.”⁶¹

So how can we apply the doctrine of Christ more fully in our lives? One way would be to make a conscious effort each week to prepare for the sacrament by taking some time to prayerfully consider where we most need to improve. We could then bring a sacrifice of at least one thing that keeps us from being like Jesus Christ to the sacrament altar, pleading in faith for help, asking for necessary spiritual gifts, and covenanting to improve during the coming week.⁶² As we do so, the Holy Ghost will come into our lives to a greater degree, and we will have additional

strength to overcome our imperfections.

I testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and that His is the only name by which we can be saved.⁶³ All things that are good are made available only through Him.⁶⁴ But to actually “lay hold upon every good thing,”⁶⁵ including eternal life, we must continually apply the doctrine of Christ in our lives. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 11:7.
2. See 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
3. See 3 Nephi 11:14–15.
4. See 3 Nephi 11:21–39.
5. See 2 Nephi 31; 3 Nephi 27:16–20. The doctrine of Christ is found throughout the scriptures but is most prevalent in the Book of Mormon.
6. 2 Nephi 2:8.
7. Moroni 10:32.
8. See Moroni 7:22–24.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:23.
10. The Atonement of Christ and the doctrine of Christ together constitute the gospel of Christ (see 3 Nephi 27:13–21).
11. D. Todd Christofferson, “Born Again,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 78.
12. See Romans 10:17; 2 Nephi 31:19; Alma 32:27–29; Moroni 7:25.
13. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
14. See 2 Nephi 31:10, 13.
15. 2 Nephi 31:19.
16. See John 1:1–3; Moses 7:47; Abraham 3:24–27.
17. See Hebrews 4:15; Doctrine and Covenants 45:4.
18. See Alma 34:16.
19. See 2 Nephi 9:21–22; Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 49–52.
20. See Alma 34:15–16.
21. Alma 34:15.
22. Relying wholly upon Christ’s merits includes recognizing that Jesus Christ is the only source of redemption (see Mosiah 4:7–8). It also requires that we believe that Christ can save us as individuals. That is one reason why in Doctrine and Covenants 27:2 we are commanded that as we partake of the sacrament, we are to remember not just that Christ suffered but also that He did so for us as individuals.
23. Helaman 14:13.
24. See Russell M. Nelson, “Repentance and Conversion,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 102–5.
25. See Neil L. Andersen, “Repent ... That I May Heal You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–43.
26. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 69–71; Anthony D. Perkins, “The Great and Wonderful Love,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 76–78.
27. Moroni 7:48.
28. See Moroni 8:16. Indeed our repentance is one of the principal evidences that we are disciples of the Savior. Can we truly claim to follow Christ if we are not continually repenting or striving to turn our hearts and actions to Him?
29. See *Adjusting to Missionary Life* (booklet, 2013), 46.
30. See Mosiah 4:5–7.
31. See 2 Nephi 10:24; 25:23.
32. See Helaman 5:11; Ether 12:27; Moroni 10:32–33.
33. Bible Dictionary, “Grace.”
34. Moroni 8:25.
35. When we partake of the sacrament worthily, we renew all of our covenants with God (see Delbert L. Stapley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14; L. Tom Perry, “As Now We Take the Sacrament,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 41).
36. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Testimony” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2014), 1–2.
37. See Moroni 4:3; see also Mosiah 18:8–10; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 for additional covenants that we make at baptism.
38. See Moroni 8:25.
39. Mosiah 18:10.
40. See 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ether 12:27; Doctrine and Covenants 35:2; Moses 1:39.
41. See Romans 6:4.
42. Douglas D. Holmes, “Come unto Christ—the Doctrine of Christ,” unpublished manuscript.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
44. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 22.
45. Confirmation occurs by the laying on of hands (see, for example, Acts 8:17).
46. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:28; Guide to the Scriptures, “Holy Ghost,” scriptures.lds.org.
47. See 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Nephi 14:14; Doctrine and Covenants 93:20.
48. See 3 Nephi 27:20.
49. Guide to the Scriptures, “Sanctification,” scriptures.lds.org.
50. See Moroni 7:48; 8:26; 10:8–18.
51. See Mosiah 4:14; Doctrine and Covenants 84:33; Bruce R. McConkie, “The Ten Blessings of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 33–35.
52. Mosiah 5:2.
53. The Holy Ghost also guides us back to our Father in Heaven (see 2 Nephi 32:5; Doctrine and Covenants 45:57) by helping us know what we must do to become like Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ether 12:27; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46–48).
54. 2 Nephi 31:16. Enduring to the end is aptly named, as it requires both time and endurance (see James 1:2–4). The fact is that we cannot develop some Christlike attributes without facing opposition and difficulties. For example, how can we become long-suffering if we are never required to suffer for a long time?
55. Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 56.
56. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:12, 19.
57. Moroni 7:25; see also Mosiah 2:41.
58. See Doctrine and Covenants 39:4–6.
59. See 2 Nephi 9:24.
60. 2 John 1:9.
61. 3 Nephi 27:17.
62. One might frequently bring the same sacrifice for weeks at a time until, with the help of the Savior, and as Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “it [is] consumed” (“Deny Yourselves of All Ungodliness,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 68).
63. See 2 Nephi 25:20.
64. See Moroni 7:24.
65. Moroni 7:25.



By Elder Carl B. Cook
Of the Seventy

Serve

Every member is needed, and every member needs an opportunity to serve.

As a boy I enjoyed working with my Uncle Lyman and Aunt Dorothy on their farm. Uncle Lyman usually led our projects, and Aunt Dorothy often assisted and drove the old Dodge truck. I remember the rush of adrenaline when we got bogged down in the mud or tried to climb a steep hill: Uncle Lyman would yell, “Put ‘er in compound, Dorothy!” That’s when I started to pray. Somehow, with the Lord’s help and after some grinding of gears, Aunt Dorothy found compound. With all wheels locked in and churning, the truck lunged forward and our work continued.

“Putting it in compound” refers to shifting into a special gear in which a number of gears are arranged to work together to generate more torque.¹ A compound gear, along with four-wheel drive, allows you to gear down, power up, and move.

I like to think of each of us as part of a compound gear as we serve together in the Church—in wards and branches, in quorums and auxiliaries. Just as gears combine to provide greater power in compound, we have greater power when we join together. As we unite to serve one another, we accomplish much more together than we could on our own. It is thrilling to

be engaged and unified as we serve and assist in the Lord’s work.

Serving Is a Blessing

The opportunity to serve is one of the great blessings of membership in the Church.² The Lord has said, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me,”³ and we serve Him by serving others.⁴

As we serve, we draw closer to God.⁵ We come to know Him in ways that we otherwise might not. Our faith

in Him increases. Our problems are put into perspective. Life becomes more satisfying. Our love for others increases, as well as our desire to serve. Through this blessed process, we become more like God, and we are better prepared to return to Him.⁶

As President Marion G. Romney taught: “Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made.”⁷

Serving Can Be Challenging

Serving in the Church, however, can be challenging if we are asked to do something that frightens us, if we grow weary of serving, or if we are called to do something that we do not initially find appealing.

Recently I received a new assignment. I had been serving in the Africa Southeast Area. It was thrilling to serve where the Church is relatively young



and being established, and we loved the Saints. Then I was called to return to Church headquarters, and to be honest, I was less than enthusiastic. A change in assignment brought some unknowns.

One night after contemplating the upcoming change, I dreamed about my great-great-grandfather Joseph Skeen. I knew from his journal that when he and his wife, Maria, moved to Nauvoo, he desired to serve, so he sought out the Prophet Joseph Smith and asked how he could help. The Prophet sent him to work on the prairie and told him to do the best he could, so he did. He worked on the Smiths' farm.⁸

I pondered the privilege that Joseph Skeen had in receiving his assignment that way. Suddenly I realized that I have the same privilege, as we all do. All Church callings come from God—through His appointed servants.⁹

I felt a distinct spiritual confirmation that my new assignment was inspired. It is important that we make that connection—that our callings literally come to us from God through our priesthood leaders. After this experience, my attitude changed, and I was filled with a deep desire to serve. I am grateful for the blessing of repentance and for my changed heart. I love my new assignment.

Even if we think that our Church calling was simply our priesthood leader's idea or that it came to us because no one else would accept it, we will be blessed as we serve. But when we recognize God's hand in our calling and serve with all our hearts, additional power comes into our service, and we become true servants of Jesus Christ.

Serving Requires Faith

Fulfilling callings requires faith. Shortly after Joseph began working on



the farm, he and Maria became very sick. They had no money and were among strangers. It was a difficult time for them. In his journal, Joseph wrote, "We worked along [and] hung on to the Church with what little faith we had, though the devil tried to destroy us and turn us back."¹⁰

I, along with hundreds of other descendants, will be eternally grateful that Joseph and Maria did not turn back. Blessings come as we persevere in our callings and responsibilities and hang on with all the faith we have.

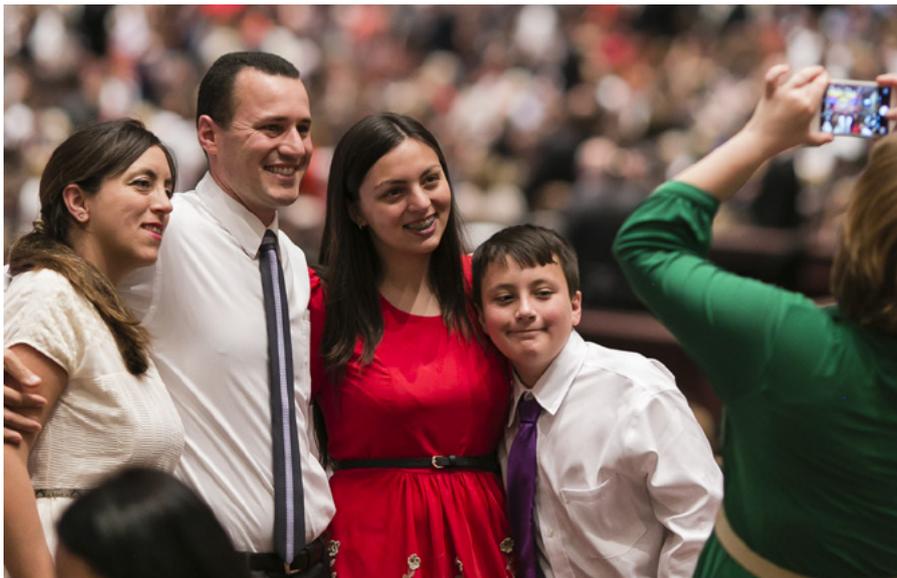
I know a wonderful Gospel Doctrine teacher who lifts class members as she teaches, but that wasn't always the case. After joining the Church, she received a calling to teach in Primary. She felt she had no teaching skills, but because she knew the importance of serving, she accepted. Fear quickly overcame her, and she stopped attending so she wouldn't have to teach. Thankfully, her home teacher noticed her absence, visited her, and invited her back. The bishop and ward members assisted her. Eventually, with increased faith, she began teaching children. As she applied principles

now taught in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, the Lord blessed her efforts and she became a gifted teacher.¹¹

The natural man or woman in all of us is inclined to allow us to excuse ourselves from serving for reasons such as "I am not ready to serve; I have more to learn," "I'm tired and need a break," "I'm too old—it's someone else's turn," or "I am simply too busy."

Brothers and sisters, accepting and fulfilling a calling is an act of faith. We can trust in what our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, repeatedly teaches: "Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies" and "When we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help."¹² Whether we are overwhelmed or underwhelmed, whether we are scared to death or bored to death, the Lord wants us to gear down, power up, and serve.

I see no signs that President Monson and his associates in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve are too busy or too tired. They exemplify in an inspiring way the power that comes into our lives as we exercise faith, accept assignments, and fulfill them with commitment and



dedication. They “put [their shoulders] to the wheel”¹³ many years ago, and they continue to push forward, onward, and upward.

Yes, they serve in important callings, but *every* calling or assignment is important. President Gordon B. Hinckley, a previous prophet and President of the Church, said: “We are all in this great endeavor together. . . . Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence.”¹⁴ Every calling is important.¹⁵

Let Us Serve

Let us rise up in faith, “put [our shoulders] to the wheel,” and move this “worthy work along.”¹⁶ Let’s “put it in compound,” along with faithful Aunt Dorothy. As brothers and sisters, let’s serve.

If you want to make your bishop’s or branch president’s day, ask him the questions “How can I help?” “Where would the Lord have me serve?” As he prays and considers your personal, family, and employment responsibilities, he will be inspired to extend an appropriate calling. As you are set apart, you will receive a priesthood blessing to help you succeed. You *will* be blessed! Every member is needed, and every member needs an opportunity to serve.¹⁷

Jesus Christ Is Our Exemplar

Jesus Christ, our great Exemplar, gave His life to His Father’s work. In the Grand Council before this world was organized, Jesus, chosen and anointed from the beginning, volunteered, “Here am I, send me.”¹⁸ In so doing, He literally became the servant of us all. Through Jesus Christ and the power we receive through His Atonement, we can also serve. He will help us.¹⁹

I extend my heartfelt love to those of you who may not currently be able to serve in the Church in traditional ways because of personal circumstances but who live your life in a spirit of service. I pray that you will be blessed in your efforts. I also express appreciation to those who magnify callings week in and week out, as well as those who soon will be accepting calls to serve. All contributions and sacrifices are valued, especially by Him whom we serve. All who serve will receive God’s grace.²⁰

Whatever our age or circumstance, let service be our “watchcry.”²¹ Serve in your calling. Serve a mission. Serve your mother. Serve a stranger. Serve your neighbor. Just serve.

May the Lord bless each of us in our efforts to serve and become true followers of Jesus Christ.²² I testify that He lives and directs this work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “Compound Gears,” technologystudent.com/gears1/gears3.htm; “Compound Gear Reduction,” curriculum.vexrobotics.com.
2. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 87.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29; see also Doctrine and Covenants 59:5.
4. See Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 2:17.
5. See John 12:26.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:4–6.
7. Marion G. Romney, “The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 93.
8. See Joseph Skeen, reminiscences and diary, 7, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; see also *Journal and History of Joseph Skeen*, ed. Greg S. Montgomery and Mark R. Montgomery (1996), 23.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; Articles of Faith 1:5.
10. Skeen, reminiscences and diary, 8, spelling and punctuation standardized; see also *Journal and History of Joseph Skeen*, 23; Luke 22:31; 2 Nephi 28:19–24; Alma 30:60; Doctrine and Covenants 10:22–27.
11. See *Teaching in the Savior’s Way* (2016), 37–38; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 5.3, 5.5.4.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “Duty Calls,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 44.
13. “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252.
14. Gordon B. Hinckley, “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
President Hinckley also said: “You have as great an opportunity for satisfaction in the performance of your duty as I do in mine. The progress of this work will be determined by our joint efforts. Whatever your calling, it is as fraught with the same kind of opportunity to accomplish good as is mine. What is really important is that this is the work of the Master. Our work is to go about doing good as did He” (“This Is the Work of the Master,” 71).
15. President Thomas S. Monson said: “How does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it” (“Duty Calls,” 43).
15. See Alma 37:6.
16. “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252.
17. See *Handbook 2*, 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 19.1.1, 19.4. “Through the service of men and women and boys and girls, God’s work is done” (*Gospel Principles* [2009], 163).
18. Abraham 3:27.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:5.
20. See Mosiah 18:26.
21. “They, the Builders of the Nation,” *Hymns*, no. 36.
22. See Moroni 7:48.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Lest Thou Forget

I encourage you to recall, especially in times of crisis, when you felt the Spirit and your testimony was strong; remember the spiritual foundations you have built.

Good afternoon, dear brothers and sisters. How blessed we have been during this conference. My first year as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been most humbling. It has been a year of stretching, growth, and earnest, ever-present petitions to my Father in Heaven. I have felt the sustaining prayers of family, friends, and Church members all around the globe. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.

I have also had the privilege of meeting with cherished friends, some from years past and many I have met recently. It was after a meeting with a dear friend that I have known and loved for many years that I felt impressed to prepare my remarks today.

When we met, my friend confided that he had been struggling. He felt he was experiencing, to use his words, a “crisis of faith” and sought my counsel. I felt grateful that he would share his feelings and concerns with me.

He expressed a great longing for what he had once felt spiritually and what he now thought he was losing. As he spoke, I listened carefully and prayed earnestly to know what the Lord would have me say.

My friend, like perhaps some of you, asked the question so poignantly phrased in the Primary song: “Heavenly Father, are you really there?”¹ For those of you who may be asking this same question, I would like to share with you the counsel I would offer to my friend and hope that each of you may find your faith strengthened and your resolve renewed to be a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

I begin by reminding you that you are a son or daughter of a loving Father

in Heaven and that His love remains constant. I know that such reassuring feelings of love are difficult to recall when you are in the midst of personal struggles or trials, disappointments, or broken dreams.

Jesus Christ knows about fierce struggles and trials. He gave His life for us. His final hours were brutal, beyond anything we can even comprehend, but His sacrifice for each one of us was the ultimate expression of His pure love.

No mistake, sin, or choice will change God’s love for us. That does not mean sinful conduct is condoned, nor does it remove our obligation to repent when sins are committed. But *do not forget*, Heavenly Father knows and loves each of you, and He is always ready to help.

As I pondered my friend’s situation, my mind reflected on the great wisdom found in the Book of Mormon: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall





send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”²

I testify that “the gulf of misery and endless wo” is a place no one wants to be. And my friend was feeling that he was on the edge.

When I have counseled individuals such as my friend, I have explored their decisions made over the years which led them to forget sacred experiences, to weaken, and to doubt. I encouraged them, as I encourage you now, to recall, especially in times of crisis, when you felt the Spirit and your testimony was strong; remember the spiritual foundations you have built. I promise that if you will do this, avoiding things that do not build and strengthen your testimony or that mock your beliefs, those precious times when your testimony prospered will return again to your memory through humble prayer and fasting. I assure you that you will once again feel the safety and warmth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each of us must first strengthen ourselves spiritually and then strengthen

those around us. Ponder the scriptures regularly, and remember the thoughts and feelings you experience as you read them. Seek other sources of truth as well, but heed this caution from the scriptures: “But to be learned is good *if* they hearken unto the counsels of God.”³ Attend Church meetings, especially sacrament meeting, and partake of the sacrament and renew covenants, including the promise to always remember the Savior, that His Spirit may ever be with you.

No matter what mistakes we have made or how imperfect we feel we are, we can always bless and lift others. Reaching out to them in Christlike service can help us feel the love of God deep within our hearts.

It is important to remember the powerful counsel found in Deuteronomy: “Keep thy soul diligently, *lest thou forget* the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.”⁴

Generations are affected by the choices we make. Share your testimony with your family; encourage them to remember how they felt when they recognized the Spirit in their lives and to record those feelings in journals and personal histories so that their own words may, when needed, bring to their remembrance how good the Lord has been to them.

You will recall that Nephi and his brothers returned to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates that contained the recorded history of their people, in part so that they would not forget their past.

Also, in the Book of Mormon, Helaman named his sons after their “first fathers” so they would not forget the goodness of the Lord:

“Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God. . . . Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.

“Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them.”⁵

Many today have the same tradition of naming their children after scriptural heroes or faithful ancestors as a way of encouraging them not to forget their heritage.

When I was born, I was given the name of Ronald A. Rasband. My last name honors my father’s ancestral line. The middle initial *A* was given to me to remind me to honor my mother’s Danish Anderson ancestry.

My great-great-grandfather Jens Anderson was from Denmark. And in 1861 the Lord led two Mormon missionaries to the Jens and Ane Cathrine Anderson home, where the missionaries introduced them and their 16-year-old son, Andrew, to the restored gospel. Thus began a legacy of faith of which my family and I are the beneficiaries. The Andersons read the

Book of Mormon and were baptized a short time later. The following year, the Anderson family heeded the call of a prophet to cross the Atlantic to join the Saints in North America.

Sadly, Jens died on the ocean voyage, but his wife and son continued to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving on September 3, 1862. Despite their hardships and their heartaches, their faith never wavered, and neither has the faith of many of their descendants.

In my office hangs a painting⁶ that captures so beautifully a symbolic reminder of that first meeting between my ancestors and those dedicated early missionaries. I am determined not to forget my heritage, and because of my name I will forever remember their legacy of faithfulness and sacrifice.

Never forget, question, or ignore personal, sacred spiritual experiences. The adversary's design is to distract us from spiritual witnesses, while the Lord's desire is to enlighten and engage us in His work.

Let me share a personal example of this truth. I distinctly recall a time when I received a prompting in answer to mighty prayer. The answer was clear and powerful. However, I failed to act immediately on the prompting, and after a period of time I began to



Elder Rasband calls this painting “a symbolic reminder” of the first meeting between his ancestors and early Mormon missionaries.

wonder if what I had felt had been real. Some of you may have fallen for that deception of the adversary as well.

Several days later, I awoke with these powerful verses of scripture in my mind:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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 concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?”⁷

It was as if the Lord was saying, “Now, Ronald, I already told you what you needed to do. Now do it!” How grateful I was for that loving correction and direction! I was immediately comforted by the prompting and was able to move forward, knowing in my heart that my prayer had been answered.

I share this experience, dear brothers and sisters, to demonstrate how quickly our minds can forget and how spiritual experiences guide us. I have learned to cherish such moments “lest I forget.”

To my friend, and to all who wish to bolster their faith, I give you this promise: as you faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ and abide by its teachings, your testimony will be protected and it will grow. Keep the covenants you have made, regardless of the actions of those around you. Be diligent parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who strengthen loved ones with personal testimony and who share spiritual experiences. Remain faithful and steadfast, even if storms of doubt invade your lives through the actions of others. Seek that which will edify and fortify you spiritually. Avoid counterfeit offerings of so-called “truths” which are so pervasive, and remember to record your feelings of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”⁸

In the midst of life's greatest storms, *do not forget* your divine heritage as a son or daughter of God or your eternal destiny to one day return to live with Him, which will surpass anything the world has to offer. Remember the tender and sweet words of Alma: “Behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”⁹

To all who feel the need to have their faith fortified, I plead with you, *do not forget!* Please do not forget.

I bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know he saw and talked with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, just as he recorded in his own words. How grateful I am that he *did not forget* to write of that experience, that we may all know of his testimony.

I bear my solemn witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives; I know He lives and stands at the head of this Church. These things I know for myself, independent of any other voice or witness, and I pray that you and I will *never forget* sacred eternal truths—first and foremost that we are sons and daughters of living and loving Heavenly Parents, who desire only our eternal happiness. Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12.
2. Helaman 5:12.
3. 2 Nephi 9:29; emphasis added.
4. Deuteronomy 4:9; emphasis added.
5. Helaman 5:6–7.
6. The original painting was created by Christen Dalsgaard in 1856. The painting in my office is a copy created by Arnold Friberg in 1964.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–23.
8. Galatians 5:22–23.
9. Alma 5:26.



By Elder Evan A. Schmutz
Of the Seventy

God Shall Wipe Away All Tears

As we exercise our faith in the Savior, He will lift us up and carry us through all of our trials and, ultimately, save us in the celestial kingdom.

As part of our Heavenly Father's plan, He allowed sorrow to be woven into our mortal experience.¹ While it seems that painful trials fall unevenly on us, we can be assured that to one degree or another, we all suffer and struggle. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us to a greater understanding why this must be so.

When we view the difficult experiences of life through the lens of faith in Christ, we are able to see that there can be godly purpose in our suffering. The faithful can experience the truth of Peter's seemingly contradictory counsel. He wrote, "If ye *suffer* for righteousness' sake, happy are ye."² As we apply our "hearts to understanding,"³ we can increase in our ability to both endure our trials well and learn from—and be refined by—them. Such understanding provides an answer to the ageless question "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Everyone listening today is acquainted with some measure of loneliness, despair, grief, pain, or sorrow. Without an "eye of faith"⁴ and an understanding of eternal truth, we

often find that the misery and suffering experienced in mortality can obscure or eclipse the eternal joy of knowing that the great plan of our Father in Heaven *really is* the eternal plan of happiness. There is no other way to receive a fulness of joy.⁵

God invites us to respond with faith to our own unique afflictions in order that we may reap blessings and gain knowledge that can be learned in no other way. We are instructed to keep



the commandments in every condition and circumstance, for "he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven."⁶ And as we read in scripture, "If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful."⁷

The Apostle Paul, himself no stranger to affliction, drew from his own experience to teach with depth and beauty the eternal perspective that comes when we endure well and with patience. He said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."⁸ In other words, we can know in the midst of our afflictions that God has provided an eternal compensating reward.

Paul's ability to speak of the trials, persecutions, and sorrows of his life as "light" afflictions belies the severity of his suffering, which was for him swallowed up by the eternal perspective of the gospel. Paul's faith in Jesus Christ made all things bearable. Five times he was beaten with stripes, thrice with rods; once he was stoned; thrice he suffered shipwreck; often he was put in peril of death by drowning, by robbers, and even by false brethren; he suffered weariness and pain, hunger and thirst, and was imprisoned in the cold and in nakedness.⁹

Many of us have pleaded with God to remove the cause of our suffering, and when the relief we seek has not come, we have been tempted to think He is not listening. I testify that, even in those moments, He hears our prayers, has a reason for allowing our afflictions to continue,¹⁰ and will help us bear them.¹¹

In an intimate and reflective passage, Paul tells us of an unnamed "thorn" in his flesh, which caused him great pain



and brought him three times to his knees, begging the Lord to take it from him. In answer to Paul's prayers, the Lord did not remove the thorn but did speak peace and give understanding to his heart, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." With new understanding, Paul was able to accept and be grateful for the thorn he was given. He said, "Most gladly therefore will I . . . glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹²

As we acquire this eternal perspective in our lives, our capacity to endure grows, we learn how to succor those in need of succor,¹³ and we come to appreciate and even express gratitude for the experiences God allows us to have as tutors in the path to eternal life.

When we find ourselves laboring through tribulation, it can be difficult to see our trials as signposts on our personal trail of discipleship. But whether we find ourselves at times in the dark valley of despair or on the high road of

happiness, learning from and feeling compassion for the sufferings of others can be a blessing.

During a recent stake conference assignment I attended in the Philippines, my heart was broken as I learned of the tragic experience of Brother Daniel Apilado. Brother Apilado and his wife were baptized in 1974. They embraced the restored gospel and were sealed in the temple. Thereafter, they were blessed with five beautiful children. On July 7, 1997, while Brother Apilado was serving as the stake president, a fire broke out in their small home. Brother Apilado's oldest son, Michael, rescued his father, pulled him from the burning structure, and then ran back into the house to rescue others. It was the last time Brother Apilado saw his son alive. Taken in the fire were Brother Apilado's wife, Dominga, and each of their five children.

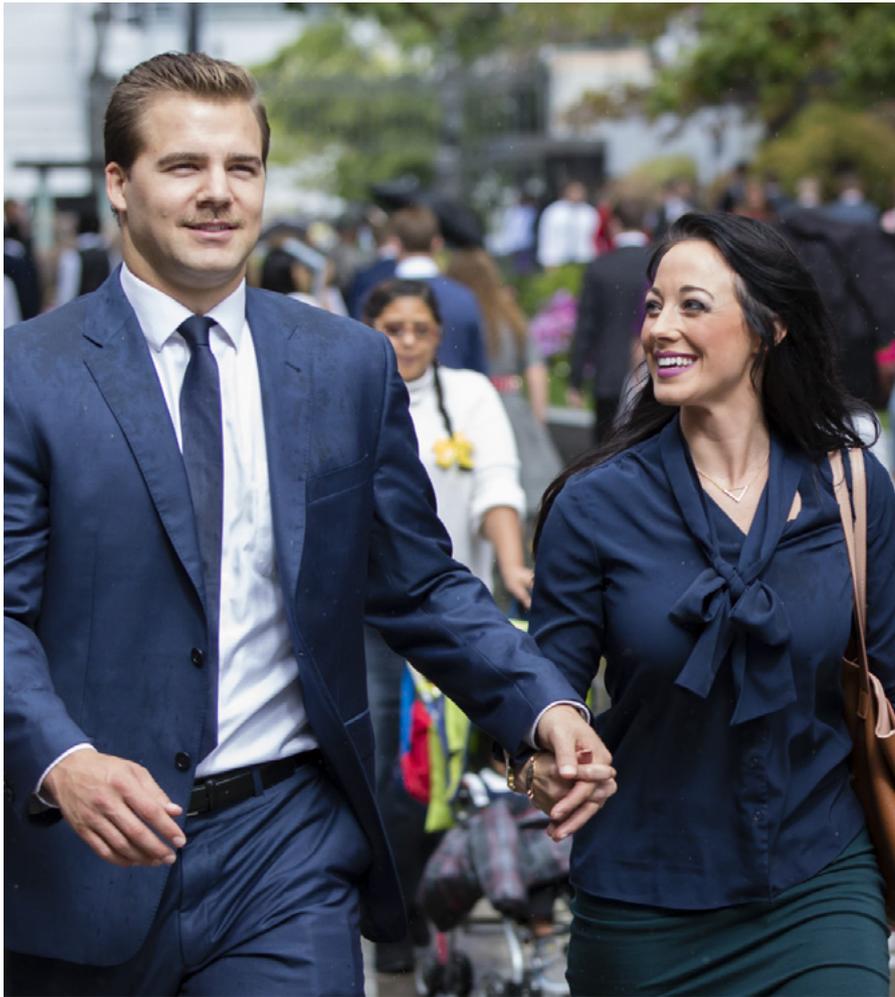
The fact that Brother Apilado was living a life pleasing unto God when tragedy struck did not prevent the

tragedy, nor did it make him immune from the sorrow that followed. But his *faithfulness* in keeping his covenants and exercising his faith in Christ gave him assurance in the promise that he will be reunited with his wife and family. This hope became an anchor to his soul.¹⁴

During my visit, Brother Apilado, now the stake patriarch, introduced me to his new wife, Simonette, and to their two sons, Raphael and Daniel. Truly, Jesus Christ can and will "bind up the brokenhearted."¹⁵

In sharing Brother Apilado's story, I am concerned that the enormity of his loss may cause many to think their own sorrows and sufferings are of little consequence in comparison. Please don't compare, but seek to learn and apply eternal principles as you wade through the furnace of your own afflictions.

If I may speak to you individually—"all ye that labour and are heavy laden"¹⁶—may I suggest that your personal struggles—your individual sorrows, pains, tribulations, and infirmities of



every kind—are all known to our Father in Heaven and to His Son. Take courage! Have faith! And believe in the promises of God!

The purpose and mission of Jesus Christ included that He would “take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people,” “take upon him their infirmities,” and “succor his people according to their infirmities.”¹⁷

To fully receive these gifts our Savior has so freely offered, we all must learn that suffering in and of itself does not teach or grant to us anything of lasting value unless we *deliberately* become involved in the process of learning from our afflictions through the exercise of faith.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell once shared what he had learned of purposeful suffering in these words:

“Certain forms of suffering, endured well, can actually be ennobling. . . .

“ . . . Part of enduring well consists of being meek enough, amid our suffering, to learn from our relevant experiences. Rather than simply passing through these things, they must pass through us . . . in ways which sanctify [us].”¹⁸

I have observed in the lives and examples of others that exercising strong and abiding faith in Jesus Christ and His promises provides the sure hope of better things to come. This sure hope steadies us, bringing the strength and power we need in order to endure.¹⁹ When we can link our suffering to an assurance of purpose in our mortality and *more specifically* to the reward awaiting us in heavenly places, our faith in Christ increases and we receive comfort to our souls.

Then we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught: “There really *is* light at the

end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the ‘light that is endless, that can never be darkened’ [Mosiah 16:9]. It is the very Son of God Himself.”²⁰

We can take strength in knowing that all the hard experiences in this life are temporary; even the darkest nights turn into dawn for the faithful.

When all is finished and we have endured all things with faith in Jesus Christ, we have the promise that “God shall wipe away all [the] tears from [our] eyes.”²¹

I testify that God our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live and that They are keepers of promises. I testify that the Savior invites all of us to come and partake of His Atonement. As we exercise our faith in Him, He will lift us up and carry us through all of our trials and, ultimately, save us in the celestial kingdom. May I invite you to come unto Christ, endure well in faith, become perfected through Him, and have perfect joy in Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Genesis 3:16–19.
2. 1 Peter 3:14; emphasis added.
3. Mosiah 12:27.
4. Ether 12:19.
5. See 3 Nephi 28:10; see also 2 Nephi 31:19–21.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 58:2.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 136:29.
8. 2 Corinthians 4:17.
9. See 2 Corinthians 11:23–27.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8; 122.
11. See Mosiah 24:12–15.
12. See 2 Corinthians 12:7–9.
13. See Mosiah 4:16.
14. See Ether 12:4.
15. Isaiah 61:1; see also verses 2–3.
16. Matthew 11:28.
17. Alma 7:11–12.
18. Neal A. Maxwell, “Enduring Well,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 8; *Liahona*, Apr. 1999, 12.
19. See Ether 12:4.
20. Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 42.
21. Revelation 7:17; see also Revelation 21:4.



By Elder K. Brett Nattress
Of the Seventy

No Greater Joy Than to Know That They Know

I don't know if anything in this world could bring more happiness and joy than to know that our children know the Savior.

Brothers and sisters, I have recently been pondering this question: “If all that your children knew of the gospel came from you—as their only source—how much would they know?” This question applies to all those who love, mentor, and influence children.

Is there any greater gift that we can impart to our children than a memory burned deep into their hearts that we know that our Redeemer lives? Do they know that we know? And more important, have they come to know for themselves that He lives?

When I was a boy, I was my mother's most difficult young child to raise. I had an overabundance of energy. My mother tells me that her greatest fear was that I would not live to see adulthood. I was just too active.

I remember as a young boy sitting in one particular sacrament meeting with our family. My mother had just received a new set of scriptures. This new set combined the entire standard works into one bound edition, and in the very center was lined paper for note-taking.

During the meeting, I asked if I could hold her scriptures. With the hope of promoting my reverence,

she handed them down the pew. As I perused her scriptures, I noticed that she had written a personal goal in the note section. To provide context for her goal, I must tell you that I am the second of six children and my name is Brett. My mother had written, in red, just one goal: “Patience with Brett!”

As further evidence to help you understand the challenge my parents faced in raising our family, let me tell you about our family scripture reading. Each morning, my mother read the Book of Mormon to us during breakfast. During this time, my older brother,

Dave, and I would sit quietly but irreverently. To be completely honest, we weren't listening. We were reading the print on the cereal boxes.

Finally, one morning, I decided to square up with my mother. I exclaimed, “Mom, why are you doing this to us? Why are you reading the Book of Mormon every morning?” I then made a statement that I am embarrassed to admit to. In fact, I can't believe I actually said it. I told her, “Mom, I am *not* listening!”

Her loving response was a defining moment in my life. She said, “Son, I was at a meeting where President Marion G. Romney taught about the blessings of scripture reading. During this meeting, I received a promise that if I would read the Book of Mormon to my children every day, I would not lose them.” She then looked me straight in the eyes and, with absolute determination, said, “*And I will not lose you!*”

Her words pierced my heart. Notwithstanding my imperfections, I was worth saving! She taught me the eternal truth that I am a son of a loving Heavenly Father. I learned that no matter what the circumstance, I was worth it. This was a perfect moment for an imperfect little boy.





I am eternally grateful for my angel mother and for all angels who love children perfectly, notwithstanding their imperfections. I firmly believe that all sisters—I will call them “angels”—are mothers in Zion, whether or not they are married or bear children during this earthly experience.

Years ago the First Presidency proclaimed: “Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels.”¹

I am grateful for angels throughout the Church who boldly and lovingly proclaim eternal truth to Heavenly Father’s children.

I am grateful for the gift of the Book of Mormon. I know that it is true! It contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am unaware of anyone who is diligently reading the Book of Mormon each day with pure intent and with faith in Christ who has lost their testimony and fallen away. Moroni’s prophetic promise carries with it the key to know the truth of all things—including having the ability to discern and avoid the deceptions of the adversary. (See Moroni 10:4–5.)

I am also grateful for a loving Heavenly Father and for His Son, Jesus Christ. The Savior provided the perfect example of how to live in an imperfect and unfair world. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). His love for us is immeasurable. He is our truest friend. He sweat “as it were great drops of blood” for you and also for me (Luke 22:44). He forgave the seemingly unforgivable. He loved the unlovable. He did what no mortal could do: He provided an Atonement to overcome the transgressions, pains, and sicknesses of all mankind.

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can live with the promise that no matter what our struggles may be, we can always have hope in Him, “who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19). Because of His Atonement, we can have joy, peace, happiness, and eternal life.

President Boyd K. Packer stated: “Save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ.”²

One of the most incredible events in human history is the Savior’s

ministering visit to the ancient inhabitants of America. Visualize in your mind what it would be like to have been there. As I have pondered His loving and tender care of that band of Saints gathered at the temple, I have reflected on individual children whom I love more than life itself. I have tried to conceive of how I would feel to behold our little ones, to personally witness the Savior inviting each child to come unto Him, to witness the Savior’s outstretched arms, to stand by as each child, one by one, gently feels the prints in His hands and in His feet, and then to see each of them stand and bear record that He lives! (See 3 Nephi 11:14–17; see also 17:21; 18:25.) To have our children turn and say, “Mom, Dad, it’s Him!”

I don’t know if anything in this world could bring more happiness and joy than to know that our children know the Savior, to know that they know “to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.” That is why, as members of the Church, “we preach of Christ” and we testify of Christ (2 Nephi 25:26).

- That is why we pray with our children every day.



By Elder Dale G. Renlund
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- That is why we read the scriptures with them every day.
- That is why we teach them to serve others, so that they can hold claim upon the blessings of finding themselves as they lose themselves in the service of others (see Mark 8:35; Mosiah 2:17).

As we devote ourselves to these simple patterns of discipleship, we empower our children with the love of the Savior and with divine direction and protection as they face the fierce winds of the adversary.

The gospel truly is about the one. It is about one lost sheep (see Luke 15:3–7); it is about one Samaritan woman at a well (see John 4:5–30); it is about one prodigal son (see Luke 15:11–32).

And it is about one little boy who might claim he is not listening.

It is about each one of us—as imperfect as we may be—becoming one with the Savior as He is one with His Father (see John 17:21).

I testify that we have a loving Heavenly Father, who knows us by name! I testify that Jesus Christ is the living Son of the living God. He is the Only Begotten and our Advocate with the Father. I further testify that salvation comes in and through His name—and in no other way.

It is my prayer that we will devote our hearts and our hands to helping all of Heavenly Father's children to know Him and to feel His love. As we do, He promises us eternal joy and happiness in this world and in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "Message of the First Presidency," in Conference Report, Oct. 1942, 12–13; read by President J. Reuben Clark Jr.
2. Boyd K. Packer, "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 20.

Repentance: A Joyful Choice

Repentance is not only possible but also joyful because of our Savior.

My dear brothers and sisters, when I was 12 years old, my family lived in Göteborg, a coastal city in southern Sweden. By way of reference, it is the hometown of our dear associate Elder Per G. Malm,¹ who passed away this summer. We miss him. We're grateful for his nobility and his noble service and for the example of his absolutely adorable family. And we certainly pray God's richest blessings to be theirs.

Fifty years ago, we attended church in a large remodeled home. One Sunday, my friend Steffan,² the only other deacon in the branch, greeted me at church with some excitement. We went to the chapel's adjacent overflow

area, and he pulled from his pocket a large firecracker and some matches. In an act of youthful bravado, I took the firecracker and lit the long gray fuse. I intended to snuff out the fuse before it blew up. But when I burned my fingers trying to do so, I dropped the firecracker. Steffan and I watched in horror as the fuse continued to burn.

The firecracker exploded, and sulfurous fumes filled the overflow area and the chapel. We hurriedly gathered up the scattered remnants of the firecracker and opened the windows to try to get the smell out, naively hoping that no one would notice. Fortunately, no one was hurt and no damage was done.



As members came to the meeting, they did notice the overpowering smell. It was hard to miss. The smell distracted from the sacred nature of the meeting. Because there were so few Aaronic Priesthood holders—and in what can only be described as dissociative thinking—I passed the sacrament, yet I did not feel worthy to partake of it. When the sacrament tray was offered to me, I took neither the bread nor the water. I felt horrible. I was embarrassed, and I knew that what I had done had displeased God.

After church, the branch president, Frank Lindberg, a distinguished older man with silver-gray hair, asked me to come to his office. After I sat down, he looked at me kindly and said he had noticed that I had not partaken of the sacrament. He asked why. I suspect he knew why. I was sure everyone knew what I had done. After I told him, he asked how I felt. Through tears, I haltingly told him I was sorry and that I knew I had let God down.

President Lindberg opened a well-worn copy of the Doctrine and Covenants and asked me to read some underlined verses. I read the following out loud:

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”³

I will never forget President Lindberg’s compassionate smile when I looked up after I had finished reading. With some emotion, he told me that he felt it would be fine for me to resume partaking of the sacrament. As I left his office, I felt indescribable joy.

Such joy is one of the inherent results of repentance. The word *repent* connotes “to perceive afterwards” and

implies “change.”⁴ In Swedish, the word is *omvänd*, which simply means “to turn around.”⁵ The Christian writer C. S. Lewis wrote about the need and the method for change. He noted that repentance involves “being put back on the right road. A wrong sum can be put right,” he said, “but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply *going on*.”⁶ Changing our behavior and returning to the “right road” are part of repentance, but only part. Real repentance also includes a turning of our heart and will to God and a renunciation of sin.⁷ As explained in Ezekiel, to repent is to “turn from . . . sin, . . . do that which is lawful and right; . . . restore the pledge, . . . [and] walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity.”⁸

Yet even this is an incomplete description. It does not properly identify the power that makes repentance possible, the atoning sacrifice of our Savior. Real repentance must involve faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith that

He can change us, faith that He can forgive us, and faith that He will help us avoid more mistakes. This kind of faith makes His Atonement effective in our lives. When we “perceive afterwards” and “turn around” with the Savior’s help, we can feel hope in His promises and the joy of forgiveness. Without the Redeemer, the inherent hope and joy evaporate, and repentance becomes simply miserable behavior modification. But by exercising faith in Him, we become converted to His ability and willingness to forgive sin.

President Boyd K. Packer affirmed the hopeful promises of repentance in April 2015 at his last general conference. He described the power of the Savior’s Atonement to heal in what I consider the distillation of the wisdom gained in half a century of apostolic service. President Packer said: “The Atonement leaves no tracks, no traces. What it fixes is fixed. . . . It just heals, and what it heals stays healed.”⁹

He continued:

“The Atonement, which can reclaim each one of us, bears no scars. That means that no matter what we have done or where we have been or how something happened, if we truly repent, [the Savior] has promised that He would atone. And when He atoned, that settled that. . . .

“. . . The Atonement . . . can wash clean every stain no matter how difficult or how long or how many times repeated.”¹⁰

The reach of the Savior’s Atonement is infinite in breadth and depth, for you and for me. But it will never be imposed on us. As the prophet Lehi explained, after we “are instructed sufficiently” to “know good from evil,”¹¹ we “are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and



death.”¹² In other words, repentance is a choice.

We can—and sometimes do—make different choices. Such choices may not seem intrinsically wrong, but they prevent us from becoming truly penitent and thus preclude our pursuit of real repentance. For instance, we may choose to blame others. As a 12-year-old in Göteborg, I could have blamed Steffan. He was the one who brought the big firecracker and the matches to the church in the first place. But blaming others, even if justified, allows us to excuse our behavior. By so doing, we shift responsibility for our actions to others. When the responsibility is shifted, we diminish both the need and our ability to act. We turn ourselves into hapless victims rather than agents capable of independent action.¹³

Another choice that impedes repentance is minimizing our mistakes. In the Göteborg firecracker incident, no one was hurt, no permanent damage occurred, and the meeting was held anyway. It would have been easy to say that there was no reason to repent. But minimizing our mistakes, even if no immediate consequences are apparent, removes the motivation to change. This thinking prevents us from seeing that our mistakes and sins have eternal consequences.

Yet another way is to think that our sins do not matter because God loves us no matter what we do. It is tempting to believe what the deceitful Nehor taught the people of Zarahemla: “That all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, . . . and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.”¹⁴ But this seductive idea is false. God does love us. However, what we do matters to Him and to us. He has given clear directives about how we should behave. We call these



commandments. His approbation and our eternal life depend on our behavior, including our willingness to humbly seek real repentance.¹⁵

Additionally, we forgo real repentance when we choose to separate God from His commandments. After all, if the sacrament were not sacred, it would not matter that the smell of the firecracker was disruptive to that Göteborg sacrament meeting. We should be wary of discounting sinful behavior by undermining or dismissing God’s authorship of His commandments. Real repentance requires recognizing the Savior’s divinity and the truthfulness of His latter-day work.

Instead of making excuses, let us choose repentance. Through repentance, we can come to ourselves, like the prodigal in the parable,¹⁶ and reflect on the eternal import of our actions. When we understand how our sins can affect our eternal happiness, we not only become truly penitent but we also strive to become better. When faced with temptation, we are more likely to ask ourselves, in the words of William Shakespeare:

*What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?
A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.
Who buys a minute’s mirth to wail
a week,
Or sells eternity to get a toy?*¹⁷

If we have lost sight of eternity for the sake of a toy, we can choose to repent. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we have another chance. Metaphorically, we can exchange the toy we so ill-advisedly purchased in the first place and receive again the hope of eternity. As the Savior explained, “For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.”¹⁸

Jesus Christ can forgive because He paid the price for our sins.¹⁹

Our Redeemer chooses to forgive because of His incomparable compassion, mercy, and love.

Our Savior wants to forgive because this is one of His divine attributes.

And, like the Good Shepherd He is, He is joyful when we choose to repent.²⁰

Even as we feel godly sorrow for our actions,²¹ when we choose to repent, we immediately invite the Savior into our lives. As Amulek taught, “Come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, *immediately* shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.”²² We can feel godly sorrow for our actions and, at the

same time, feel the joy of having the Savior's help.

The fact that we can repent is the good news of the gospel!²³ Guilt can be “swept away.”²⁴ We can be filled with joy, receive a remission of our sins, and have “peace of conscience.”²⁵ We can be freed from feelings of despair and the bondage of sin. We can be filled with the marvelous light of God and be “pained no more.”²⁶ Repentance is not only possible but also joyful because of our Savior. I still remember the feelings that washed over me in the branch president's office after the firecracker episode. I knew I had been forgiven. My feelings of guilt vanished, my gloomy mood lifted, and my heart felt light.

Brothers and sisters, as we conclude this conference, I invite you to feel more joy in your life: joy in the knowledge that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is real; joy in the Savior's ability, willingness, and desire to forgive; and joy in choosing to repent. Let us follow the instruction to “with joy . . . draw water out of the wells of salvation.”²⁷ May we choose to repent, forsake our sins, and turn our hearts and wills around to follow our Savior. I testify of His living reality. I am a witness and repeated recipient of His incomparable compassion, mercy, and love. I pray that the redeeming blessings of His Atonement may be yours now—and again and again and again throughout your lives,²⁸ as they have been in mine. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Elder Per Gösta Malm (1948–2016) served as a General Authority Seventy from 2010 until his death. Though born in Jönköping, Sweden, he and his wife, Agneta, made their home in Göteborg, Sweden. In his remarkable October 2010 general conference talk, Elder Malm also spoke of a reflection from Göteborg (see “Rest unto

Your Souls,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 101–2).

2. Even though Steffan is not my friend's real name, the story is told with his permission.
 3. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
 4. The Greek word *metanoee* literally means “to perceive afterwards’ (*meta*, ‘after,’ implying ‘change,’ *noeo*, ‘to perceive’; *nous*, ‘the mind, the seat of moral reflection’)” (see James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [2010], Greek dictionary section, 162).
 5. My translation of *omvänd*. *Om* can be translated as “around.” *Vänd* can be translated as “to turn.”
 6. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (1946), 6. In the preface to the book, Lewis wrote that some try to unify heaven and hell instead of choosing one or the other. He says that some of us think that “development or adjustment or refinement will somehow turn evil into good. . . . This belief I take to be a disastrous error. . . . We are not living in a world where all roads are radii of a circle and where all, if followed long enough, will therefore draw gradually nearer and finally meet at the centre. . . .
- “I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. . . . Evil can be undone, but it cannot ‘develop’ into good. Time does not heal it.



The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, . . . or else not” (5–6).

7. See Bible Dictionary, “Repentance.”
8. Ezekiel 33:14–15.
9. President Boyd K. Packer's testimony in the leadership meeting associated with April 2015 general conference is not published in full. These remarks are from my private notes, taken at the time.
10. Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 28.
11. 2 Nephi 2:5.
12. 2 Nephi 2:27.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:26.
14. Alma 1:4. Nehor and his followers did not believe in repentance (see Alma 15:15).
15. See Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–25; *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 12–17.
16. See Luke 15:17; see also verses 11–24.
17. William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, lines 211–14.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
19. See Isaiah 53:5.
20. See Luke 15:4–7; Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–13.
21. True repentance includes “godly sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Elder M. Russell Ballard has taught: “For those who have strayed, the Savior has provided a way back. But it is not without pain. Repentance is not easy; it takes time—painful time!” (“Keeping Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 7). Elder Richard G. Scott also taught, “Sometimes the steps of repentance are initially difficult and painful” (“Finding Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 77). While godly sorrow and pain are involved in the process of repentance, the eventual outcome is joyful when forgiveness of sin is felt.
22. Alma 34:31; emphasis added.
23. See Bible Dictionary, “Gospels.”
24. Enos 1:6.
25. Mosiah 4:3.
26. Mosiah 27:29.
27. Isaiah 12:3.
28. See Mosiah 26:29–30. While God promises to freely forgive, willfully sinning and counting on the Savior's mercy to allow easy repentance is abhorrent to God (see Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–27). Elder Richard G. Scott said: “The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of past poor choices is that the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy” (“Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 83).

The following list of 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 |
|------------------------|--|
| Neil L. Andersen | (35) Conversion comes to several people as Church members reach out to them "as witnesses of God." |
| M. Russell Ballard | (90) While reading John 17 to his family in the Holy Land, M. Russell Ballard prays to be one with them and with the Father and the Son. |
| W. Mark Bassett | (52) As a boy, W. Mark Bassett and his brother try to pry metal bands off the sealed portion of a model of the golden plates. |
| Jean B. Bingham | (6) After canoeing against the wind, Jean B. Bingham and a group of young women create sails when the wind changes direction. A girl who rides her bike to a house with "golden windows" sees that her own house's windows are also golden. People refuse to acknowledge the growth of a successful young man. |
| D. Todd Christofferson | (48) Helen Keller feels great joy when her teacher helps her understand the concept of words. |
| Carl B. Cook | (110) As he ponders an assignment his great-great-grandfather received from the Prophet Joseph Smith, Carl B. Cook receives confirmation that his new Church assignment came from God. A new member increases her faith and overcomes her fears to teach in Primary. |
| Quentin L. Cook | (40) Quentin L. Cook comes to understand why his father views a power pole as a blessing rather than as a stumbling block to a scenic view. |
| J. Devn Cornish | (32) A senior resident at a hospital changes the life of J. Devn Cornish by telling him he will become an excellent doctor. |
| LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. | (68) Parley P. Pratt and four other men gain testimonies of the Book of Mormon. LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. gains a testimony of it as a teenager. |
| Dean M. Davies | (93) Dean M. Davies learns through the Holy Ghost that members of a ward he is visiting have come to sacrament meeting to truly worship. |
| Henry B. Eyring | (75) The father and priesthood leaders of young Henry B. Eyring raise his sights and give him confidence. (99) As a young man, Henry B. Eyring could not see the timing of the Lord's intentions to build His kingdom. |
| Robert D. Hales | (22) While Elie Wiesel is recovering from open-heart surgery, his grandson asks him if he would hurt less if his grandson loved him more. On Sundays a loving husband helps his ill wife dress and prepare for church. |
| Jeffrey R. Holland | (61) Home teachers miss an opportunity to help a sister whose basement is flooded. A home teacher ministers to a father whose son died in an accident. |
| Peter F. Meurs | (85) As a five-year-old, Peter F. Meurs feels the calming influence of the Holy Ghost as his father blesses the sacrament. |
| Thomas S. Monson | (78) A Church member who has kept the Word of Wisdom prays for and receives strength to climb a rope onto the deck of a ship. (80) A young man at the 1964 World's Fair recognizes the truth of the plan of salvation after watching the Church film <i>Man's Search for Happiness</i> . |
| K. Brett Nattress | (119) K. Brett Nattress learns from his mother that despite his imperfections as a child, his Heavenly Father loves him. |
| Russell M. Nelson | (81) After a group of exiled Saints pass a "merry night" in the cold, Eliza R. Snow observes that "Saints can be happy under every circumstance." Church members overcome trials, temptations, and "the natural man" by focusing on the joy that comes from living the gospel. |
| Bonnie L. Oscarson | (12) A sister in Mexico increases attendance in her Sunday School class. A mother inoculates her children against negative influences outside the home. |
| Ronald A. Rasband | (113) Ronald A. Rasband counsels a friend who is experiencing a "crisis of faith." The faith of Ronald A. Rasband's ancestors stays strong despite hardship and heartache. Ronald A. Rasband is slow to act on an answered prayer until he receives a scriptural reminder. |
| Linda S. Reeves | (88) Boyd K. Packer testifies that through repentance and the Savior's Atonement, his sins are gone. Through sincere repentance, a member, a missionary, and a convert find joy and peace. |
| Dale G. Renlund | (121) Young Dale G. Renlund feels joy after confessing to his branch president that he had set off a firecracker at church. |
| Evan A. Schmutz | (116) A Church member whose family dies in a fire keeps his covenants and exercises faith that he will be reunited with them. |
| Carole M. Stephens | (9) A young woman with bipolar disorder summons the strength to testify of the Savior and His Atonement. |
| Gary E. Stevenson | (44) Twelve-year-old Mary Elizabeth Rollins reads and gains a testimony of the Book of Mormon. While testifying of the Book of Mormon as a missionary, Gary E. Stevenson receives a witness of its truthfulness. |
| Juan A. Uceda | (30) Heavenly Father answers Juan A. Uceda's desperate prayer, saving him after he steps off a mountain trail during his mission. |
| Dieter F. Uchtdorf | (15) A young girl encourages her grandmother to "listen harder!" A mother prays that her prodigal daughter will return to the Lord. Two missionaries find success after knocking on every door of a four-story apartment building. (19) After much time, patience, hope, faith, reassurance from his wife, and many liters of diet soda, Dieter F. Uchtdorf learns to use a personal computer. (71) A former member of the Church returns to the faith thanks to friends, the Holy Ghost, and the pull of the Good Shepherd. |
| Kazuhiko Yamashita | (55) As a mission president, Kazuhiko Yamashita is blessed to know a missionary who is "ambitious for Christ." |



Below: Elder Neil L. Andersen visits Rarotonga; Elder Quentin L. Cook meets with the president of the Republic of El Salvador; Elder Jeffrey R. Holland listens during a conference on religious persecution at Windsor Castle, England.



Above, from top: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf and his wife, Harriet, greet Latter-day Saints at the rededication of the Freiberg Germany Temple; Elder Gary E. Stevenson and other Church leaders meet with government leaders in Vietnam; President Russell M. Nelson and Elder M. Russell Ballard offer encouragement to flood victims and volunteers in Louisiana.

Prophets and Apostles Minister

Prophets and apostles continue to minister throughout the world (see D&C 107:23). Here's a brief summary of some of their activities since the last general conference:

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, during a visit in May 2016, offered hope to members in cities recently victimized by terror attacks in **England, France, and Belgium**. He visited refugees, went to the site of the Paris France Temple (now nearing completion), and participated in the creation of the first stake in the **Czech Republic**. In July he traveled to **Italy**, presenting a check for \$3 million in Church funds to help with refugee relief, and visited refugee camps in **Greece**. In September he visited members in **Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, Norway, and Germany**, where he rededicated the Freiberg Germany Temple. He said the gospel brings hope to people wherever they are and that among members “there is a real feeling of being brothers and sisters in the Church.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles presided at the Moscow Russia Stake conference in June, as other stakes met in Saratov and St. Petersburg, **Russia**. He also met with members in **Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine**.

In **England** in June, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told members of the British Parliament that religious freedom allows churches to do good around the world. “We want the blessings of religious



freedom to be claimed by all the inhabitants of this planet, and we are far short of that at present,” he said.

At a conference on religious persecution and forced migration held at Windsor Castle in **England** in September, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said there is much to learn from the experience of early LDS pioneers that could help modern-day refugees rise above their circumstances. “Whenever possible, we should facilitate and perpetuate the unique identities of refugees and highlight stories from their past,” he said.

In **Spain**, including the **Canary Islands**, and in **Portugal**, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited members, missionaries, and leaders to encourage those who are less active to return to full participation in the Church.

As **Vietnam** granted the Church full and official recognition in June, Elder Quentin L. Cook and Elder Gary E. Stevenson, both of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, met with government officials and discussed the history and development of the Church. They also discussed how the Church assists with social and charitable projects and helps the poor and disadvantaged. They also presided over meetings in **Guam**, **Micronesia**, and **Japan**.

Also in June, Brisbane, **Australia**, and the **Cook Islands** were blessed by the visit of Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Andersen also visited the island of **Rarotonga** and became the first Apostle to set foot on the island of **Mangaia**.

In **Colombia**, **Peru**, and **Ecuador** in June, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles rearranged his schedule to visit those

still recovering from a massive earthquake. He shared a message of love from President Thomas S. Monson and assured the quake-weary members that they were not forgotten.

In **Guatemala** in August, Elder Quentin L. Cook noted a steady rise in family history research and temple work and said it is an indication of members’ faith.

When the king and queen of Tonga were welcomed to the Church’s Polynesian Cultural Center in **Hawaii, USA**, in June, Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave introductory remarks about the importance of family ties.

In **Louisiana, USA**, President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder M. Russell Ballard visited flood victims while Mormon Helping Hands volunteers helped clean up damaged homes during August and September. Elder Ballard noted that more than 11,000 volunteers had come from 13 states.

And in September, during a worldwide devotional for young adults that originated in **Washington, D.C., USA**, Elder Cook said, “We should not have fear even in a dangerous and troubled world.” He counseled young adults to set righteous goals and have a plan to achieve them and to not underestimate their own talents and capabilities. He also encouraged them to evaluate their use of social media. “We hear a lot about being authentic in social media,” he said, but “being sincerely Christlike is an even more important goal than being authentic.”

Up-to-date information on the ministry of these Church leaders can be found on their respective Facebook pages and at prophets.lds.org. ■

155th Temple Dedicated Soon

Upon the dedication of the **Hartford Connecticut Temple** (USA) on November 20, 2016, the Church will have 155 temples operating throughout the world. Recently dedicated or rededicated temples include the following:

- **Sapporo Japan Temple**, dedicated on August 21, 2016
- **Freiberg Germany Temple**, rededicated on September 4, 2016
- **Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple** (USA), dedicated on September 18, 2016
- **Fort Collins Colorado Temple** (USA), dedicated on October 16, 2016
- **Star Valley Wyoming Temple** (USA), dedicated on October 30, 2016

Additional information about temples that are under construction or that have been announced can be found at temples.lds.org. ■

TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA TEMPLE, FREIBERG GERMANY TEMPLE, AND SAPPORO JAPAN TEMPLE

Defending Religious Freedom

Letter-day Saints should be involved “in a constructive way in the vital contest for religious freedom,” said Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at a religious freedom conference in Texas, USA, in September 2016. “Literally everyone—from kindergarten children through the ranks of professionals and mothers and fathers and friends and neighbors—can and should understand what religious freedom is and why it is important.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also spoke in defense of religious freedom at a patriotic service in Utah, USA, in June. “Recently,” he said, “it has become popular to argue that the freedom of religion is really only the right to worship rather than the right to freely exercise your faith in your daily life.” He encouraged people of faith to stand up for religious freedom by becoming informed, speaking up, and getting involved in cultural, civic, and political organizations and events.

Church leaders have repeatedly addressed the subject of religious freedom, delivering speeches and participating in conferences in Australia, Brazil, Mexico, and the United Kingdom and at various locations in the USA. Find their talks and learn about religious freedom and what you can do to protect it by visiting religiousfreedom.lds.org. Some of the content there is specific to the United States, but the principles can be adapted in other countries. ■



Doctrinal Mastery

In today’s world of instant internet information, youth are no longer isolated from people who attack the Church. But a new initiative called Doctrinal Mastery is helping seminary students develop a deeper understanding of gospel doctrine and increase their faith in Jesus Christ.

Students are also learning how to respond to difficult questions and issues by acting in faith, examining concepts and questions with an eternal perspective, and seeking further understanding through divinely appointed sources.

In an address to Seminaries and Institutes personnel, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said of Doctrinal Mastery: “This initiative is inspired and timely. It will have a wonderful influence on our young people.”

The major aims of Doctrinal Mastery are to help students:

1. Acquire spiritual knowledge.
2. Master the doctrine of the gospel and the scripture passages in which that doctrine is taught.

Building on what was previously accomplished through Scripture Mastery, this in-depth effort is enabling students to strengthen their conversion and commitment as disciples of Jesus Christ, find protection against the influences of the adversary, and bless the lives of others.

Doctrinal Mastery resources can be found at lds.org/si/seminary/manuals. ■

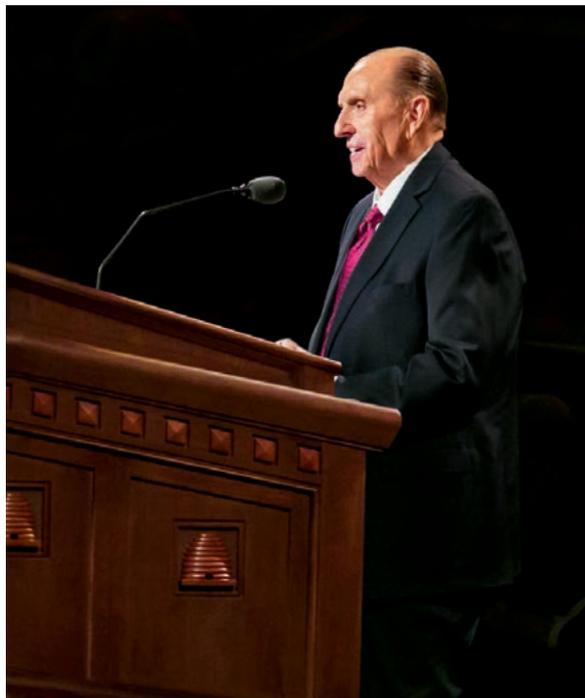


“Essential to the plan is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His atoning sacrifice, all would be lost. It is not enough, however, merely to believe in Him and His mission. We need to work and learn, search and pray, repent and improve. We need to know God’s laws and live them. We need to receive His saving ordinances.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Perfect Path to Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 80–81.

Look and Live, by Ben Hammond

See Numbers 21:4-9; Alma 33:18-22. Those who looked to Moses and the brass serpent, a symbol of the Son of God, were healed.



"We are blessed to *have* the truth. We have a mandate to *share* the truth," said President Thomas S. Monson during the 186th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. "Let us *live* the truth, that we might merit all that the Father has for us. He does nothing save it be for our benefit. He has told us, 'This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.'"

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS