

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

# Ensign

General  
Conference  
Addresses





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*“How do we come unto Him? Last April, President Russell M. Nelson and Elder M. Russell Ballard encouraged us to study ‘The Living Christ’ as part of learning about the Savior. . . .*

*“As I have studied the life and teachings of Jesus Christ with more focus and committed ‘The Living Christ’ to memory, my gratitude and love for our Savior have increased. Each sentence of that inspired document contains a sermon and has enhanced my understanding of His divine roles and earthly mission. What I have learned and felt through this period of study and reflection confirms that Jesus truly ‘is the light, the life, and the hope of the world.’”*

Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” 85.

*Through the Eyes of Faith,*  
by Mark Missman and  
Mark Mabry

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# The 187th Semiannual General Conference

## Saturday Evening, September 23, 2017, General Women's Session

Conducting: Jean B. Bingham.

Invocation: Megumi Yamaguchi.

Benediction: Leslie P. Layton.

Music by a Relief Society choir from stakes in the Park City, Utah, area; Jane Fjeldsted, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise," *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "Sing Praise to Him," *Hymns*, no. 70, arr. Fjeldsted and Goodliffe; "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254; "We Have Partaken of Thy Love," *Hymns*, no. 155, arr. Fjeldsted and Goodliffe.

## Saturday Morning, September 30, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Larry R. Lawrence.

Benediction: Elder Massimo De Feo.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "Come, We That Love the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 119; "Arise, O God, and Shine," *Hymns*, no. 265, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford University Press; "God Bless Our Prophet Dear," *Hymns*, no. 24, arr. Wilberg; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5; "God Is Love," *Hymns*, no. 87, arr. Murphy; "Faith in Every Footstep," Dayley, pub. by Jackman.

## Saturday Afternoon, September 30, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge.

Benediction: Elder Allan F. Packer.

Music by a youth choir from stakes in Midvale and Sandy, Utah; Leah Tarrant, director; Linda Margetts, organist: "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 58, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Deseret Book; medley, arr. Sally DeFord: "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79; "He Sent His Son," *Children's Songbook*, 34–35; "There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227; "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman.

## Saturday Evening, September 30, 2017, General Priesthood Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Kevin W. Pearson.

Benediction: Elder Rafael E. Pino.

Music by a father and sons choir from stakes in Cache County, Utah; Geoffrey Anderson, director; Clay Christiansen, organist; "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252, arr. Dalton, pub. by LDS Music Source; "Secret Prayer," *Hymns*, no. 144, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman; "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85; "We Ever Pray for Thee," *Hymns*, no. 23, arr. Kasen, pub. by Jackman.

## Sunday Morning, October 1, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Michael T. Ringwood.

Benediction: Elder José A. Teixeira.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72; "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81, arr. Wilberg; "Consider the Lilies," Hoffman, arr. Lyon, pub. by Sonos; "Hark, All Ye Nations!" *Hymns*, no. 264, arr. Wilberg; "Glory to God on High," *Hymns*, no. 67; "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd," *Hymns*, no. 221, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "I Believe in Christ," *Hymns*, no. 134, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Jackman.

## Sunday Afternoon, October 1, 2017, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Joseph W. Sitati.

Benediction: Elder Evan A. Schmutz.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223, arr. Zabriskie, pub. by LDS Music Source; "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3; "If the Savior Stood Beside Me," DeFord, arr. Cardon; "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," *Hymns*, no. 7, arr. Wilberg.

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# Ensign

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## Highlights from the 187th Semiannual General Conference

*God bless our prophet dear;  
May health and comfort cheer  
His noble heart.  
His words with fire impress  
On souls that thou wilt bless  
To choose in righteousness  
The better part.*

(“God Bless Our Prophet Dear,” *Hymns*, no. 24, sung during the Saturday morning session)

For more than 50 years, President Thomas S. Monson’s touching personal accounts and powerful witness of Jesus Christ have been part of general conference. But because of declining health, both President Monson and Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were noticeably absent from conference.

Absent, but not forgotten.

Though President Monson watched from home and Elder Hales passed away peacefully in the hospital just prior to the final session, both were not only in our thoughts as we prayed for them, but their influence was also evident throughout the addresses.

President Monson was quoted by more than a dozen speakers, including President Russell M. Nelson (see page 60), who made particular reference to President Monson’s invitation last conference “to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.”<sup>1</sup>

Elder Neil L. Andersen, the concluding speaker (see page 122), shared remarks that Elder Hales had been preparing for conference but was unable to deliver: “When we choose to have faith, we are prepared to stand in the presence of God,” Elder Hales wrote. Certainly, Elder Hales chose faith.

Absent, but not really missing, President Monson and Elder Hales weren’t at the pulpit, but they played an important part in making conference meaningful to many.

*We ever pray for thee, our prophet dear,  
That God will give to thee comfort  
and cheer;  
As the advancing years furrow  
thy brow,  
Still may the light within shine bright  
as now,  
Still may the light within shine bright  
as now.*

(“We Ever Pray for Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 23, sung during the general priesthood session) ■

### NOTE

1. Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 87.





By Sharon Eubank

First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Turn On Your Light

*The prophets are calling on us, my sisters. Will you be righteous? Will you articulate your faith? Will you turn on your light?*

You might not know this, but President Monson and I are twins. On the very day I was born—in the very hour—in Northern California, the 36-year-old Thomas S. Monson was sustained as the newest Apostle. I love my special, personal link to the prophet of God, President Monson.

The prophets are speaking about women.<sup>1</sup> You will hear some of their words in this meeting. For my text I am going back almost 40 years to a remarkable prophecy written by President Spencer W. Kimball. September 1979 was only the second time the women of the global Church had met in their own general meeting. President Kimball had prepared his talk, but when the day of the conference came, he was in the hospital. So instead, he asked his wife, Camilla Eyring Kimball, to read his remarks on his behalf.<sup>2</sup>

Sister Kimball read the prophet's words, which emphasized the influence of LDS women on the good women of the world prior to the Second Coming of the Savior. Near the end, there was an electrifying charge to the women of the Church that we have been talking about ever since.

Let me quote a little of what President Kimball said:

“Finally, my dear sisters, may I suggest to you something that has not been said before or at least in quite this way. Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world . . . will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness and articulateness in their lives and to the degree that the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world.

“Among the real heroines in the world who will come into the Church



In September 1979, Camilla Eyring Kimball read remarks on behalf of President Spencer W. Kimball.

are women who are more concerned with being righteous than with being selfish. These real heroines have true humility, which places a higher value on integrity than on visibility. . . .

“. . . It will be . . . female exemplars of the Church [who] will be a *significant force* in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days.”<sup>3</sup>

What a prophetic statement that is. Just to summarize:

- It will be the good relationships of women that will trigger much of the major growth coming to the Church in the years ahead.
- The friendships that Relief Society women, young women, and Primary girls build with sincere, faithful, godly women and girls of other faiths and beliefs will be a *significant force* in how the Church grows in the last days.
- President Kimball called these women from other backgrounds “heroines” who will be more concerned with being righteous than selfish, who will show us that integrity is more valuable than visibility.

I have met so many of these good women as I do my work around the world. Their friendships are precious to me. You know them too among your friends and neighbors. They may or may not be members of the Church right now, but we connect in friendship that is very important. Well, how do we play our part? What should we do? President Kimball refers to five things:

**The first is to be righteous.** Being righteous doesn't mean being perfect or never making mistakes. It means developing an inner connection with God, repenting of our sins and mistakes, and freely helping others.



Women who have repented change the course of history. I have a friend who was in a car accident when she was young, and from that, she became addicted to pain medication. Later on, her parents divorced. She became pregnant from a brief relationship, and her addictions continued. But one night, she looked at the chaos and mess of her life and thought, “Enough.” She cried out to the Savior Jesus Christ to help her. She said she learned that Jesus Christ was stronger than even her terrible circumstances and that she could rely on His strength as she walked the road of repentance.

By coming back to the Lord and His ways, she changed the course of her history and her little boy’s history and her new husband’s. She is righteous; she has a wide-open heart for others who have made mistakes and want to change. And just like all of us, she isn’t perfect, but she knows how to repent and to keep trying.

#### **The second is to be articulate.**

Being articulate means to clearly express how you feel about something and why. Earlier this year, there was a

post on my Facebook news feed that disparaged Christianity. I read it and I was a little annoyed, but I shrugged it off. But an acquaintance who is not a member of our faith responded with a comment of her own. She wrote: “[This is] the exact opposite of what Jesus stood for—he was . . . radical [in] his time because he . . . equalized the world. . . . He [spoke to] prostitute[s], [he ate] with . . . tax collector[s] . . . , befriended powerless women and children . . . , [and] gave us the story of the Good Samaritan. . . . It follows that . . . true Christians would be striving to be the MOST loving people in the world.” When I read that, I thought to myself, “Why didn’t I write that?”

Each of us needs to be better at articulating the reasons for our faith. How do you feel about Jesus Christ? Why do you stay in the Church? Why do you believe the Book of Mormon is scripture? Where do you get your peace? Why does it matter that the prophet has something to say in 2017? How do you know he is a real prophet? Use your voice and your power to articulate what you know and feel—on

social media, in quiet conversations with your friends, when you’re chatting with your grandchildren. Tell them why you believe, what it feels like, if you ever doubted, how you got through it, and what Jesus Christ means to you. As the Apostle Peter said, “Be not afraid . . . ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”<sup>4</sup>

**The third is to be different.** Let me tell you a story that happened this July on Panama City Beach in Florida.<sup>5</sup> Late in the afternoon, Roberta Ursrey saw her two young sons screaming for help from 100 yards (90 m) out into the ocean. They had become caught in a strong current and were being carried out to sea. A nearby couple tried to rescue the boys, but they also got caught in the current. So members of the Ursrey family dove in to rescue the struggling swimmers, and quickly nine people were caught in the rip current.

There were no ropes. There was no lifeguard. The police sent for a rescue boat, but the people had been out in the ocean struggling for 20 minutes,

and they were exhausted and their heads were slipping under the water. Among the onlookers on the beach was Jessica Mae Simmons. Her husband had the idea to form a human chain. They shouted at people on the beach to help them, and dozens of people linked arms and marched into the ocean. Jessica wrote, “To see people from different races and genders come into action to help TOTAL strangers [was] absolutely amazing to see!”<sup>6</sup> An 80-person chain stretched toward the swimmers. Look at this picture of that incredible moment.

Everyone on the beach could think only of traditional solutions, and they were paralyzed. But one couple, in a split second, thought of a different solution. Innovation and creation are spiritual gifts. When we keep our covenants, it may make us different from others in our culture and society, but it gives us access to inspiration so we can think of different solutions, different approaches, different applications. We aren’t always going to fit in with the world, but being different in positive ways can be a lifeline to others who are struggling.

#### **The fourth is to be distinct.**

Distinct means to be recognizably well defined. Let me go back to the story about Jessica Mae Simmons on the beach. Once that human chain was stretching toward the swimmers, she knew she could help. Jessica Mae said, “I can hold my breath . . . and go around an Olympic pool with ease! [I knew how to get out of a rip current.] I knew I could get [each swimmer] to the human chain.”<sup>7</sup> She and her husband grabbed boogie boards and swam down the chain until they and another rescuer reached the swimmers, and then they ferried them one by one back to the chain, who passed them to the safety of the beach. Jessica had

a distinct skill: she knew how to swim against a rip current.

The restored gospel is recognizably well defined. But we have to be distinct about how we follow it. Just as Jessica practiced swimming, we need to practice living the gospel before the emergency so that, unafraid, we will be strong enough to help when others are being swept away by the current.

**And finally, the fifth is to do one through four in happy ways.** Being happy doesn’t mean to slap a plastic smile on your face no matter what is going on. But it does mean keeping the laws of God and building and lifting others.<sup>8</sup> When we build, when we lift the burden of others, it blesses our lives in ways our trials cannot take away. I have a quote by President Gordon B. Hinckley placed where I see it every day. He said: “You don’t . . . build out of pessimism or cynicism. You look with optimism, work with faith, and things happen.”<sup>9</sup>

An example of that happy, optimistic spirit is a 13-year-old girl I know named Elsa, whose family is moving to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1,800 miles (2,900 km) away from her friends. It’s not very easy when you are 13 to move

to a new place. Elsa was understandably unsure about the move, so her dad gave her a blessing. At the very moment of the blessing, her mom’s phone chimed with a text. The young women who live in Louisiana had sent this picture with the caption “Please move into our ward!”<sup>10</sup>

These young women were optimistic they would like Elsa without even meeting her. Their enthusiasm created optimism in Elsa about the upcoming move and answered her prayer about whether everything would be all right.

There is an energy that comes from happiness and optimism that doesn’t just bless us—it builds everyone around us. Any small thing you do to light real happiness in others shows that you are already carrying the torch that President Kimball lit.

I was 15 years old at the time President Kimball’s talk was given. We who are older than 40 have been carrying this charge from President Kimball ever since that day. Now I look out at the 8-year-olds, the 15-year-olds, the 20-year-olds, and the 35-year-olds, and I’m going to pass this torch to you. You are the future leaders in this Church, and it will be



*An 80-person human chain of volunteers stretches to save swimmers caught in a rip current.*

up to you to carry this light forward and be the fulfillment of this prophecy. We who are older than 40 link our arms through yours and feel your strength and energy. We need you.

Listen to this scripture found in Doctrine and Covenants 49:26–28. It may have been written under different circumstances, but tonight by the Holy Spirit, I hope you will take it as your personal call to this sacred work.

“Behold, I say unto you, go forth as I have commanded you; repent of all your sins; ask and ye shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you.

“Behold, I will go before you and be your rearward; and I will be in your midst, and you shall not be confounded.

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, and I come quickly.”<sup>11</sup>

I appeal to each of you to put yourself in a place where you can feel the generous love God has for you. You cannot put yourself beyond the reach of that love. When you feel His love, when you love Him, you will repent and keep His commandments. When you keep His commandments, He can use you in His work. His work and glory is the exaltation and eternal life of women and men.

The prophets are calling on us, my sisters. Will you be righteous? Will you articulate your faith? Can you bear being distinct and different? Will your happiness in spite of your trials draw others who are good and noble and who need your friendship? Will you turn on your light? I testify the Lord Jesus Christ will go before us and be in our midst.

I conclude with the words of our well-loved prophet, Thomas S. Monson: “My dear sisters, this is your day, this is your time.”<sup>12</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



#### NOTES

1. President Brigham Young: “Let [the sisters] organize Female Relief Societies in the various wards. We have many talented women among us, and we wish their help in this matter. Some may think this is a trifling thing, but it is not; and you will find that the sisters will be the mainspring of the movement” (in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* [2011], 41).

President Lorenzo Snow: “You have ever been found at the side of the Priesthood, ready . . . to do your part in helping to advance the interests of the kingdom of God; and as you have shared in these labors, so you will most certainly share in the triumph of the work and in the exaltation and glory which the Lord will give to His faithful children” (in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 7).

President Spencer W. Kimball: “There is power in this organization [of Relief Society] that has not yet been fully exercised to strengthen the homes of Zion and build the Kingdom of God—nor will it until both the sisters and the priesthood [brethren] catch the vision of Relief Society” (in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 142).

President Howard W. Hunter: “There is a great need to rally the women of the Church to stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior. . . . So we entreat you to minister with your powerful influence for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities” (in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 157).

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “There is strength and great capacity in the women of this Church. There is leadership and direction, a certain spirit of independence, and yet great satisfaction in being a part of this, the Lord’s kingdom, and of working hand in hand with the priesthood to move it forward” (in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 143).

President Thomas S. Monson, quoting Belle Smith Spafford, ninth General

President of the Relief Society: “‘Never have women had greater influence than in today’s world. Never have the doors of opportunity opened wider for them. This is an inviting, exciting, challenging, and demanding period of time for women. It is a time rich in rewards if we keep our balance, learn the true values of life, and wisely determine priorities’ [A Woman’s Reach (1974), 21]. My dear sisters, this is your day, this is your time” (“The Mighty Strength of the Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 95).

President Russell M. Nelson: “I plead with my sisters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to step forward! Take your rightful and needful place in your home, in your community, and in the kingdom of God—more than you ever have before. I plead with you to fulfill President Kimball’s prophecy. And I promise you in the name of Jesus Christ that as you do so, the Holy Ghost will magnify your influence in an unprecedented way!” (“A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97).

2. See the video of Sister Camilla Kimball reading President Spencer W. Kimball’s address at [conference.lds.org](https://www.conference.lds.org); see also Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102–4.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” 103–4; emphasis added.
4. 1 Peter 3:14–15.
5. See McKinley Corbley, “80 Beachgoers Form Human Chain to Save Family Being Dragged Out to Sea by Riptide,” July 12, 2017, [goodnewsnetwork.org](https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org).
6. Jessica Mae Simmons, in Corbley, “80 Beachgoers Form Human Chain.”
7. Simmons, in Corbley, “80 Beachgoers Form Human Chain.”
8. See Alma 41:10; 34:28; Doctrine and Covenants 38:27; Luke 16:19–25.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 71.
10. Note from Virginia Pearce family.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 49:26–28.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “The Mighty Strength of the Relief Society,” 95.



By Neill F. Marriott

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Abiding in God and Repairing the Breach

*Christ has the power to bring us into loving fellowship with the Father and with one another.*

**W**e need to continually deepen our knowledge of and obedience to Heavenly Father. Our relationship with Him is eternal. We are His beloved children, and that will not change. How are we going to wholeheartedly accept His invitation to draw near to Him and thus enjoy the blessings He longs to give us in this life and in the world to come?

The Lord said to ancient Israel, and He says to us, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”<sup>1</sup> Speaking as would the Father, He also says to us, “Thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.”<sup>2</sup> Do we trust Him enough to abide in Him and walk with Him?

We are here on this earth to learn and grow, and the most important learning and growing will come from our covenant connection to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. From our faithful relationship with Them come godly knowledge, love, power, and capacity to serve.

“We are duty-bound to learn all that God has revealed about himself.”<sup>3</sup> We must understand that God the Father directed His Son, Jesus Christ, to create

the earth *for our growth*, that Heavenly Father gave His Son to pay the demands of justice *for our salvation*, and that the Father’s priesthood power and the Son’s true Church with the necessary ordinances were restored *for our blessings*. Can you feel the depth of love running through Their preparations for our joy and growth? We need to know that Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation is that we obey the laws and ordinances of

the gospel and gain eternal life and thus become as God is.<sup>4</sup> This is the true and lasting happiness Heavenly Father offers us. There is no other true and lasting happiness.

Our challenges can pull us off this course of happiness. We can lose our trusting connection to God if trials drive us to distraction instead of sending us to our knees.

This simple couplet begs us to do some priority sifting:

*Some things matter; some things don't.  
A few things last, but most things  
won't.*<sup>5</sup>

Sisters, what matters to you? What is lasting to you? A matter of lasting value to the Father is that we learn of Him, humble ourselves, and grow in obedience to Him through earthly experiences. He wants us to change our selfishness into service, our fears into faith. These lasting matters can test us to our core.

It is *now*, with our mortal limitations, that the Father asks us to love





when loving is most difficult, to serve when serving is inconvenient, to forgive when forgiving is soul stretching. How? How will we do it? We earnestly reach for Heavenly Father's help, in the name of His Son, and do things His way instead of pridefully asserting our own will.

I recognized my pride when President Ezra Taft Benson spoke on cleansing the inner vessel.<sup>6</sup> I imagined myself as a pitcher. How was I to get the residue of pride out of my pitcher? Independently forcing ourselves to have humility and trying to make ourselves love others is insincere and hollow, and it simply doesn't work. Our sins and pride create a breach—or a gap—between us and the font of all love, our Heavenly Father.

Only the Savior's Atonement can cleanse us of our sins and close that gap or breach.

We want to be encircled in the arms of our Heavenly Father's love and guidance, and so we put His will first and with a broken heart plead that Christ will pour streams of cleansing water into our pitcher. At

first it may come drop by drop, but as we seek, ask, and obey, it will come abundantly. This living water will begin to fill us, and brimming with His love, we can tip the pitcher of our soul and share its contents with others who thirst for healing, hope, and belonging. As our inner pitcher becomes clean, our earthly relationships begin to heal.

Sacrifice of our personal agendas is required to make room for the eternal plans of God. The Savior, who speaks for the Father, pleads with us, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."<sup>7</sup> Drawing near unto the Father can mean learning of His truth through the scriptures, following prophetic counsel, and striving to do His will more completely.

Do we understand that Christ has the power to bring us into loving fellowship with the Father and with one another? He, by the power of the Holy Ghost, can give us needed insight into relationships.

A Primary teacher told me about a powerful experience with his class of 11-year-old boys. One of them, whom

I'll call Jimmy, was an uncooperative loner in class. One Sunday the teacher was inspired to put aside his lesson and tell why he loved Jimmy. He spoke of his gratitude and his belief in this young man. Then the teacher asked the class members to tell Jimmy something they appreciated about him. As class members, one by one, told Jimmy why he was special to them, the boy lowered his head and tears began to roll down his face. This teacher and class built a bridge to Jimmy's lonely heart. Simple love, honestly expressed, gives hope and value to others. I call this "repairing the breach or the gap."

Perhaps our life in a loving pre-mortal world set up our yearning for true, lasting love here on earth. We are divinely designed to give love and be loved, and the deepest love comes when we are one with God. The Book of Mormon invites us to "be reconciled unto [God] through the atonement of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

Isaiah spoke of those who faithfully live the law of the fast and thus become for their own posterity a repairer of the breach. They are the



ones who, Isaiah promises, will “build the old waste places.”<sup>9</sup> In a similar way, the Savior repaired the breach, or distance, between us and Heavenly Father. He, through His great atoning sacrifice, opens the way for us to partake of God’s loving power, and then we are enabled to repair the “waste places” in our personal lives. Healing emotional distance between each other will require our acceptance of God’s love, coupled with a sacrifice of our natural selfish and fearful tendencies.

One memorable night a relative and I disagreed about a political issue. She briskly and thoroughly took my comments apart, proving me wrong within earshot of family members. I felt foolish and uninformed—and I probably was. That night as I knelt to pray, I hurried to explain to Heavenly Father how difficult this relative was! I talked on and on. Perhaps I paused in my complaining and the Holy Ghost had

a chance to get my attention, because, to my surprise, I next heard myself say, “You probably want me to love her.” Love her? I prayed on, saying something like, “How can I love her? I don’t think I even like her. My heart is hard; my feelings are hurt. I can’t do it.”

Then, surely with help from the Spirit, I had a new thought as I said, “But You love her, Heavenly Father. Would You give me a portion of Your love for her—so I can love her too?” My hard feelings softened, my heart started to change, and I began to see this person differently. I began to sense her real value that Heavenly Father saw. Isaiah writes, “The Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.”<sup>10</sup>

Over time the gap between us sweetly closed. But even if she had not accepted my changed heart, I had learned that Heavenly Father will help us love even those we may think are

unlovable, if we plead for His aid. The Savior’s Atonement is a conduit for the constant flow of charity from our Father in Heaven. We must choose to abide in this love in order to have charity for all.

When we give our heart to the Father and the Son, we change our world—even if circumstances around us do not change. We draw closer to Heavenly Father and feel His tender acceptance of our efforts to be true disciples of Christ. Our discernment, confidence, and faith increase.

Mormon tells us to pray with all energy of heart for this love and it will be bestowed upon us from its source—Heavenly Father.<sup>11</sup> Only then can we become repairers of the breach in earthly relationships.

Our Father’s infinite love reaches out to us, to bring us back into His glory and joy. He gave His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to repair the breach that gapes wide between us and Him. Reunion with Father in Heaven is the essence of lasting love and eternal purpose. We must make the connection with Him now to learn what really matters, to love as He loves, and to grow to be like Him. I testify that our faithful relationship with Heavenly Father and the Savior matters eternally to Them and to us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jeremiah 31:3.
2. Moses 6:34.
3. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Mystery of Godliness” (Brigham Young University fireside, Jan. 6, 1985), 1, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu).
4. See Bruce R. McConkie, “The Mystery of Godliness,” 4.
5. Author unknown.
6. See Ezra Taft Benson, “Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 4–7.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
8. Jacob 4:11.
9. Isaiah 58:12.
10. Isaiah 30:26.
11. See Moroni 7:48.



By Joy D. Jones  
Primary General President

## Value beyond Measure

*We can frequently savor the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost verifying the truth of our spiritual worth.*

While visiting the country of Sierra Leone in West Africa, I participated in a meeting conducted by a stake Primary leader. Mariama led with such love, grace, and confidence that it was easy to assume she had long been a member of the Church. Mariama, however, was a fairly recent convert.

Her younger sister joined the Church and invited Mariama to attend a Church class with her. Mariama was deeply impressed by the message. The lesson was on the law of chastity. She asked to have the missionaries teach her more and soon received a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. She was baptized in 2014, and her daughter was baptized last month. Imagine, the two fundamental teachings that led to Mariama's conversion were the law of chastity and the Prophet Joseph Smith, two points the world often sees as irrelevant, outdated, or inconvenient. But Mariama testified that she was like a moth attracted to the light. She said, "When I found the gospel, I found myself." She discovered her worth through divine principles. Her value as a daughter of God was revealed to her through the Holy Ghost.

Now let's meet the Singh sisters from India. Renu, on the far right, the first of

five sisters to join the Church, shared these thoughts:

"Before I started investigating the Church, I didn't really feel that I was very special. I was just one of many people, and my society and culture didn't really teach me that I had any value as an individual. When I learned the gospel and learned that I was a daughter of our Heavenly Father, it changed me. Suddenly I felt so special—God had actually created me and had created my soul and my life with value and purpose.



Mariama, pictured with her daughter, discovered her worth after discovering divine principles.

"Before I had the gospel in my life, I was always trying to prove to others that I was someone special. But when I learned the truth, that I am a daughter of God, I didn't have to prove anything to anyone. I knew that I was special. . . . Don't ever think that you are nothing."

President Thomas S. Monson said it perfectly when he quoted these words: "The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God."<sup>1</sup>

I was recently blessed to meet another young woman who understands this same truth. Her name is Taiana. I met her at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City. Taiana was a junior in high school when she was diagnosed with cancer. She fought a brave battle for 18 months before passing away a few short weeks ago. Taiana was full of light and love. She was known for her contagious smile and her trademark "double thumbs-up." When others asked, "Why you, Taiana?" her response was, "Why not me?" Taiana sought to become like her Savior, whom she so dearly loved. During our visits, I learned



Knowing that she is a daughter of God gave Taiana peace and courage to face her trial.

that Taiana understood her divine worth. Knowing she was a daughter of God gave her peace and courage to face her overwhelming trial in the positive way she did.

Mariama, Renu, and Taiana teach us that the Spirit will confirm to each of us individually our divine worth. Truly knowing that you are a daughter of God will affect every aspect of your life and guide you in the service you render each day. President Spencer W. Kimball explained in these glorious words:

“God is your Father. He loves you. He and your mother in heaven value you beyond any measure. . . . You are unique. One of a kind, made of the eternal intelligence which gives you claim upon eternal life.

“Let there be no question in your mind about your value as an individual. The whole intent of the gospel plan is to provide an opportunity for each of you to reach your fullest potential, which is eternal progression and the possibility of godhood.”<sup>2</sup>

Let me point out the need to differentiate between two critical words:

*worth* and *worthiness*. They are not the same. Spiritual *worth* means to value ourselves the way Heavenly Father values us, not as the world values us. Our worth was determined before we ever came to this earth. “God’s love is infinite and it will endure forever.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, *worthiness* is achieved through obedience. If we sin, we are less worthy, but we are never worth less! We continue to repent and strive to be like Jesus with our worth intact. As President Brigham Young taught: “The least, the most inferior spirit now upon the earth . . . is worth worlds.”<sup>4</sup> No matter what, we always have worth in the eyes of our Heavenly Father.

Despite this marvelous truth, how many of us struggle, from time to time, with negative thoughts or feelings about ourselves? I do. It’s an easy trap. Satan is the father of all lies, especially when it comes to misrepresentations about our own divine nature and purpose. Thinking small about ourselves does not serve us well. Instead it holds us back. As we’ve often been taught,

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”<sup>5</sup> We can stop comparing our worst to someone else’s best. “Comparison is the thief of joy.”<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, the Lord assures us that when we have virtuous thoughts, He will bless us with confidence, even the confidence to know who we really are. There’s never been a more crucial time to heed His words. “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly,” He said. “Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and . . . the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion.”<sup>7</sup>

The Lord revealed this additional truth to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “He that receiveth of God, let him account it of God; and let him rejoice that he is accounted of God worthy to receive.”<sup>8</sup> When we feel the Spirit, as this verse explains, we recognize that what we feel comes from our Heavenly Father. We acknowledge Him and praise Him for blessing us. We then rejoice that we are counted worthy to receive.

Imagine that you are reading the scriptures one morning and the Spirit softly whispers to you that what you are reading is true. Can you recognize the Spirit and be happy that you felt His love and were worthy to receive?

Mothers, you might be kneeling next to your four-year-old as he says his bedtime prayer. A feeling flows over you as you listen. You feel warmth and peace. The feeling is brief, but you recognize that you, at that moment, are counted worthy to receive. We may seldom, if ever, receive huge spiritual manifestations in our lives; but we can frequently savor the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost verifying the truth of our spiritual worth.

The Lord explained the relationship between our worth and His great atoning sacrifice when He said:



Through the gospel, Renu Singh (far right) learned her value as a daughter of God and became the first of five sisters to join the Church.

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

“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.”<sup>9</sup>

Sisters, because of what He did for us, “we are bound to him by loving ties.”<sup>10</sup> He said, “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me.”<sup>11</sup>

King Benjamin also explained this binding connection with our Savior: “And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.”<sup>12</sup> That suffering and the results of that suffering fill our hearts with love and gratitude. Elder Paul E. Koelliker taught, “As we remove the distractions that pull us toward the world and exercise our agency to seek Him, we open our hearts to a celestial force which draws us toward Him.”<sup>13</sup> If the love we feel for the Savior and what He did for us is greater than the energy we give to weaknesses, self-doubts, or bad habits, then He will help us overcome the things which cause suffering in our lives. He saves us from ourselves.

Let me reemphasize: if the pull of the world is stronger than the faith and trust we have in the Savior, then the pull of the world will prevail every time. If we choose to focus on our negative thoughts and doubt our worth instead of clinging to the Savior, it becomes more difficult to feel the impressions of the Holy Ghost.



Sisters, let's not be confused about who we are! While it is often easier to be spiritually passive than it is to put forth the spiritual effort to remember and embrace our divine identity, we cannot afford that indulgence in these latter days. May we, as sisters, “be faithful in Christ; . . . may Christ lift [us] up, and may his sufferings and death, . . . and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in [our minds] forever.”<sup>14</sup> As the Savior lifts us to higher ground, we can see more clearly not only who we are but also that we are closer to Him than we ever imagined. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Our Sacred Priesthood Trust,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 55.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 105.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “Abide in My Love,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 48.
4. Brigham Young, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, Mar. 6, 1861, 2.
5. Attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt.
6. Attributed to Theodore Roosevelt.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45, 46.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 50:34.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–11.
10. “Our Savior’s Love,” *Hymns*, no. 113.
11. 3 Nephi 27:14.
12. Mosiah 3:7.
13. Paul E. Koelliker, “He Truly Loves Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 18.
14. Moroni 9:25.



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

# Three Sisters

*We are responsible for our own discipleship, and it has little—if anything—to do with the way others treat us.*

Dear sisters, dear friends, to begin general conference with a world-wide sisters' session is significant and wonderful. Just imagine: sisters of all ages, backgrounds, nationalities, and languages united in faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we recently met with our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, he expressed to us how much he loves the Lord. And I know that President Monson is very grateful for your love, your prayers, and your devotion to the Lord.

A long time ago in a distant land lived a family of three sisters.

The first sister was **sad**. Everything from her nose to her chin and from her skin to her toes seemed not quite good enough to her. When she spoke, her words sometimes came out awkwardly, and people laughed. When someone criticized her or “forgot” to invite her to something, she would blush, walk away, and find a secret spot where she would let out a sad sigh and wonder why life had turned out to be so bleak and cheerless.

The second sister was **mad**. She thought of herself as very smart, but there was always someone else who scored higher on tests at school. She considered herself funny, fair,

fashionable, and fascinating. But always, there seemed to be someone who was funnier, fairer, more fashionable, or more fascinating.

She was never first at anything, and this she could not endure. Life was not supposed to be this way!

Sometimes she lashed out at others, and it seemed that she was always one breath away from being outraged by one thing or another.

Of course, this did not make her any more likable or popular. Sometimes she clenched her teeth, tightened her fists, and thought, “Life is so unfair!”

Then there was the third sister. Unlike her sad and mad sisters, she was—well, **glad**. And it wasn't because she was smarter or more beautiful or more capable than her sisters. No, people sometimes avoided or ignored her too. They sometimes made fun of what she was wearing or the things she was saying. They sometimes said mean things about her. But she did not allow any of that to bother her too much.

This sister loved to sing. She didn't have great pitch, and people laughed about it, but that didn't stop her. She would say, “I am not going to let other people and their opinions stop me from singing!”

The very fact that she kept singing made her first sister sad and her second sister mad.

Many years passed, and eventually each sister reached the end of her time on earth.

The first sister, who discovered again and again that there was no shortage of disappointments in life, eventually died **sad**.

The second, who every day found something new to dislike, died **mad**.





And the third sister, who spent her life singing her song with all her might and a confident smile on her face, died *glad*.

Of course, life is never so simple, and people are never so one-dimensional as the three sisters in this story. But even extreme examples like these can teach us something about ourselves. If you are like most of us, you may have recognized part of yourself in one, two, or perhaps all three of these sisters. Let us take a closer look at each one.

#### The Victim

The first sister saw herself as a victim—as someone who was acted upon.<sup>1</sup> It seemed like one thing after another kept happening to her that made her miserable. With this approach to life, she was giving others control over how she felt and behaved. When we do this, we are driven about by every wind of opinion—and in this day of ever-present social media, those winds blow at hurricane intensity.

Dear sisters, why should you surrender your happiness to someone, or a group of someones, who cares very little about you or your happiness?

If you find yourself worrying about what other people say about you, may I suggest this antidote: remember who you are. Remember that you are of the royal house of the kingdom of God, daughters of Heavenly Parents, who reign throughout the universe.

You have the spiritual DNA of God. You have unique gifts that originated in your spiritual creation and that were developed during the vast span of your premortal life. You are the child of our merciful and everlasting Father in Heaven, the Lord of Hosts, the One who created the universe, spread the spinning stars across the vast expanse of space, and placed the planets in their appointed orbits.

You are in His hands.

Very good hands.

Loving hands.

Caring hands.

And nothing anyone ever says about you can change that. Their words are meaningless compared to what God has said about you.

You are His precious child.

He loves you.

Even when you stumble, even when you turn away from Him, God loves

you. If you are feeling lost, abandoned, or forgotten—fear not. The Good Shepherd will find you. He will lift you upon His shoulders. And He will carry you home.<sup>2</sup>

My dear sisters, please let these divine truths sink deeply into your hearts. And you will find that there are many reasons not to be sad, for you have an eternal destiny to fulfill.

The beloved Savior of the world gave His life so that you could choose to make that destiny a reality. You have taken upon you His name; you are His disciples. And because of Him, you can clothe yourselves with robes of eternal glory.

#### The Hater

The second sister was angry at the world. Like her sad sister, she felt that the problems in her life were all caused by someone else. She blamed her family, her friends, her boss and coworkers, the police, the neighbors, Church leaders, current fashion trends, even the intensity of solar flares, and plain bad luck. And she lashed out at all of them.

She didn't think of herself as a mean person. To the contrary, she

felt that she was only sticking up for herself. Everyone else, she believed, was motivated by selfishness, pettiness, and hate. She, on the other hand, was motivated by good intentions—justice, integrity, and love.

Unfortunately, the mad sister's line of thinking is all too common. This was noted in a recent study that explored conflict between rival groups. As part of the study, researchers interviewed Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East, and Republicans and Democrats in the United States. They discovered that “each side felt their own group [was] motivated by love more than hate, but when asked why their rival group [was] involved in the conflict, [they] pointed to hate as [the other] group's motivating factor.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, each group thought of themselves as the “good guys”—fair, kind, and truthful. By contrast, they saw their rivals as the “bad guys”—uninformed, dishonest, even evil.

In the year I was born, the world was immersed in a terrible war that brought agonizing grief and consuming sorrow to the world. This war was caused by my own nation—by a group of people who identified certain other groups as evil and encouraged hatred toward them.

They silenced those they did not like. They shamed and demonized them. They considered them inferior—even less than human. Once you degrade a group of people, you are more likely to justify words and acts of violence against them.

I shudder when I think about what happened in 20th-century Germany.

When someone opposes or disagrees with us, it's tempting to assume that there must be something wrong with them. And from there it's a small step to attach the worst of motives to their words and actions.

Of course, we must always stand for what is right, and there are times when we must raise our voices for that cause. However, when we do so with anger or hate in our hearts—when we lash out at others to hurt, shame, or silence them—chances are we are not doing so in righteousness.

What did the Savior teach?

“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.”<sup>4</sup>

This is the Savior's way. It is the first step in breaking down the barriers that create so much anger, hatred, division, and violence in the world.

“Yes,” you might say, “I would be willing to love my enemies—if only they were willing to do the same.”

But that doesn't really matter, does it? We are responsible for our own discipleship, and it has little—if anything—to do with the way others treat us. We obviously hope that they will be understanding and charitable in return, but our love for *them* is independent of their feelings toward *us*.

Perhaps our effort to love our enemies will soften their hearts and influence them for good. Perhaps it will not. But that does not change our commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

So, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we will love our enemies.

We will overcome anger or hate.

We will fill our hearts with love for all of God's children.

We will reach out to bless others and minister to them—even those who might “despitefully use [us] and persecute [us].”<sup>5</sup>

#### The Authentic Disciple

The third sister represents the authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. She did something that can be extremely hard to do: she trusted God even in the face of ridicule and hardship. Somehow she maintained her faith and hope, despite the scorn and cynicism around her. She lived joyfully not because her circumstances were joyful but because *she* was joyful.

None of us makes it through life's journey unopposed. With so many forces trying to draw us away, how do we keep our vision fixed on the glorious happiness promised to the faithful?



I believe the answer can be found in a dream that a prophet had thousands of years ago. The prophet's name is Lehi, and his dream is recorded in the precious and wonderful Book of Mormon.

In his dream, Lehi saw a vast field, and in it was a wondrous tree, beautiful beyond description. He also saw large groups of people making their way toward the tree. They wanted to taste its glorious fruit. They felt and trusted that it would give them great happiness and abiding peace.

There was a narrow path that led to the tree, and alongside was an iron rod that helped them stay on the path. But there was also a mist of darkness that obscured their vision of both the path and the tree. And perhaps even more dangerous was the sound of loud laughter and ridicule coming from a large and spacious building nearby. Shockingly, the mocking even convinced some people who had reached the tree and tasted the wondrous fruit to begin to feel ashamed and wander away.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps they began to doubt that the tree was really as beautiful as they had once thought. Perhaps they began to question the reality of what they had experienced.

Maybe they thought if they turned away from the tree, life would be easier. Maybe they would not be ridiculed or laughed at anymore.

And actually, the people who were scoffing at them looked like people who were quite happy and having a good time. So perhaps if they abandoned the tree, they would be welcomed into the congregation of the great and spacious building and be applauded for their judgment, intelligence, and sophistication.

#### Stay on the Path

Dear sisters, dear friends, if you find it difficult to hold fast to the iron rod



and walk steadfastly toward salvation; if the laughter and ridicule of others who seem so confident cause you to waver; if you are troubled by unanswered questions or doctrines you don't understand yet; if you feel saddened because of disappointments, I urge you to remember Lehi's dream.

Stay on the path!

Never let go of the rod of iron—the word of God!

And when anyone tries to make you ashamed for partaking of the love of God, ignore them.

Never forget you are a child of God; rich blessings are in store; if you can learn to do His will, you'll live with Him once more!<sup>7</sup>

The promises of praise and acceptance by the world are unreliable, untrue, and unsatisfying. God's promises are sure, true, and joyful—now and forever.

I invite you to consider religion and faith from a higher perspective. Nothing offered in the great and spacious building can compare with the fruit of living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the

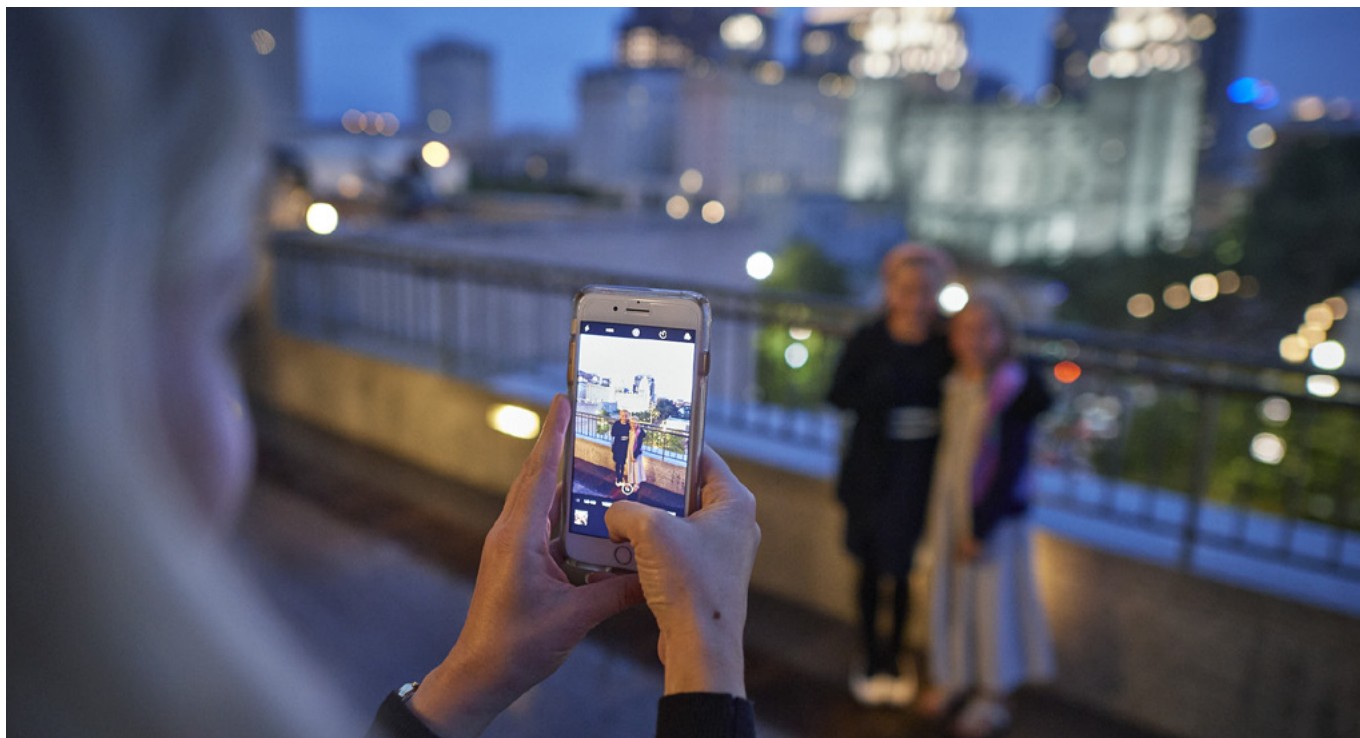
heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>8</sup>

I have learned for myself that the path of discipleship in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the way to joy. It is the way to safety and peace. It is the way to truth.

I testify that by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, you can learn this for yourself.

In the meantime, if the path becomes difficult for you, I hope you will find refuge and strength in our wonderful organizations of the Church: Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society. They are like waypoints on the path, where you can renew your confidence and faith for the journey ahead. They are a safe home, where you can feel a sense of belonging and receive encouragement from your sisters and fellow disciples.

The things you learn in Primary prepare you for the additional truths you learn as young women. The path of discipleship you walk in your Young Women classes leads to the fellowship and sisterhood of Relief Society. With each step along the way, you are given additional opportunities to demonstrate your love for others through acts of



faith, compassion, charity, virtue, and service.

Choosing this path of discipleship will lead to untold happiness and fulfillment of your divine nature.

It will not be easy. It will require the very best that you have—all your intelligence, creativity, faith, integrity, strength, determination, and love. But one day you will look back upon your efforts, and oh, how grateful you will be that you remained strong, that you believed, and that you did not depart from the path.

#### Press On

There may be many things about life that are beyond your control. But in the end, you have the power to choose both your destination and many of your experiences along the way. It is not so much your abilities but your choices that make the difference in life.<sup>9</sup>

You cannot allow circumstances to make you sad.

You cannot allow them to make you mad.

You can rejoice that you are a daughter of God. You can find joy and happiness in the grace of God and in the love of Jesus Christ.

You can be glad.

I urge you to fill your hearts with gratitude for the abundant and limitless goodness of God. My beloved sisters, you can do this! I pray with all the affection of my soul that you will make the choice to press on toward the tree of life. I pray that you will choose to lift up your voice and make your life a glorious symphony of praise, rejoicing in what the love of God, the wonders of His Church, and the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring to the world.

The song of true discipleship may sound off-key or even a little loud to some. Since the beginning of time, this has been so.

But to our Heavenly Father and to those who love and honor Him, it is a most precious and beautiful song—the sublime and sanctifying song of redeeming love and service to God and fellowmen.<sup>10</sup>

I leave you my blessing as an Apostle of the Lord that you will find the strength and courage to joyfully thrive as a daughter of God while gladly walking each day on the glorious path of discipleship. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 2:14, 26.
2. See Luke 15:4–6.
3. Boston College, “Study Finds Intractable Conflicts Stem from Misunderstanding of Motivation,” *ScienceDaily*, Nov. 4, 2014, sciencedaily.com.
4. Matthew 5:44–45.
5. Matthew 5:44.
6. See 1 Nephi 8.
7. See “I Am a Child of God,” *Children’s Songbook*, 2–3.
8. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
9. See “The Most Inspirational Book Quotes of All Time,” [pegasuspublishers.com/blog](http://pegasuspublishers.com/blog).
10. See Alma 5:26.





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

# A Yearning for Home

*Turn your soul toward the light. Begin your own wonderful journey home. As you do so, your life will be better, happier, and more purposeful.*

Recently, as we met with President Thomas S. Monson, he expressed, with great solemnity and a countenance of happiness, how much he loves the Lord and that he knows that the Lord loves him. My dear brothers and sisters, I know that President Monson is very grateful for your love, your prayers, and your dedication to the Lord and His great gospel.

## Bobbie the Wonder Dog

Nearly a century ago, a family from Oregon was vacationing in Indiana—over 2,000 miles (3,200 km) away—when they lost their beloved dog, Bobbie. The frantic family searched for the dog everywhere but to no avail. Bobbie could not be found.

Heartbroken, they made the trip home, each mile taking them farther away from their cherished pet.

Six months later, the family was stunned to find Bobbie on their doorstep in Oregon. “Mangy, scrawny, feet worn to the bone—[he] appeared to have walked the entire distance . . . by himself.”<sup>1</sup> Bobbie’s story captured the imagination of people across the United States, and he became known as Bobbie the Wonder Dog.

Bobbie is not the only animal who has baffled scientists with an amazing

sense of direction and instinct for home. Some monarch butterfly populations migrate 3,000 miles (4,800 km) each year to climes better suited for their survival. Leatherback turtles travel across the Pacific Ocean from Indonesia to the coasts of California. Humpback whales swim from the cold waters of the North and South Poles toward the equator and back. Perhaps even more incredibly, the arctic tern flies from the Arctic Circle to Antarctica and back every year, some 60,000 miles (97,000 km).

When scientists study this fascinating behavior, they ask questions such

as “How do they know where to go?” and “How does each successive generation learn this behavior?”

When I read of this powerful instinct in animals, I can’t help but wonder, “Is it possible that human beings have a similar yearning—an inner guidance system, if you will—that draws them to their *heavenly home*?”

I believe that every man, woman, and child has felt the call of heaven at some point in his or her life. Deep within us is a longing to somehow reach past the veil and embrace Heavenly Parents we once knew and cherished.

Some might suppress this yearning and deaden their souls to its call. But those who do not quench this light within themselves can embark on an incredible journey—a wondrous migration toward heavenly climes.

## God Calls to You

The sublime message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that God is our Father, that He cares about us, and that there is a way to return to Him.

God calls to you.





God knows your every thought, your sorrows, and your greatest hopes. God knows the many times you have sought Him. The many times you have felt limitless joy. The many times you have wept in loneliness. The many times you have felt helpless, confused, or angry.

Yet, no matter your history—if you have faltered, failed, feel broken, bitter, betrayed, or beaten—know that you are not alone. God still calls to you.

The Savior extends His hand to you. And, as He did to those fishermen who stood long ago on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, with infinite love He speaks to you: “Come, follow me.”<sup>2</sup>

If you will hear Him, He will speak to you this very day.

When you walk the path of discipleship—when you move toward Heavenly Father—there is something within you that will confirm that you have heard the call of the Savior and set your heart toward the light. It will tell you that you are on the right path and that you are returning home.

Since the beginning of time, God’s prophets have urged the people of their day to “hearken unto the voice

of the Lord thy God, . . . keep his commandments and his statutes . . . , [and] turn unto [Him] with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.”<sup>3</sup>

The scriptures teach us a thousand reasons why we should do this.

Today, let me offer two reasons why we should turn to the Lord.

First, your life will be better.

Second, God will use you to make the lives of others better.

#### **Your Life Will Be Better**

I testify that when we embark upon or continue the incredible journey that leads to God, our lives will be better.

This does not mean that our lives will be free from sorrow. We all know of faithful followers of Christ who suffer tragedy and injustice—Jesus Christ Himself suffered more than anyone. Just as God makes the “sun to rise on the evil and on the good,” He also allows adversity to test the just and the unjust.<sup>4</sup> In fact, sometimes it seems that our lives are more difficult *because* we are trying to live our faith.

No, following the Savior will not remove all of your trials. However,

it will remove the barriers between you and the help your Heavenly Father wants to give you. God will be with you. He will direct your steps. He will walk beside you and even carry you when your need is greatest.

You will experience the sublime fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, [and] faith.”<sup>5</sup>

These spiritual fruits are not a product of temporal prosperity, success, or good fortune. They come from following the Savior, and they can be our faithful attendants even in the midst of the darkest storms.

The fires and tumults of mortal life may threaten and frighten, but those who incline their hearts to God will be encircled by His peace. Their joy will not be diminished. They will not be abandoned or forgotten.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,” the scriptures teach, “and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”<sup>6</sup>

Those who heed the inner call and seek God, those who pray, believe, and walk the path the Savior has prepared—even if they stumble along the path at times—receive the consoling assurance that “all things shall work together for [their] good.”<sup>7</sup>

For God “gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”<sup>8</sup>

“For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.”<sup>9</sup>

And the Lord in His goodness asks: Do you want to experience abiding joy?

Do you yearn to feel within your heart the peace that passes understanding?<sup>10</sup>

Then turn your soul toward the light.

Begin your own wonderful journey home.

As you do so, your life will be better, happier, and more purposeful.

#### God Will Use You

On your journey back to Heavenly Father you will soon realize that this journey isn't just about focusing on your own life. No, this path inevitably leads you to become a blessing in the lives of God's other children—your brothers and sisters. And the interesting thing about the journey is that as you serve God, and as you care for and help your fellowmen, you will see great progress in your own life, in ways you could never imagine.

Perhaps you don't consider yourself all that useful; perhaps you don't consider yourself a blessing in somebody's life. Often, when we look at ourselves, we see only our limitations and deficiencies. We might think we have to be “more” of something for God to use us—more intelligent, more wealthy, more charismatic, more talented, more spiritual. Blessings will come not so much because of your abilities but because of your choices. And the God of the universe will work within and through you, magnifying your humble efforts for His purposes.

His work has always advanced on this important principle: “Out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”<sup>11</sup>

When writing to the Saints in Corinth, the Apostle Paul observed that not many of them would be considered wise by worldly standards. But that didn't matter, because “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”<sup>12</sup>

The history of God's work is filled with people who considered themselves inadequate. But they humbly served, relying on the grace of God and His promise: “Their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield . . . ,

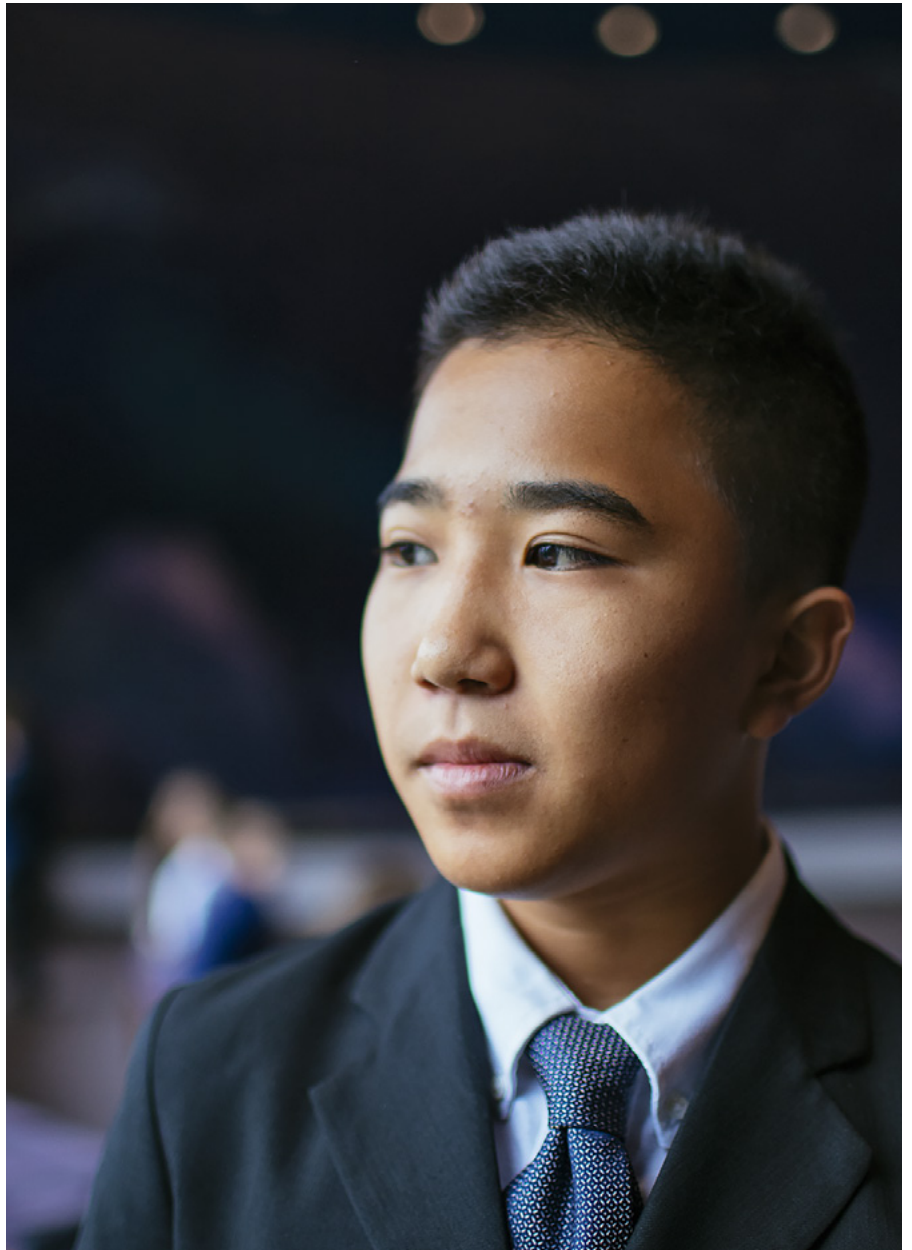
and they shall fight manfully for me; and . . . I [will] preserve them.”<sup>13</sup>

This past summer our family had a wonderful opportunity to visit some early Church history sites in the eastern United States. In a special way, we relived the history of that time. People I had read so much about—people like Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and Thomas B. Marsh—became more real to me as we walked where they walked and pondered the sacrifices they made to build the kingdom of God.

They had many great traits that allowed them to make significant

contributions to the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. But they were also human, weak, and fallible—just as you and I are. Some found themselves at variance with the Prophet Joseph Smith and fell away from the Church. Later, many of the same people had a change of heart, humbled themselves, and once again sought and found fellowship with the Saints.

We might have a tendency to judge these brethren and other members like them. We might say, “I would never have abandoned the Prophet Joseph.”





While that may be true, we don't really know what it was like to live in that time, in those circumstances. No, they were not perfect, but how encouraging it is to know that God was able to use them anyway. He knew their strengths and weaknesses, and He gave them the extraordinary opportunity to contribute a verse or a melody to the glorious anthem of the Restoration.

How encouraging it is to know, though *we* are imperfect, if our hearts are turned to God, He will be generous and kind and use us for His purposes.

Those who love and serve God and fellowmen and humbly and actively participate in His work will see wondrous things happen in their lives and in the lives of those they love.

Doors that seemed shut will open.

Angels will go before them and prepare the way.

No matter your position in your community or in the Church, God will use you, if you are willing. He will magnify your righteous desires and turn the compassionate actions you sow into a bountiful harvest of goodness.

#### We Can't Get There on Autopilot

We are, each one of us, "strangers and pilgrims"<sup>14</sup> in this world. In many ways, we are far from home. But that doesn't mean we need to feel lost or alone.

Our beloved Father in Heaven has given us the Light of Christ. And deep within each one of us, a heavenly stirring urges us to turn our eyes and hearts to Him as we make the pilgrimage back to our celestial home.

This requires effort. You cannot get there without striving to learn of Him, understanding His instructions, earnestly applying them, and putting one foot in front of the other.

No, life is not a self-driving car. It is not an airplane on autopilot.

You cannot just float in the waters of life and trust that the current will take you wherever you hope to be one day. Discipleship requires our willingness to swim upstream when needed.

No one else is responsible for your personal journey. The Savior will help you and prepare the way before you, but the commitment to follow Him and keep His commandments must come from you. That is your sole burden, your sole privilege.

This is your great adventure.

Please heed the call of your Savior.

Follow Him.

The Lord has established The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to help you in this commitment to serve God and fellowmen. Its purpose is to encourage, teach, lift, and inspire. This wonderful Church provides opportunities for you to exercise compassion, reach out to others, and renew and keep sacred covenants. It is designed to bless your life and improve your home, community, and nation.

Come, join with us and trust the Lord. Lend your talents to His wonderful work. Reach out, encourage, heal, and support all who desire to feel and heed the yearning for our supernal home. Let us join together in this glorious pilgrimage to heavenly climes.

The gospel is a transcendent message of hope, happiness, and joy. It is the pathway that leads us home.

As we embrace the gospel in faith and deed, each day and every hour, we will draw a little closer to our God. Our lives will be better, and the Lord will use us in remarkable ways to bless those around us and bring about His eternal purposes. Of this I testify and leave you my blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Susan Stelljes, "Bobbie the Wonder Dog," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, [oregonencyclopedia.org](http://oregonencyclopedia.org).
2. See Matthew 4:19; Luke 18:22.
3. Deuteronomy 30:10.
4. Matthew 5:45.
5. Galatians 5:22.
6. Proverbs 3:5–6.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
8. Isaiah 40:29, New International Version.
9. Proverbs 24:16, New International Version.
10. See Philippians 4:7.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
12. 1 Corinthians 1:27.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 35:14.
14. Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11.



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

# The Needs before Us

*Some of the most significant needs we can meet are within our own families, among our friends, in our wards, and in our communities.*

In recent days we have witnessed a large number of natural disasters, in Mexico, the United States, Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. It has brought out the best in people as thousands have stepped in to help those who are in danger or need and who have suffered loss. I have been thrilled to see young women in Texas and Florida who, along with many others, have donned the yellow Helping Hands T-shirts and are helping clear houses of debris following the recent hurricanes. Many thousands more would gladly go to the centers of need were it not for distance. Instead, you have offered generous donations to alleviate suffering. Your generosity and compassion are inspiring and Christlike.

Today I want to mention an aspect of service that I feel is important for all—no matter where we are located. For those of us who have watched news of recent events and have felt helpless to know what to do, the answer might actually be right before us.

The Savior taught, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”<sup>1</sup> President Thomas S. Monson said of this scripture: “I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there

is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and figuratively lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.”<sup>2</sup>

We live in a culture where more and more we are focused on the small, little screen in our hands than we are on the people around us. We have substituted texting and tweeting for actually looking someone in the eye and smiling or, even rarer, having a face-to-face conversation. We are often more

concerned with how many followers and likes we have than with putting an arm around a friend and showing love, concern, and tangible interest. As amazing as modern technology can be for spreading the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and helping us stay connected to family and friends, if we are not vigilant in how we use our personal devices, we too can begin to turn inward and forget that the essence of living the gospel is service.

I have tremendous love for and faith in those of you who are in your teen and young adult years. I have seen and felt of your desires to serve and make a difference in the world. I believe that most members consider service to be at the heart of their covenants and discipleship. But I also think that sometimes it's easy to miss some of the greatest opportunities to serve others because we are distracted or because we are looking for ambitious ways to change the world and we don't see that some of the most significant needs we can meet are within our own families, among our friends, in our wards, and





in our communities. We are touched when we see the suffering and great needs of those halfway around the world, but we may fail to see there is a person who needs our friendship sitting right next to us in class.

Sister Linda K. Burton told the story of a stake Relief Society president who, working with others, collected quilts for people in need during the 1990s. “She and her daughter drove a truck filled with those quilts from London to Kosovo. On her journey home she received an unmistakable spiritual impression that sank deep into her heart. The impression was this: ‘What you have done is a very good thing. Now go home, walk across the street, and serve your neighbor!’”<sup>3</sup>

What good does it do to save the world if we neglect the needs of those closest to us and those whom we love the most? How much value is there in fixing the world if the people around us are falling apart and we don’t notice? Heavenly Father may have placed those who need us closest to us, knowing that we are best suited to meet their needs.

Everyone can find ways to offer Christlike service. My counselor Sister Carol F. McConkie recently told me about her 10-year-old granddaughter Sarah who, when she realized that her mother was ill, decided on her own to be of help. She got her little sister up, helped her dress, brush her

teeth, fix her hair, and eat breakfast so her mother could rest. She quietly performed this simple act of service without being asked because she saw a need and desired to help. Not only did Sarah bless her mother, but I am sure that she also felt joy in knowing she had lightened the burden of someone she loved and, along the way, strengthened her relationship with her sister. President James E. Faust said: “Serving others can begin at almost any age. . . . It need not be on a grand scale, and it is noblest within the family.”<sup>4</sup>

Do you children realize how much it means to your parents and family members when you look for ways to serve at home? For those in your teen years, strengthening and serving your family members should be among your top priorities as you look for ways to change the world. Showing kindness and concern for your siblings and parents helps create an atmosphere of unity and invites the Spirit into the home. Changing the world begins with strengthening your own family.

Another area of focus for our service can be in our ward families. Occasionally our children would ask us the question, “Why do I have to go to Mutual? I just don’t get very much out of it.”

If I was having a good parenting moment, I would reply, “What makes you think you go to Mutual because of what *you* get out of it?”

My young friends, I can guarantee that there will always be someone at every Church meeting you attend who is lonely, who is going through challenges and needs a friend, or who feels like he or she doesn’t belong. You have something important to contribute to every meeting or activity, and the Lord desires for you to look around at your peers and then minister as He would.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson has taught, “A major reason the Lord has a church is to create a community of Saints that will sustain one another in the ‘strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life.’” He goes on to say, “This religion is not concerned only with self; rather, we are all called to serve. We are the eyes, hands, head, feet, and other members of the body of Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

It is true that we attend our weekly Church meetings to participate in ordinances, learn doctrine, and be inspired, but another very important reason for attending is that, as a ward family and as disciples of the Savior Jesus Christ, we watch out for one another, encourage one another, and find ways to serve and strengthen each other. We are not just receivers and takers of what is offered at church; we are needed to be givers and suppliers. Young women and young men, next time you are at Mutual, instead of picking up your phone to see what your friends are doing, stop, look around, and ask yourself, “Who needs me today?” You may be the key to reaching out and touching the life of a peer or to giving encouragement to a friend who is quietly struggling.

Ask your Heavenly Father to show you those around you who need your help and to inspire you on how to best serve them. Remember that the Savior most often ministered to one person at a time.

Our grandson Ethan is 17. I was touched this summer when he told me that, inspired by his mother's example, he prays each day to have an opportunity to serve someone. As we spent time with his family, I observed how Ethan treats his brother and sisters with patience, love, and kindness and is helpful to his parents and looks for ways to reach out to others. I am impressed with how aware he is of the people around him and of his desire to serve them. He is an example to me. Doing as Ethan does—inviting the Lord to help us find ways to serve—will allow the Spirit to open our eyes to see the needs around us, to see the “one” who needs us that day, and to know how to minister to him or her.

In addition to serving your family and your ward members, look for opportunities to serve in your neighborhood and community. While at times we are called upon to help after a major disaster, on a day-to-day basis we are encouraged to look for opportunities in our own areas to lift and help those in need. I was recently instructed by an Area President, serving in a country which has many temporal challenges, that the best way to help those in need in other parts of the world is to pay a generous fast offering, contribute to the Church's Humanitarian Aid Fund, and look for ways to serve those in your own community wherever you live. Just imagine how the world would be blessed if everyone followed this counsel!

Brothers and sisters, and especially the youth, as you strive to become more like the Savior Jesus Christ and live your covenants, you will continue to be blessed with desires to relieve suffering and to help those who are less fortunate. Remember that some of the greatest needs may be those right

in front of you. Begin your service in your own homes and within your own families. These are the relationships that can be eternal. Even if—and maybe especially if—your family situation is less than perfect, you can find ways to serve, lift, and strengthen. Begin where you are, love them as they are, and prepare for the family you want to have in the future.

Pray for help in recognizing those in your ward families who need love and encouragement. Instead of attending church with the question of “What am I going to get out of this meeting?” ask, “Who needs me today? What do I have to contribute?”

As you bless your own families and ward members, look for ways to bless those in your local communities. Whether you have time for extensive service or can give only a few hours a month, your efforts will bless lives and

will also bless you in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs.”<sup>6</sup> May we each recognize the privilege and blessing it is to participate in accomplishing the work of our Heavenly Father as we meet the needs of His children is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 9:24.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 85.
3. Linda K. Burton, “I Was a Stranger,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 15.
4. James E. Faust, “Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 96; *Liahona*, July 2000, 117.
5. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why the Church,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 108, 109.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 82.





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

# The Plan and the Proclamation

*The family proclamation is the Lord's reemphasis of the gospel truths we need to sustain us through current challenges to the family.*

As is evident in our family proclamation, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are blessed with unique doctrine and different ways of viewing the world. We participate and even excel in many worldly activities, but on some subjects we forgo participation as we seek to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, ancient and modern.

Similarly, the writings of Jesus's early Apostles frequently use the image of "the world" to represent opposition to gospel teachings. "Be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2), the Apostle Paul taught. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19). And, "Beware," he warned, "lest any man spoil you . . . after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after

Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The Apostle James taught that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God[.] Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The Book of Mormon often uses this image of the opposition of "the world." Nephi prophesied the ultimate destruction of "those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek . . . the things of the world" (1 Nephi 22:23; see also 2 Nephi 9:30). Alma condemned those who were "puffed up . . . with the vain things of the world" (Alma 31:27). Lehi's dream shows that those who seek to follow the iron rod, the word of God, will encounter the opposition of the world. The occupants of the "great and spacious building" Lehi saw were "mocking and pointing" the "finger of scorn" (1 Nephi 8:26–27, 33). In his vision interpreting this dream, Nephi learned that this ridicule and opposition came from "the multitudes of the earth, . . . the world and the wisdom thereof; . . . the pride of the world" (1 Nephi 11:34–36).

I.

In a parable, Jesus described those who "[hear] the word" but become "unfruitful" when that word is "choke[d]" by "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22). Later, Jesus corrected Peter for not savoring "the things that be of God, but those that be of men," declaring, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:23, 26). In His final teachings in mortality, He told His Apostles, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, . . . the world hateth you" (John 15:19; see also John 17:14, 16).



What is the meaning of these scriptural cautions and commandments not to be “of the world” or the modern commandment to “forsake the world”? (D&C 53:2). President Thomas S. Monson summarized these teachings: “We must be vigilant in a world which has moved so far from that which is spiritual. It is essential that we reject anything that does not conform to our standards, refusing in the process to surrender that which we desire most: eternal life in the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup>

God created this earth according to His plan to provide His spirit children a place to experience mortality as a necessary step toward the glories He desires for all His children. While there are various kingdoms and glories, our Heavenly Father’s ultimate desire for His children is what President Monson called “eternal life in the kingdom of God,” which is exaltation in families. This is more than salvation. President Russell M. Nelson has reminded us, “In God’s eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter; [but] exaltation is a family matter.”<sup>2</sup>

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the inspired family proclamation, which I will discuss later, are essential teachings to guide mortal preparation for exaltation. Even as we must live with the marriage laws and other traditions of a declining world, those who strive for exaltation must make personal choices in family life according to the Lord’s way whenever that differs from the world’s way.

In this mortal life, we have no memory of what preceded our birth, and we now experience opposition. We grow and mature spiritually by choosing to obey God’s commandments in a succession of right choices. These include covenants and ordinances and repentance when our choices are wrong. In



contrast, if we lack faith in God’s plan and are disobedient to or deliberately refrain from its required actions, we forgo that growth and maturity. The Book of Mormon teaches, “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32).

## II.

Latter-day Saints who understand God’s plan of salvation have a unique worldview that helps them see the reason for God’s commandments, the unchangeable nature of His required ordinances, and the fundamental role of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our Savior’s Atonement reclaims us from death and, subject to our repentance, saves us from sin. With that worldview, Latter-day Saints have distinctive priorities and practices and are blessed with the strength to endure the frustrations and pains of mortal life.

Inevitably, the actions of those who try to follow God’s plan of salvation can cause misunderstanding or even conflict with family members or friends who do not believe its principles. Such conflict is always so. Every generation that has sought to follow God’s plan has had challenges. Anciently, the prophet Isaiah gave strength to the Israelites, whom he called “ye that know righteousness, . . .

in whose heart is my law.” To them he said, “Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings” (Isaiah 51:7; see also 2 Nephi 8:7). But whatever the cause of conflict with those who do not understand or believe God’s plan, those who do understand are always commanded to choose the Lord’s way instead of the world’s way.

## III.

The gospel plan each family should follow to prepare for eternal life and exaltation is outlined in the Church’s 1995 proclamation, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”<sup>3</sup> Its declarations are, of course, visibly different from some current laws, practices, and advocacy of the world in which we live. In our day, the differences most evident are cohabitation without marriage, same-sex marriage, and the raising of children in such relationships. Those who do not believe in or aspire to exaltation and are most persuaded by the ways of the world consider this family proclamation as just a statement of policy that should be changed. In contrast, Latter-day Saints affirm that the family proclamation defines the kind of family relationships where the most important part of our eternal development can occur.



We have witnessed a rapid and increasing public acceptance of cohabitation without marriage and of same-sex marriage. The corresponding media advocacy, education, and even occupational requirements pose difficult challenges for Latter-day Saints. We must try to balance the competing demands of following the gospel law in our personal lives and teachings, even as we seek to show love for all.<sup>4</sup> In doing so we sometimes face, but need not fear, what Isaiah called “the reproach of men.”

Converted Latter-day Saints believe that the family proclamation, issued nearly a quarter century ago and now translated into scores of languages, is the Lord’s reemphasis of the gospel truths we need to sustain us through current challenges to the family. Two examples are same-sex marriage and cohabitation without marriage. Just 20 years after the family proclamation, the United States Supreme Court authorized same-sex marriage, overturning thousands of years of marriage being limited to a man and a woman. The shocking percentage of United States children born to a mother not married to the father came more gradually: 5 percent in 1960,<sup>5</sup> 32 percent in 1995,<sup>6</sup> and now 40 percent.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV.

The family proclamation begins by declaring “that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” It also affirms that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.” It further declares “that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”

The proclamation affirms the continuing duty of husband and wife to multiply and replenish the earth and their “solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children”: “Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.” It solemnly warns against the abuse of spouse or offspring, and it affirms that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Finally, it calls for the promotion of official “measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”

In 1995 a President of the Church and 14 other Apostles of the Lord issued these important doctrinal statements. As one of only seven of those Apostles still living, I feel obliged to share what led to the family proclamation for the information of all who consider it.

The inspiration identifying the need for a proclamation on the family came to the leadership of the Church over 23 years ago. It was a surprise to some who thought the doctrinal truths about marriage and the family were well understood without restatement.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, we felt the confirmation and we went to work. Subjects were identified and discussed by members of the Quorum of the Twelve for nearly a year. Language was proposed, reviewed, and revised. Prayerfully we continually pleaded with the Lord for His inspiration on what we should say and how we should say it. We all learned “line upon line, precept upon precept,” as the Lord has promised (D&C 98:12).

During this revelatory process, a proposed text was presented to the First Presidency, who oversee and promulgate Church teachings and doctrine. After the Presidency made further changes, the proclamation on the family was announced by the President of the Church, Gordon B. Hinckley. In the women’s meeting of September 23, 1995, he introduced the proclamation with these words: “With so much of sophistry that is passed off as truth, with so much of deception concerning standards and values, with so much of allurements and enticement to take on the slow stain of the world, we have felt to warn and forewarn.”<sup>9</sup>

I testify that the proclamation on the family is a statement of eternal truth, the will of the Lord for His children who seek eternal life. It has been the basis of Church teaching and practice for the



last 22 years and will continue so for the future. Consider it as such, teach it, live by it, and you will be blessed as you press forward toward eternal life.

Forty years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson taught that “every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself.”<sup>10</sup> I believe our attitude toward and use of the family proclamation is one of those tests for this generation. I pray for all Latter-day Saints to stand firm in that test.

I close with President Gordon B. Hinckley’s teachings uttered two years after the family proclamation was announced. He said: “I see a wonderful future in a very uncertain world. If we will cling to our values, if we will build on our inheritance, if we will walk in obedience before the Lord, if we will simply live the gospel, we will be blessed in a magnificent and wonderful way. We will be looked upon as a peculiar people

who have found the key to a peculiar happiness.”<sup>11</sup>

I testify of the truth and eternal importance of the family proclamation, revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ to His Apostles for the exaltation of the children of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4), in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Holy Places,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 83.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 10.
3. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 26–29.
5. See “‘Disastrous’ Illegitimacy Trends,” *Washington Times*, Dec. 1, 2006, [washingtontimes.com](http://washingtontimes.com).
6. See Stephanie J. Ventura and others, “Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1996,” *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, June 30, 1998, 9.
7. See Brady E. Hamilton and others, “Births: Provisional Data for 2016,” *Vital Statistics Rapid Release*, June 2017, 10.
8. Our Young Women General President said it well 20 years later: “Little did we realize then how very desperately we would need these basic declarations in today’s world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago” (Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Defenders of the Family Proclamation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 14–15).
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 100.
10. Ezra Taft Benson, “Our Obligation and Challenge” (address given at the regional representatives’ seminar, Sept. 30, 1977), 2; in David A. Bednar, “On the Lord’s Side: Lessons from Zion’s Camp,” *Ensign*, July 2017, 31; *Liahona*, July 2017, 19.
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 186; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Look to the Future,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 69.



By Elder John C. Pingree Jr.  
Of the Seventy

# “I Have a Work for Thee”

*Every one of us has a meaningful role to play in furthering God's work.*

To Moses, God declared, “I have a work for thee” (Moses 1:6). Have you ever wondered if Heavenly Father has a work for you? Are there important things He has prepared you—and specifically you—to accomplish? I testify the answer is yes!

Consider Girish Ghimire, who was born and raised in the country of Nepal. As a teenager, he studied in China, where a classmate introduced him to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Eventually, Girish came to Brigham Young University for graduate work and met his future wife. They settled in the Salt Lake Valley and adopted two children from Nepal.

Years later, when more than 1,500 refugees from camps in Nepal were relocated to Utah,<sup>1</sup> Girish felt inspired to help. With native-language fluency and cultural understanding, Girish served as an interpreter, teacher, and mentor. After resettling in the community, some of the Nepali refugees demonstrated interest in the gospel. A Nepali-speaking branch was organized, and Girish later served as its branch president. He was also instrumental in translating the Book of Mormon into Nepali.

Can you see how Heavenly Father prepared and is using Girish?

## God Has a Work for Each of Us

Brothers and sisters, God has important work for each of us. Speaking to sisters but teaching truths that apply to all, President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “Before we came [to earth, we] were given certain assignments. . . . While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once

agreed to.”<sup>2</sup> What an ennobling truth! Our Heavenly Father has specific and significant things for you and me to accomplish (see Ephesians 2:10).

These divine assignments are not reserved for a privileged few but are for all of us—regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, income level, social status, or Church calling. Every one of us has a meaningful role to play in furthering God's work (see Moses 1:39).

Some of us question whether Heavenly Father can use *us* to make important contributions. But remember, He has always used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things (see 1 Corinthians 1:27–28; D&C 35:13; 124:1). “[We] are agents,” and “the power is in [us]” to “bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27–28).<sup>3</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson explained:

“The Lord has more in mind for you than you have in mind for yourself! You have been reserved and preserved for this time and place. . . .

“The Lord needs you to change the world. As you accept and follow



His will for you, you will find yourself accomplishing the impossible!”<sup>4</sup>

So how do we come to understand and perform the work God intends for us? Let me share four principles that will help.

#### Focus on Others

First, focus on others. We can follow Christ, “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38; see also 2 Nephi 26:24).

After returning from a full-time mission, I missed the daily purpose I had enjoyed. Clearly, I needed to keep my covenants, get an education, start a family, and earn a living. But I wondered if there was something more, or even special, that the Lord wanted me to do. After pondering for several months, I came across this verse: “If you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation” (D&C 11:8). The Spirit helped me understand that the primary purpose of divine assignments is to bless others and to do “much good.”

We can approach decision points in our lives—like what to study, what to do for work, or where to live—in the context of helping others.

One family moved to a new city. Instead of finding a home in an affluent neighborhood, they felt impressed to locate to an area with considerable social and economic needs. Over the years, the Lord has worked through them to support many individuals and to build up their ward and stake.

A medical professional maintained a typical practice but felt guided to set aside one day each week to provide free care to individuals with no health insurance. Because of this man’s and his wife’s willingness to bless others, the Lord provided a way for them to support hundreds of patients in need while also raising their large family.



#### Discover and Develop Spiritual Gifts

Second, discover and develop spiritual gifts. Heavenly Father gave us these gifts to help us identify, perform, and enjoy the work He has for us.

Some of us wonder, “Do I have *any* gifts?” Again, the answer is yes! “To *every* man [and woman] is given a gift by the Spirit of God . . . that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:11–12; emphasis added).<sup>5</sup> A number of spiritual gifts are documented in scripture (see 1 Corinthians 12:1–11, 31; Moroni 10:8–18; D&C 46:8–26), but there are many others.<sup>6</sup> Some might include having compassion, expressing hope, relating well with people, organizing effectively, speaking or writing persuasively, teaching clearly, and working hard.

So how do we come to know our gifts? We can reference our patriarchal blessing, ask those who know us best,

and personally identify what we are naturally good at and enjoy. Most important, we can ask God (see James 1:5; D&C 112:10). He knows our gifts, since He gave them to us (see D&C 46:26).

As we discover our gifts, we have a responsibility to develop them (see Matthew 25:14–30). Even Jesus Christ “received not of the fulness at first, but [developed] from grace to grace” (D&C 93:13).

One young man produced illustrations to promote religious values. My favorite is a portrait of the Savior, a copy of which hangs in our home. This brother developed and used his artistic gifts. Working through him, Heavenly Father has inspired others to improve their discipleship.

Sometimes we feel that we don’t have any particularly important gifts. One day, a discouraged sister pleaded,



will reveal our divine assignments to us.<sup>9</sup> Once we discover them, He will help us fulfill those assignments. “All things are present before [His] eyes” (D&C 38:2; see also Abraham 2:8), and at the right times, He will open the doors necessary for us (see Revelation 3:8). He even sent His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we can depend on Him for strength beyond our natural abilities (see Philippians 4:13; Alma 26:12).

One brother, concerned with local government decisions, felt impressed to run for public office. Despite a daunting campaign process, he exercised faith and gathered the resources to run. Ultimately, he did not win but felt the Lord gave him guidance and strength to raise issues important to the community.

A single mother, raising children with developmental disabilities, questioned whether she could adequately meet her family’s needs. Though it has been difficult, she feels strengthened by the Lord to fulfill her most important mission successfully.

#### A Word of Warning

At the same time God helps us fulfill divine assignments, the adversary works to distract and dissuade us from a life of meaning.

Sin is perhaps our greatest stumbling block, dulling our sensitivity to the Holy Ghost and restricting our access to spiritual power. To perform the work Heavenly Father has for us, we must strive to be clean (see 3 Nephi 8:1). Are we living in such a way that God can work through us?

Satan also seeks to distract us with less important matters. The Lord warned an early Church leader, “Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me . . . and the ministry whereunto you

“Lord, what is my personal ministry?” He answered, “Notice others.” It was a spiritual gift! Since then, she has found joy in noticing those who are regularly forgotten, and God has worked through her to bless many. While some spiritual gifts may not be prominent by the world’s standards, they are essential to God and His work.<sup>7</sup>

#### Make Use of Adversity

Third, make use of adversity. Our trials help us discover and prepare for the work Heavenly Father has for us. Alma explained, “After much tribulation, the Lord . . . made me an instrument in his hands” (Mosiah 23:10).<sup>8</sup> Like the Savior, whose atoning sacrifice enables Him to succor us (see Alma 7:11–12), we can use knowledge gained from difficult experiences to lift, strengthen, and bless others.

After a successful human resources executive was laid off, he read his patriarchal blessing and felt inspired to start a company to help other professionals find employment. (He even helped me find work when our family returned from serving a mission.) The Lord used his trial as a stepping-stone to bless others, while providing him with a more meaningful career.

A young couple experienced a stillbirth. With broken hearts, they decided to honor their daughter by providing counseling and material support to parents enduring similar situations. The Lord has worked through this couple because of their specialized empathy, developed through adversity.

#### Rely on God

And fourth, rely on God. When we ask Him in faith with real intent, He

have been called” (D&C 30:2). Are we so preoccupied with worldly things that we are diverted from our divine assignments?

In addition, Satan discourages us with feelings of inadequacy. He makes our work appear too difficult or intimidating. However, we can trust God! He loves us. He wants us to succeed. He “doth go before [us]; he will be with [us], he will not fail [us]” (Deuteronomy 31:8; see also Psalm 32:8; Proverbs 3:5–6; Matthew 19:26; D&C 78:18).

Satan may also coax us to view our work as less valuable than the work assigned to others. But every assignment from God is important, and we will find fulfillment as we “glory in that which the Lord hath commanded [us]” (Alma 29:9).

As God works through us, the adversary may tempt us to take credit for any accomplishments. However, we can emulate the Savior’s humility by deflecting personal praise and glorifying the Father (see Matthew 5:16; Moses 4:2). When a reporter tried to recognize Mother Teresa for her life’s mission to help the poor, she retorted: “It’s [God’s] work. I am like a . . . pencil in his hand. . . . He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used.”<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

My beloved brothers and sisters, I invite each of us to “yield [ourselves] unto God . . . as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13). Yielding ourselves involves letting Him know we want to be of use, seeking His direction, and accessing His strength.

As always, we can look to Jesus Christ, our perfect example. In the pre-earth life, Heavenly Father asked, “Whom shall I send?”



And Jesus answered, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27; see also Isaiah 6:8).

Jesus Christ accepted, prepared for, and performed His preordained role as our Savior and Redeemer. He did the Father’s will (see John 5:30; 6:38; 3 Nephi 27:13) and completed His divine assignments.

As we follow Christ’s example and yield ourselves to God, I testify that He will also use us to further His work and to bless others. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. See Refugee Processing Center, “Admissions and Arrivals,” [ireports.wrapsnet.org/Interactive-Reporting](http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/Interactive-Reporting).
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 102.
3. President Gordon B. Hinckley encouraged: “Believe in yourself. Believe in your capacity to do great . . . things. . . . You are a child of God, of infinite capacity” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* [2016], 77).
4. Russell M. Nelson, *Accomplishing the Impossible: What God Does, What We Can Do* (2015), 147.
5. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf noted: “Our Heavenly Father sees our real potential. He knows things about us that we do not know ourselves. He prompts us during our lifetime to fulfill the measure of our creation. . . .  
“Let us resolve to follow the Savior and work with diligence to become the person we were designed to become. Let us listen to and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As we do so, Heavenly Father will reveal to us things we never knew about ourselves. He will illuminate the path ahead and open our eyes to see our unknown and perhaps unimagined talents”

(“Of Regrets and Resolutions,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 22, 23).

6. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Spiritual gifts are endless in number and infinite in variety. Those listed in the revealed word are simply illustrations of the boundless outpouring of divine grace that a gracious God gives those who love and serve him” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 371).
7. Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught: “Taken at random, let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important. Among these may be your gifts—gifts not so evident but nevertheless real and valuable.  
“Let us review some of these less-conspicuous gifts: the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; the gift of being agreeable; the gift of avoiding vain repetition; the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; the gift of being a disciple; the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony; and the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost” (“There Are Many Gifts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20).
8. Paul also instructed, “[God] comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:4).
9. Elder Richard G. Scott explained: “God has a specific plan for your life. He will reveal parts of that plan to you as you look for it with faith and consistent obedience” (“How to Live Well amid Increasing Evil,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 102).
10. Mother Teresa, in Edward W. Desmond, “Interview with Mother Teresa: A Pencil in the Hand of God,” *Time*, Dec. 4, 1989, [time.com](http://time.com).



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

# The Living Bread Which Came Down from Heaven

*If we yearn to dwell in Christ and have Him dwell in us, then holiness is what we seek.*

The day after Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000 in Galilee with only “five barley loaves, and two small fishes,”<sup>1</sup> He spoke to the people again in Capernaum. The Savior perceived that many were not so much interested in His teachings as they were in being fed again.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, He tried to convince them of the immensely greater value of “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus declared:

“I am that bread of life.

“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

The Savior’s intended meaning was totally lost on His hearers who understood His statement only literally.

Recoiling at the thought, they wondered, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”<sup>5</sup> Jesus pressed the point further:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

“For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”<sup>6</sup>

He then expressed the profound meaning of His metaphor:

“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”<sup>7</sup>

Still His hearers did not grasp what Jesus was saying, and “many . . . , when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . [And] from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”<sup>8</sup>

To eat His flesh and drink His blood is a striking way of expressing how completely we must bring the Savior into our life—into our very being—that we may be one. How does this happen?

First, we understand that in sacrificing His flesh and blood, Jesus atoned for our sins and overcame death, both physical and spiritual.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, then, we partake of His flesh and drink His blood when we receive from Him the power and blessings of His Atonement.

The doctrine of Christ expresses what we must do to receive atoning grace. It is to believe and have faith in Christ, to repent and be baptized, and to receive the Holy Ghost, “and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>10</sup> This is the gate, our access to the Savior’s atoning



grace and to the strait and narrow path leading to His kingdom.

“Wherefore, if ye shall press forward [on that path], feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

“ . . . Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end.”<sup>11</sup>

The symbolism of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is beautiful to contemplate. The bread and water represent the flesh and blood of Him who is the Bread of Life and the Living Water,<sup>12</sup> poignantly reminding us of the price He paid to redeem us. As the bread is broken, we remember the Savior’s torn flesh. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once observed that “because it is broken and torn, each piece of bread is unique, just as the individuals who partake of it are unique. We all have different sins to repent of. We all have different needs to be strengthened through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we remember in this ordinance.”<sup>13</sup> As we drink the water, we think of the blood He shed in Gethsemane and on the cross and its sanctifying power.<sup>14</sup> Knowing that “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom,” we resolve to be among “those who have washed their garments in [the Savior’s] blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.”<sup>15</sup>

I have spoken of receiving the Savior’s atoning grace to take away our sins and the stain of those sins in us. But figuratively eating His flesh and drinking His blood has a further meaning, and that is to internalize the qualities and character of Christ, putting off the natural man and becoming



Saints “through the atonement of Christ the Lord.”<sup>16</sup> As we partake of the sacramental bread and water each week, we would do well to consider how fully and completely we must incorporate His character and the pattern of His sinless life into our life and being. Jesus could not have atoned for the sins of others unless He Himself was sinless. Since justice had no claim on Him, He could offer Himself in our place to satisfy justice and then extend mercy. As we remember and honor His atoning sacrifice, we should also contemplate His sinless life.

This suggests the need for a mighty striving on our part. We cannot be content to remain as we are but must be moving constantly toward “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Like King Lamoni’s father in the Book of Mormon, we must be willing to give away all our sins<sup>18</sup> and focus on what the Lord expects of us, individually and together.

Not long ago, a friend recounted to me an experience he had while serving

as a mission president. He had undergone a surgery that required several weeks of recuperation. During his recovery, he devoted time to searching the scriptures. One afternoon as he pondered the Savior’s words in the 27th chapter of 3 Nephi, he drifted off to sleep. He subsequently related:

“I fell into a dream in which I was given a vivid, panoramic view of my life. I was shown my sins, poor choices, the times . . . I had treated people with impatience, plus the omissions of good things I should have said or done. . . . [A] comprehensive . . . [review of] my life was shown to me in just a few minutes, but it seemed much longer. I awoke, startled, and . . . instantly dropped to my knees beside the bed and began to pray, to plead for forgiveness, pouring out the feelings of my heart like I had never done previously.

“Prior to the dream, I didn’t know that I [had] such great need to repent. My faults and weaknesses suddenly became so plainly clear to me that the gap between the person I was and the



Lord.” We seek it in our marriages, families, and homes. We seek it each week as we delight in the Lord’s holy day.<sup>25</sup> We seek it even in the details of daily living: our speech, our dress, our thoughts. As President Thomas S. Monson has stated, “We are the product of all we read, all we view, all we hear and all we think.”<sup>26</sup> We seek holiness as we take up our cross daily.<sup>27</sup>

Sister Carol F. McConkie has observed: “We recognize the multitude of tests, temptations, and tribulations that could pull us away from all that is virtuous and praiseworthy before God. But our mortal experiences offer us the opportunity to choose holiness. Most often it is the sacrifices we make to keep our covenants that sanctify us and make us holy.”<sup>28</sup> And to “the sacrifices we make” I would add the service we give.

We know that “when [we] are in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God.”<sup>29</sup> And the Lord reminds us that such service is central to His life and character: “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>30</sup> President Marion G. Romney wisely explained: “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.”<sup>31</sup>

Zechariah prophesied that in the day of the Lord’s millennial reign, even the bells of the horses would bear the inscription “Holiness unto the Lord.”<sup>32</sup> In that spirit, the pioneer Saints in these valleys affixed that reminder, “Holiness to the Lord,” on seemingly common or mundane things as well as those more directly associated with religious practice. It was inscribed on sacrament cups

holiness and goodness of God seemed [like] millions of miles. In my prayer that late afternoon, I expressed my deepest gratitude to Heavenly Father and to the Savior with my whole heart for what They had done for me and for the relationships I treasured with my wife and children. While on my knees I also felt God’s love and mercy that was so palpable, despite my feeling so unworthy. . . .

“I can say I haven’t been the same since that day. . . . My heart changed. . . . What followed is that I developed more empathy toward others, with a greater capacity to love, coupled with a sense of urgency to preach the gospel. . . . I could relate to the messages of faith, hope, and the gift of repentance found in the Book of Mormon [as] never before.”<sup>19</sup>

It is important to recognize that this good man’s vivid revelation of his sins and shortcomings did not discourage him or lead him to despair. Yes, he felt shock and remorse. He felt keenly his need to repent. He had been humbled, yet he felt gratitude, peace, and hope—real hope—because of Jesus Christ, “the living bread which came down from heaven.”<sup>20</sup>

My friend spoke of the gap he perceived in his dream between his life and the holiness of God. *Holiness* is the right word. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ means to pursue holiness. God commands, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”<sup>21</sup>

Enoch counseled us, “Teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ.”<sup>22</sup> As a boy, I wondered why in the New Testament Jesus is often referred to (and even refers to Himself) as the Son of Man when He is really the Son of God, but Enoch’s statement makes it clear that these references are actually a recognition of His divinity and holiness—He is the Son of Man of Holiness, God the Father.

If we yearn to dwell in Christ and have Him dwell in us,<sup>23</sup> then holiness is what we seek, in both body and spirit.<sup>24</sup> We seek it in the temple, whereon is inscribed “Holiness to the



and plates and printed on certificates of ordination of Seventies and on a Relief Society banner. “Holiness to the Lord” also appeared over the display windows of Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution, the ZCMI department store. It was found on the head of a hammer and on a drum. “Holiness to the Lord” was cast on the metal doorknobs of President Brigham Young’s home. These references to holiness in seemingly unusual or unexpected places may seem incongruous, but they suggest just how pervasive and constant our focus on holiness needs to be.

Partaking of the Savior’s flesh and drinking His blood means to put out of our lives anything inconsistent with a Christlike character and to make His attributes our own. This is the larger meaning of repentance: not only a turning away from past sin but also “a turning of the heart and will to God”<sup>33</sup> going forward. As happened with my friend in his revelatory dream, God will show us our flaws and failings, but He will also help us turn weakness into strength.<sup>34</sup> If we sincerely ask, “What lack I yet?”<sup>35</sup> He will not leave us to guess, but in love He will answer for the sake of our happiness. And He will give us hope.

It is a consuming endeavor, and it would be terribly daunting if in our striving for holiness we were alone.

The glorious truth is we are not alone. We have the love of God, the grace of Christ, the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship and encouragement of fellow Saints in the body of Christ. Let us not be content with where we are, but neither let us be discouraged. As a simple but thoughtful hymn urges us:

*Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.*

*By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;  
thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.*<sup>36</sup>

I bear testimony of Jesus Christ, “the living bread which came down from heaven,”<sup>37</sup> and that “whoso eateth [His] flesh, and drinketh [His] blood, hath eternal life,”<sup>38</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 6:9.
2. See John 6:26.
3. John 6:27.
4. John 6:48–51.
5. John 6:52.
6. John 6:53–55.
7. John 6:56–57.
8. John 6:60, 66. It was on this occasion that the Savior asked His Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Responding for the Twelve with resolute faith, Peter answered: “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” (John 6:68–69). I don’t know if, at that moment, Peter and his Brethren understood what the Lord was teaching any better than the disciples who were now abandoning the Master, but Peter did know by the certain witness of the Spirit that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (see also Matthew 16:15–17), and that salvation could be found nowhere else. He was therefore fully committed to follow Jesus regardless. If he had questions, they could be resolved in due course, but he would not be dissuaded from loyalty to the Son of God—setting a wonderful example for us all.

9. See Luke 22:44; Hebrews 13:12; Mosiah 3:7; 15:7–8; Alma 7:13; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18; 38:4; 45:4–5.
10. 2 Nephi 31:17.
11. 2 Nephi 31:20–21.
12. See John 4:10.
13. Dallin H. Oaks, “Introductory Message” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2017), 2.
14. See Moses 6:60.
15. 3 Nephi 27:19; see also Moroni 10:32–33.
16. Mosiah 3:19.
17. Ephesians 4:13.
18. See Alma 22:18.
19. Personal correspondence.
20. John 6:51.
21. 1 Peter 1:16.
22. Moses 6:57.
23. See John 6:56.
24. See Romans 12:1.
25. See Isaiah 58:13.
26. *Teachings of Thomas S. Monson*, comp. Lynne F. Cannegieter (2011), 267.
27. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:25–26 (in Matthew 16:24, footnote e); Luke 9:23; 14:27–30; Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:27–28 (in Luke 14:27, footnote b); Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:31 (in Luke 14:30, footnote a).
28. Carol F. McConkie, “The Beauty of Holiness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 10.
29. Mosiah 2:17.
30. Mark 10:45; see also Alma 34:28.
31. Marion G. Romney, “The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 65; *Liahona*, Mar. 2009, 19.
32. Zechariah 14:20.
33. Bible Dictionary, “Repentance.”
34. See Ether 12:27.
35. Matthew 19:20.
36. William D. Longstaff, “Take Time to Be Holy,” *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989), no. 395.
37. John 6:51.
38. John 6:54.



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

# Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually

*If we persevere, then somewhere in eternity our refinement will be finished and complete.*

The scriptures were written to bless and encourage us, and surely they do that. We thank heaven for every chapter and verse we have ever been given. But have you noticed that every now and then a passage will appear that reminds us we *are* falling a little short? For example, the Sermon on the Mount begins with soothing, gentle beatitudes, but in the verses that follow, we are told—among other things—not only not to kill but also not even to be angry. We are told not only not to commit adultery but also not even to have impure thoughts. To those who ask for it, we are to give our coat and then give our cloak also. We are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and do good to them who hate us.<sup>1</sup>

If that is your morning scripture study, and after reading just that far you are pretty certain you are not going to get good marks on your gospel report card, then the final commandment in the chain is sure to finish the job: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father . . . in heaven is perfect.”<sup>2</sup> With that concluding imperative, we want to go back to bed and pull the covers over our head. Such celestial goals

seem beyond our reach. Yet surely the Lord would never give us a commandment He knew we could not keep. Let’s see where this quandary takes us.

Around the Church I hear many who struggle with this issue: “I am just not good enough.” “I fall so far short.” “I will never measure up.” I hear this from teenagers. I hear it from missionaries. I hear it from new converts. I hear it from lifelong members. One insightful Latter-day Saint, Sister Darla Isackson, has observed that Satan has

somehow managed to make covenants and commandments seem like curses and condemnations. For some he has turned the ideals and inspiration of the gospel into self-loathing and misery-making.<sup>3</sup>

What I now say in no way denies or diminishes any commandment God has ever given us. I believe in His perfection, and I know we are His spiritual sons and daughters with divine potential to become as He is. I also know that, as children of God, we should not demean or vilify ourselves, as if beating up on ourselves is somehow going to make us the person God wants us to become. No! With a willingness to repent and a desire for increased righteousness always in our hearts, I would hope we could pursue personal improvement in a way that doesn’t include getting ulcers or anorexia, feeling depressed or demolishing our self-esteem. That is *not* what the Lord wants for Primary children or anyone else who honestly sings, “I’m trying to be like Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>

To put this issue in context, may I remind all of us that we live in a fallen world and for now we are a fallen people. We are in the *telestial* kingdom;



that is spelled with a *t*, not a *c*. As President Russell M. Nelson has taught, here in mortality perfection is still “pending.”<sup>5</sup>

So I believe that Jesus did not intend His sermon on this subject to be a verbal hammer for battering us about our shortcomings. No, I believe He intended it to be a tribute to who and what God the Eternal Father is and what we can achieve with Him in eternity. In any case, I am grateful to know that in spite of *my* imperfections, at least God is perfect—that at least He is, for example, able to love His enemies, because too often, due to the “natural man”<sup>6</sup> and woman in us, you and I are sometimes that enemy. How grateful I am that at least God can bless those who despitefully use Him because, without wanting or intending to do so, we *all* despitefully use Him sometimes. I am grateful that God is merciful and a peacemaker because I need mercy and the world needs peace. Of course, all we say of the Father’s virtues we also say of His Only Begotten Son, who lived and died unto the same perfection.

I hasten to say that focusing on the Father’s and the Son’s achievements rather than our failures does not give us one ounce of justification for undisciplined lives or dumbing down our standards. No, from the beginning the gospel has been “for the perfecting of the saints, . . . till we . . . come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”<sup>7</sup> I am simply suggesting that at least one purpose of a scripture or a commandment can be to remind us just how magnificent “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”<sup>8</sup> really is, inspiring in us greater love and admiration for Him and a greater desire to be like Him.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him . . .,” Moroni pleads.



“Love God with all your might, mind and strength, then . . . *by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.*”<sup>9</sup> Our only hope for true perfection is in receiving it as a gift from heaven—we can’t “earn” it. Thus, the grace of Christ offers us not only salvation from sorrow and sin and death but also salvation from our own persistent self-criticism.

Let me use one of the Savior’s parables to say this in a little different way. A servant was in debt to his king for the amount of 10,000 talents. Hearing the servant’s plea for patience and mercy, “the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and . . . forgave . . . the debt.” But then that same servant would not forgive a fellow servant who owed him 100 pence. On hearing this, the king lamented to the one he had forgiven, “Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?”<sup>10</sup>

There is some difference of opinion among scholars regarding the monetary values mentioned here—and forgive the U.S. monetary reference—but to make the math easy, if the smaller, unforgiven

100-pence debt were, say, \$100 in current times, then the 10,000-talent debt so freely forgiven would have approached \$1 billion—or more!

As a personal debt, that is an astronomical number—totally beyond our comprehension. (Nobody can shop that much!) Well, for the purposes of this parable, it is *supposed* to be incomprehensible; it is *supposed* to be beyond our ability to grasp, to say nothing of beyond our ability to repay. That is because this isn’t a story about two servants arguing in the New Testament. It is a story about us, the fallen human family—mortal debtors, transgressors, and prisoners all. Every one of us is a debtor, and the verdict was imprisonment for every one of us. And there we would all have remained were it not for the grace of a King who sets us free because He loves us and is “moved with compassion toward us.”<sup>11</sup>

Jesus uses an unfathomable measurement here because His Atonement is an unfathomable gift given at an incomprehensible cost. That, it seems to me, is at least part of the meaning



behind Jesus's charge to be perfect. We may not be able to demonstrate yet the 10,000-talent perfection the Father and the Son have achieved, but it is *not* too much for Them to ask us to be a little more godlike in little things, that we speak and act, love and forgive, repent and improve at least at the 100-pence level of perfection, which it is clearly within our ability to do.

My brothers and sisters, except for Jesus, there have been no flawless performances on this earthly journey we are pursuing, so while in mortality let's strive for steady improvement without obsessing over what behavioral scientists call "toxic perfectionism."<sup>12</sup> We should avoid that latter excessive expectation of ourselves and of others and, I might add, of those who are called to serve in the Church—which for Latter-day Saints means *everyone*, for we are all called to serve somewhere.

In that regard, Leo Tolstoy wrote once of a priest who was criticized by one of his congregants for not living as resolutely as he should, the critic concluding that the principles the erring preacher taught must therefore also be erroneous.

In response to that criticism, the priest says: "Look at my life now and compare it to my former life. You will see that I am trying to live out the truth I proclaim." Unable to live up to the high ideals he taught, the priest admits he has failed. But he cries:

"Attack me, [if you wish,] I do this myself, but [don't] attack . . . the path I follow. . . . If I know the way home [but] am walking along it drunkenly, is it any less the right way simply because I am staggering from side to side?

" . . . Do not gleefully shout, 'Look at him! . . . There he is crawling into a bog!' No, do not gloat, but give . . . your help [to anyone trying to walk the road back to God.]"<sup>13</sup>

Brothers and sisters, every one of us aspires to a more Christlike life than we often succeed in living. If we admit that honestly and are trying to improve, we are not hypocrites; we are human. May we refuse to let our own mortal follies, and the inevitable shortcomings of even the best men and women around us, make us cynical about the truths of the gospel, the truthfulness of the Church, our hope for our future, or the possibility of godliness. If we persevere, then somewhere in eternity

our refinement will be finished and complete—which is the New Testament meaning of *perfection*.<sup>14</sup>

I testify of that grand destiny, made available to us by the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself continued "from grace to grace"<sup>15</sup> until in His immortality<sup>16</sup> He received a perfect fulness of celestial glory.<sup>17</sup> I testify that in this and every hour He is, with nail-scarred hands, extending to us that same grace, holding on to us and encouraging us, refusing to let us go until we are safely home in the embrace of Heavenly Parents. For such a perfect moment, I continue to strive, however clumsily. For such a perfect gift, I continue to give thanks, however inadequately. I do so in the very name of Perfection itself, of Him who has never been clumsy or inadequate but who loves all of us who are, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Matthew 5:1–47.
2. Matthew 5:48.
3. See Darla Isackson, "Satan's Counterfeit Gospel of Perfectionism," *Meridian Magazine*, June 1, 2016, [ldsmag.com](http://ldsmag.com).
4. "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, "Perfection Pending," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–88.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Ephesians 4:12–13.
8. Ephesians 4:13.
9. Moroni 10:32; emphasis added.
10. See Matthew 18:24–33.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:4.
12. See Joanna Benson and Lara Jackson, "Nobody's Perfect: A Look at Toxic Perfectionism and Depression," *Millennial Star*, Mar. 21, 2013, [millennialstar.org](http://millennialstar.org).
13. "The New Way," *Leo Tolstoy: Spiritual Writings*, sel. Charles E. Moore (2006), 81–82.
14. For an enlightening examination of the meaning of the Greek word used in the New Testament for *perfect* ("teleios"), see President Russell M. Nelson's October 1995 general conference address "Perfection Pending" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–87).
15. Doctrine and Covenants 93:13.
16. See Luke 13:32.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:13.



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

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

**B**rothers and sisters, I will now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as

First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell 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.

Elders Donald L. Hallstrom and Richard J. Maynes have been released from serving as members of the Presidency of the Seventy.

All who wish to show appreciation to these Brethren for the service they have rendered may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Juan A. Uceda and Patrick Kearon, who have been called to serve as members of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Those willing to sustain these Brethren in their new assignments, please manifest it.

Any who are opposed may indicate by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release with appreciation for their devoted service Elders Stanley G. Ellis, Larry R.



Lawrence, and W. Craig Zwick as General Authority Seventies and grant them emeritus status.

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 the following as Area Seventies: Pedro U. Adduru, Detlef H. Adler, Angel H. Alarcon, Winsor Balderrama, Robert M. Call, Christopher Charles, Gene R. Chidester, Ralph L. Dewsnup, Ángel A. Duarte, Peter F. Evans, Francisco D. N. Granja, Yuriy A. Gushchin, Clifford T. Herbertson, Aniefiok Udo Inyon, Luiz M. Leal, Alejandro Lopez, L. Jean Claude Mabaya, Declan O. Madu, Alexander T. Mestre, Jared R. Ocampo, Andrew M. O’Riordan, Jesús A. Ortiz, Abenir V. Pajaro, Siu Hong Pon, Robert C. Rhien, Jorge Luis Romeu, Jorge L. Saldívar, Ciro Schmeil, Alin Spannaus, Moroni B. Torgan, Steven L. Toronto, and Ricardo Valladares.

Those who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Torben Engbjerg to serve as an Area Seventy.

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.

Those who opposed any of the proposals should contact their stake president.

Brothers and sisters, we are grateful for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church. ■



**By Elder Gary E. Stevenson**

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Spiritual Eclipse

*Don't let life's distractions eclipse heaven's light.*

On August 21 of this year, two rare events occurred that captured the attention of people around the world. The first was the 90th birthday celebration of our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. At the time, I was on assignment in the Pacific Area and was thrilled that the Saints of Australia, Vanuatu, New Zealand, and French Polynesia were not only aware of his personal milestone, but they also rejoiced in celebrating it. I felt fortunate to share in their warm expressions of faith and love for this great man. What an inspiration it is to see the connection Latter-day Saints share with their prophet.

Of course, President Monson, mindful of those desiring to wish him happy birthday, described an ideal birthday gift:

“Find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely and do something for them. That’s all I would ask.”<sup>1</sup> We love and sustain you, President Monson.

### Solar Eclipse

The other rare and heavenly event occurring on the same day and captivating millions worldwide was a total solar eclipse. This was the first time such an eclipse had marched across the entire United States in 99 years.<sup>2</sup> Have you ever seen a solar eclipse? Perhaps I could describe this in greater detail.

A total solar eclipse occurs when the moon moves between the earth and the sun, almost completely blocking any light from the sun’s surface.<sup>3</sup> The fact that this can happen is a marvel to



me. If you imagine the sun as the size of a common bicycle tire, the moon in comparison would scarcely be the size of a small pebble.

How is it possible that the very source of our warmth, light, and life could be so greatly obscured by something comparatively insignificant in size?

Although the sun is 400 times larger than the moon, it is also 400 times farther away from the earth.<sup>4</sup> From earth's perspective, this geometry makes the sun and moon appear to be the same size. When the two are aligned just right, the moon seems to obscure the entire sun. Friends and family of mine who were in the zone of total eclipse described how light was replaced by darkness, the stars appeared, and birds quit singing. The air became chilly, as temperatures in an eclipse can decrease by more than 20 degrees Fahrenheit (11 degrees Celsius).<sup>5</sup>

They described a sense of awe, astonishment, and even anxiety, knowing an eclipse brings certain hazards. However, they all exercised care to prevent permanent eye damage or "eclipse blindness" during the eclipse event. Safety was made possible because they wore glasses equipped with special filtered lenses that protected their eyes from any potential harm.

#### The Analogy

In the same manner that the very small moon can block the magnificent sun, extinguishing its light and warmth, a *spiritual* eclipse can occur when we allow minor and troublesome obstructions—those we face in our daily lives—to get so close that they block out the magnitude, brightness, and warmth of the light of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell took this analogy even further when he stated: "Even



something as small as a man's thumb, when held very near the eye, can blind him to the very large sun. Yet the sun is still there. Blindness is brought upon the man by himself. When we draw other things too close, placing them first, we obscure our vision of heaven."<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, none of us wants to purposefully obscure our vision of heaven or allow a spiritual eclipse to occur in our lives. Let me share some thoughts that may assist us in preventing spiritual eclipse from causing us permanent spiritual damage.

#### Gospel Glasses: Maintain a Gospel Perspective

Do you recall my description of special eyewear used to protect those viewing a solar eclipse from eye damage or even eclipse blindness? Looking at a spiritual eclipse through the protecting and softening lens of the Spirit provides a gospel perspective, thus protecting us from spiritual blindness.

Let's consider some examples. With the words of the prophets in our hearts and the Holy Spirit as our counselor, we can gaze at partially blocked heavenly light through "gospel glasses," avoiding the harm of a spiritual eclipse.

So how do we put on gospel glasses? Here are some examples: Our gospel glasses inform us that the Lord desires that we partake of the sacrament each week and that He desires that we study the scriptures and have

daily prayer. They also inform us that Satan will tempt us not to. We know that his agenda seeks to take away our agency through distractions and worldly temptations. Even in Job's day, perhaps there were some experiencing a spiritual eclipse, described as: "They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night."<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, when I speak of seeing through gospel glasses, please know that I am not suggesting that we do not acknowledge or discuss the challenges we face or that we walk blissfully ignorant of the traps and evils the enemy has placed before us. I am not speaking of wearing blinders—but just the opposite. I am suggesting that we look at challenges through the lens of the gospel. Elder Dallin H. Oaks observed that "perspective is the ability to see all relevant information in a meaningful relationship."<sup>8</sup> A gospel perspective expands our sight to an eternal view.

When you put on gospel glasses, you find enhanced perspective, focus, and vision in the way you think about your priorities, your problems, your temptations, and even your mistakes. You will see brighter light that you could not see without them.

Ironically, it is not only the negative that can cause spiritual eclipse in our lives. Often, admirable or positive endeavors to which we dedicate ourselves can be drawn so close that they blot out gospel light and bring darkness. These dangers or distractions could include education and prosperity, power and influence, ambition, even talents and gifts.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught that "any virtue when taken to an extreme can become a vice. . . . There comes a point where milestones can become millstones and ambitions, albatrosses around our necks."<sup>9</sup>

Let me share in greater detail examples that could become catalysts for avoiding our own spiritual eclipses.

### Social Media

A few months ago I spoke at BYU Women's Conference.<sup>10</sup> I described how technology, including social media, facilitates spreading "the knowledge of a Savior . . . throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people."<sup>11</sup> These technologies include Church websites like [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) and [Mormon.org](http://Mormon.org); mobile apps such as Gospel Library, Mormon Channel, LDS Tools, and Family Tree; and social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. These modalities have generated hundreds of millions of likes, shares, views, retweets, and pins and have become very effective and efficient in sharing the gospel with family, friends, and associates.

All of the virtues and appropriate use of these technologies notwithstanding, there are risks associated with them that, when drawn too close, can put us in a spiritual eclipse and potentially block the brightness and warmth of the gospel.

The use of social media, mobile apps, and games can be inordinately time-consuming and can reduce face-to-face interaction. This loss of personal conversation can affect marriages, take the place of valuable spiritual practices, and stifle the development of social skills, especially among youth.

Two additional risks related to social media are idealized reality and debilitating comparisons.

Many (if not most) of the pictures posted on social media tend to portray life at its very best—often unrealistically. We have all seen beautiful images of home decor, wonderful vacation

spots, smiling selfies, elaborate food preparation, and seemingly unattainable body images.

Here, for example, is an image that you might see on someone's social media account. However, it doesn't quite capture the *full* picture of what is *actually* going on in real life.

Comparing our own seemingly average existence with others' well-edited, perfectly crafted lives as represented on social media may leave us with

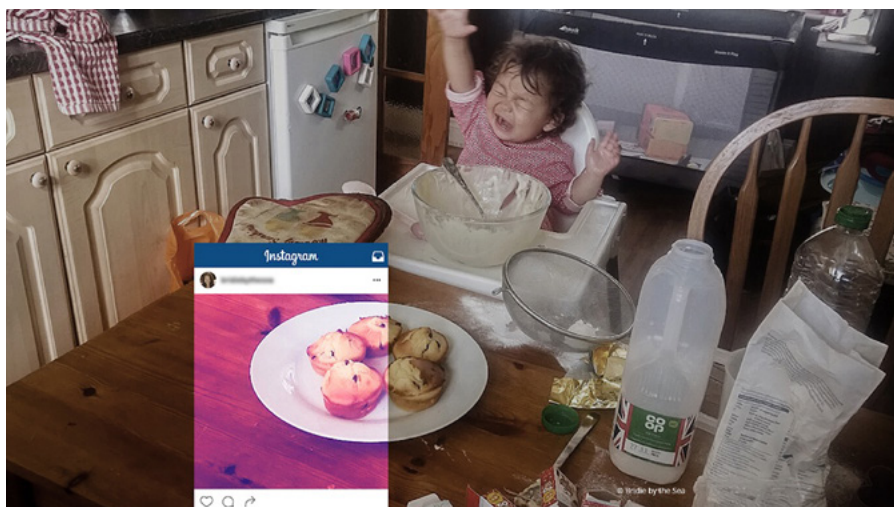
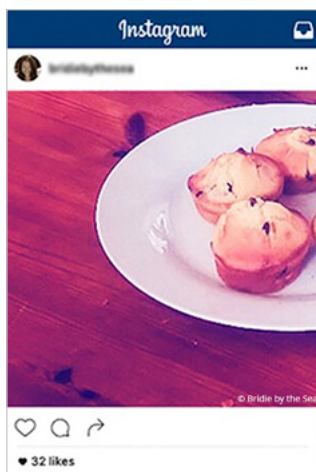
feelings of discouragement, envy, and even failure.

One person who has shared numerous posts of her own said, perhaps only partly in jest, "What's the point of being happy if you're not going to post it?"<sup>12</sup>

As Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson reminded us this morning, success in life doesn't come down to how many likes we get or how many social media friends or followers we have. It does, however, have something to do with meaningfully connecting with others and adding light to their lives.

Hopefully, we can learn to be more real, find more humor, and experience less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often lead to debilitating comparisons.

Comparison apparently is not just a sign of our times but was in times past as well. The Apostle Paul warned the people of his day that "they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."<sup>13</sup>



The image posted on social media didn't capture the full picture of what was actually going on in real life.

With so many appropriate and inspired uses of technology, let us use it to teach, inspire, and lift ourselves and to encourage others to become their finest—rather than to portray our idealized virtual selves. Let us also teach and demonstrate the righteous use of technology to the rising generation and warn against the associated hazards and destructive use of it. Viewing social media through the lens of the gospel can prevent it from becoming a spiritual eclipse in our lives.

### Pride

Let's now address the age-old stumbling block of pride. Pride is the opposite of humility, which is a "willingness to submit to the will of the Lord."<sup>14</sup> When prideful, we tend to take honor to ourselves rather than giving it to others, including the Lord. Pride is often competitive; it is a tendency to seek to obtain more and presume we are better than others. Pride often results in feelings of anger and hatred; it causes one to hold grudges or to withhold forgiveness. Pride, however, can be swallowed in the Christlike attribute of humility.

Relationships, even with close family and loved ones, *especially* with close family and loved ones—even between husbands and wives—are fostered in humility and are stymied by pride.

Many years ago an executive of a large retailer called me to talk about his company, which was being bought out by one of its competitors. He and numerous other headquarters personnel were extremely anxious that they might lose their jobs. Knowing that I was well acquainted with senior management of the acquiring company, he asked if I would be willing to both introduce him and give a strong reference on his behalf, even to arrange a meeting for him. He then concluded with the

following statement: "You know what they say? 'The meek shall perish!'"

I understood his comment was more than likely intended as humor. I got the joke. But there was an important principle that I felt might ultimately be of use to him. I replied, "Actually, that isn't what they say. In fact, it is just the opposite. 'The meek . . . shall inherit the earth'<sup>15</sup> is what they say."

In my experience in the Church as well as throughout my professional career, some of the greatest, most effective people I have known have been among the most meek and humble.

Humility and meekness fit hand in glove. May we remember that "none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart."<sup>16</sup>

I pray that we will strive to avoid the spiritual eclipse of pride by embracing the virtue of humility.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a solar eclipse is indeed a remarkable phenomenon of nature during which the beauty, warmth, and light of the sun can be completely covered by a comparatively insignificant object, causing darkness and chill.

A similar phenomenon can be replicated in a spiritual sense, when otherwise small and insignificant matters are drawn too close and block the beauty, warmth, and heavenly light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, replacing it with cold darkness.

Eyewear designed to protect the sight of those in the zone of a total solar eclipse can prevent permanent damage and even blindness.<sup>17</sup> Gospel glasses comprised of a knowledge and testimony of gospel principles and ordinances provide a gospel perspective that can similarly provide greater spiritual protection and clarity for someone exposed to the hazards of a spiritual eclipse.

If you discover anything that seems to be blocking the light and joy of the gospel in *your* life, I invite you to place it in a gospel perspective. Look through a gospel lens and be vigilant not to allow insignificant and inconsequential matters in life to obscure your eternal view of the great plan of happiness. In short, don't let life's distractions eclipse heaven's light.

### Testimony

I bear testimony that no matter the obstruction that may block our vision of gospel light, the light is still there. That source of warmth, truth, and brightness is the gospel of Jesus Christ. I bear testimony of a loving Heavenly Father; of His Son, Jesus Christ; and of the Son's role as our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, in Sarah Jane Weaver, "What Gift Does President Monson Want for His 90th Birthday?" *Deseret News*, Aug. 17, 2017, [deseretnews.com](http://deseretnews.com).
2. See Christina Zdanowicz and Judson Jones, "An Eclipse Will Cross the US for the First Time in 99 Years," July 24, 2017, [cnn.com](http://cnn.com).
3. See "Eclipse: Who? What? Where? When? and How?" [eclipse2017.nasa.gov](http://eclipse2017.nasa.gov).
4. See EarthSky in Space, "Coincidence That Sun and Moon Seem Same Size?" [earthsky.org](http://earthsky.org).
5. See Brian Lada, "5 Surprising Effects the Total Solar Eclipse Will Have besides Darkness," [accuweather.com](http://accuweather.com).
6. Neal A. Maxwell, *Of One Heart: The Glory of the City of Enoch* (1975), 19.
7. Job 5:14.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, address given at Salt Lake Bonneville Young Single Adult Stake fireside, Salt Lake City, Utah, Feb. 8, 2015.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Of Things That Matter Most," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 20.
10. See Gary E. Stevenson, "The Knowledge of a Savior" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference, May 5, 2017).
11. Mosiah 3:20.
12. Jade, "The Obsession of Creating a Picture-Perfect Life on Social Media."
13. 2 Corinthians 10:12.
14. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 120–21.
15. Matthew 5:5; 3 Nephi 12:5.
16. Moroni 7:44.
17. See "Solar Eclipse and Your Eyes," [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org).



**By Stephen W. Owen**  
Young Men General President

# Repentance Is Always Positive

*The moment we set foot on the path of repentance, we invite the Savior's redeeming power into our lives.*

Several years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley attended a college football game. He was there to announce that the stadium would be named after the team's longtime, beloved coach, who was about to retire. The team desperately wanted to win the game to honor their coach. President Hinckley was invited to visit the locker room and share some encouraging words. Inspired by his words, that team on that day went on to win that game and ended the season with a winning record.

Today, I would like to speak to those who may worry that they are not winning in life. The truth is, of course, that we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”<sup>1</sup> While there may be undefeated seasons in sports, there aren't any in life. But I testify that the Savior Jesus Christ worked out a perfect Atonement and gave us the gift of repentance—our path back to a perfect brightness of hope and a winning life.

## Repentance Brings Happiness

Too often we think of repentance as something miserable and depressing. But God's plan is the plan of

happiness, not the plan of misery! Repentance is uplifting and ennobling. It's sin that brings unhappiness.<sup>2</sup> Repentance is our escape route! As Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained: “Without repentance, there is no real progress or improvement in life. . . . Only through repentance do we gain access to the atoning grace of Jesus Christ and salvation. Repentance . . .

points us to freedom, confidence, and peace.”<sup>3</sup> My message to all—especially to the youth—is that repentance is always positive.

When we speak of repentance, we aren't just talking about self-improvement efforts. True repentance is more than that—it is inspired by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His power to forgive our sins. As Elder Dale G. Renlund has taught us, “Without the Redeemer, . . . repentance becomes simply miserable behavior modification.”<sup>4</sup> We can try to change our behavior on our own, but only the Savior can remove our stains and lift our burdens, enabling us to pursue the path of obedience with confidence and strength. The joy of repentance is more than the joy of living a decent life. It's the joy of forgiveness, of being clean again, and of drawing closer to God. Once you've experienced that joy, no lesser substitute will do.

True repentance inspires us to make our obedience a commitment—a covenant, beginning with baptism



and renewed each week at the Lord's Supper, the sacrament. There we receive the promise that we can "always have his Spirit to be with [us],"<sup>5</sup> with all of the joy and peace that come from His constant companionship. This is the fruit of repentance, and this is what makes repentance joyful!

#### Repentance Requires Persistence

I love the parable of the prodigal son.<sup>6</sup> There's something poignant about that pivotal moment when the prodigal "came to himself." Sitting in a pigsty, wishing he could "have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," he finally realized that he had wasted not only his father's inheritance but also his own life. With faith that his father might accept him back—if not as a son then at least as a servant—he determined to put his rebellious past behind him and go home.

I've often wondered about the son's long walk home. Were there times when he hesitated and wondered, "How will I be received by my father?" Perhaps he even took a few steps back toward the swine. Imagine how the story would be different if he had given up. But faith kept him moving, and faith kept his father watching and waiting patiently, until finally:

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: . . .

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."



#### Repentance Is for Everyone

Brothers and sisters, we are all prodigals. We all have to "come to ourselves"—usually more than once—and choose the path that leads back home. It's a choice we make daily, throughout our lives.

We often associate repentance with grievous sins that require "a mighty change."<sup>7</sup> But repentance is for everyone—those who are wandering in "forbidden paths and [are] lost"<sup>8</sup> as well as those who "have gotten into [the] strait and narrow path" and now need to "press forward."<sup>9</sup> Repentance both puts us on the right path and keeps us on the right path. It is for those who are just beginning to believe, those who have believed all along, and those who need to begin again to believe. As Elder David A. Bednar taught: "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—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and . . . striving to become better."<sup>10</sup>

Recently I visited a missionary training center when a group of brand-new missionaries arrived. I was deeply moved as I watched them and observed the light in their eyes. They seemed so bright and happy and enthusiastic. Then a thought came to me: "They have experienced faith unto repentance. This is why they are filled with joy and hope."

I don't think that means they all had serious transgressions in their past, but I do think they knew how to repent; they had learned that repentance is positive; and they were ready and eager to share this joyful message with the world.

This is what happens when we feel the joy of repentance. Consider the example of Enos. He had his own "coming to himself" moment, and after his "guilt was swept away," his heart turned immediately to the welfare of others. Enos spent the rest of his life inviting all people to repent and "rejoiced in it above that of the world."<sup>11</sup> Repentance does that; it turns our hearts toward our fellowman

because we know that the joy we feel is meant for everyone.

### Repentance Is a Lifelong Pursuit

I have a friend who grew up in a less-active Latter-day Saint family. When he was a young adult, he too “came to himself” and decided to prepare for a mission.

He became an excellent missionary. On his last day before returning home, the mission president interviewed him and asked him to bear his testimony. He did so, and after a tearful embrace, the president said, “Elder, you could forget or deny everything you have just testified of in a matter of months if you do not continue to do the things that built your testimony in the first place.”

My friend later told me that he has prayed and read the scriptures daily since he returned from his mission. Being constantly “nourished by the good word of God” has kept him “in the right way.”<sup>12</sup>

You who are preparing for full-time missions and you who are returning, take note! It is not enough just to gain a testimony; you have to maintain it and strengthen it. As every missionary knows, if you stop pedaling a bicycle, it will fall, and if you stop feeding your testimony, it will weaken. This same principle applies to repentance—it is a lifelong pursuit, not a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

To all who seek forgiveness—the youth, young single adults, parents, grandparents, and yes, even great-grandparents—I invite you to come home. Now is the time to begin. Do not procrastinate your day of repentance.<sup>13</sup>

Then, once you have made that decision, keep following the path. Our Father is waiting, longing to receive you. His arms are outstretched “all the day long” for you.<sup>14</sup> The reward is worth the effort.



Remember these words from Nephi: “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.”<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes the journey will seem long—after all, it is the journey toward eternal life. But it can be a joyous journey if we pursue it with faith in Jesus Christ and hope in His Atonement. I testify that the moment we set foot on the path of repentance, we invite the Savior’s redeeming power into our lives. That power will steady our feet, expand our vision, and deepen our resolve to keep moving forward, step by step, until that glorious day when we

finally return to our heavenly home and hear our Father in Heaven say to us, “Well done.”<sup>16</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. Romans 3:23.
2. See Alma 41:10.
3. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 38.
4. Dale G. Renlund, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 122.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
6. See Luke 15:11–32.
7. Alma 5:12.
8. 1 Nephi 8:28.
9. 2 Nephi 31:19, 20.
10. David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 14.
11. See Enos 1.
12. Moroni 6:4.
13. See Alma 13:27.
14. Jacob 6:4.
15. 2 Nephi 31:20.
16. Matthew 25:21.



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

# The Eternal Everyday

*Humility about who we are and God's purpose for us is essential.*

Since my service in the British Mission as a young man, I have enjoyed British humor. It is sometimes characterized by a self-deprecating, modest, humble approach to life. An example of this is how summer is portrayed. British summers are relatively short and unpredictable. As one author in a low-key way said, “I love the British summer, it’s my favourite *day* of the year.”<sup>1</sup> A favorite British cartoon character of mine was pictured in her bed waking up late in the morning and declaring to her dogs, “Oh my goodness! I think we’ve overslept and missed summer.”<sup>2</sup>

There is an analogy in this humor to our life on this beautiful earth. The scriptures are clear that our precious mortal existence is a very short time. It could be said that from an eternal perspective, our time on earth is as fleeting as a British summer.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes man’s purpose and very existence are also described in very humble terms. The prophet Moses was raised in what some today might call a privileged background. As recorded in the Pearl of Great Price, the Lord, preparing Moses for his prophetic assignment, gives him an overview of the world and all the children of men which are and were created.<sup>4</sup> Moses’s somewhat surprising reaction was, “Now . . . I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.”<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, God, in what amounts to a rebuttal to any feelings of unimportance that Moses may have felt, proclaimed His true purpose: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>6</sup>

We are all equal before God. His doctrine is clear. In the Book of Mormon, we read, “All are alike unto God,” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female.”<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, all are invited to come to the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

Anyone who claims superiority under the Father’s plan because of characteristics like race, sex, nationality,

language, or economic circumstances is morally wrong and does not understand the Lord’s true purpose for all of our Father’s children.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, in our day in almost every segment of society, we see self-importance and arrogance flaunted while humility and accountability to God are denigrated. Much of society has lost its moorings and does not understand why we are on this earth. True humility, which is essential to achieve the Lord’s purpose for us, is seldom evident.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to understand the magnitude of Christ’s humility, righteousness, character, and intelligence, as exemplified in the scriptures. It is foolish to underestimate the necessity of continuously striving for these Christlike qualities and attributes on a day-by-day basis, particularly humility.<sup>11</sup>

The scriptures are clear that while this life is relatively short, it is incredibly significant. Amulek, who was a missionary companion of Alma in the Book of Mormon, said, “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God;





yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.”<sup>12</sup> We do not want, like my cartoon character, to sleep through this life.

The Savior’s example of humility and sacrifice for all mankind is the most profound event in history. The Savior, even as a member of the Godhead, was willing to come to earth as a lowly infant and begin an existence that included teaching and healing His brothers and sisters and ultimately suffering indescribable pain in Gethsemane and on the cross in order to perfect His Atonement. This act of love and humility on the part of Christ is known as His condescension.<sup>13</sup> He did this for every man and woman God has created or will create.

Our Heavenly Father does not want His children to be discouraged or to give up on their quest for celestial glory. When we really contemplate God the Father and Christ the Son, who They are, and what They have accomplished on our behalf, it fills us with reverence, awe, gratitude, and humility.

#### **Humility Is Essential in Helping the Lord Establish His Church**

Alma asked a question in his day that is pertinent today: “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?”<sup>14</sup> Alma continued, “Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, . . . that ye have been sufficiently humble?”<sup>15</sup>

Every time I read about Alma the Younger relinquishing his role as head of state to preach the word of God,<sup>16</sup> I am impressed. Alma clearly had a profound testimony of God the Father and Jesus Christ and felt accountable to Them completely and without reservation. He had the correct priorities and humility to give up status and position because he realized that serving the Lord was more important.

Having sufficient humility in our lives to help establish the Church is particularly valuable. An example in Church history is revealing. In June of 1837, the Prophet Joseph was inspired while in the Kirtland Temple to call Apostle Heber C. Kimball to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to “England . . . and open the door of salvation to that nation.”<sup>17</sup> Apostle Orson Hyde and a few others were assigned to accompany him. Elder Kimball’s response was remarkable. “The idea of being appointed to such an important

mission was almost more than I could bear. . . . [I] was nearly ready to sink under the burden which was placed upon me.”<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, he undertook the mission with absolute faith, commitment, and humility.

Sometimes humility is accepting callings when we do not feel adequate. Sometimes humility is serving faithfully when we feel capable of a more high-profile assignment. Humble leaders have verbally and by example established that it is not where we serve but how we faithfully serve.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes humility is overcoming hurt feelings when we feel that leaders or others have mistreated us.

On July 23, 1837, the Prophet Joseph met with Elder Thomas B. Marsh, President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Marsh was apparently frustrated that the Prophet had called two members of his quorum to go to England without consulting him. As Joseph met with Elder Marsh, any hurt feelings were put aside, and the Prophet received a remarkable revelation. It is now the 112th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>20</sup> It gives incredible direction from heaven with respect to humility and missionary work. Verse 10 reads, “Be thou *humble*; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”<sup>21</sup>

This revelation occurred the exact same day that Elders Kimball, Hyde, and John Goodson, full of humility, were declaring the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Vauxhall Chapel in Preston, England.<sup>22</sup> This was the first time missionaries had proclaimed the restored gospel outside of North America in this dispensation. Their missionary effort resulted in almost immediate convert baptisms and led to numerous faithful members.<sup>23</sup>

Subsequent parts of the revelation guide the missionary effort in our day. They read, in part, “Whosoever ye shall send in my name . . . shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation . . . inasmuch as they shall *humble* themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit.”<sup>24</sup>

The humility that undergirded this incredible missionary effort allowed the Lord to establish His Church in a remarkable way.

Gratefully, we continually see this in the Church today. Members, including the rising generation, give up their time and defer education and employment to serve missions. Many senior members leave employment and make other sacrifices in order to serve God in whatever capacity they are called. We do not allow personal issues to distract or divert us from accomplishing His purposes.<sup>25</sup> Church service requires humility. We humbly serve as called with all our might, mind, and strength. At every level of the Church, it is important to understand the Christlike attribute of humility.

#### Everyday Humility Is Essential in Helping Prepare Individuals to Meet God

The goal of honoring the Lord and submitting ourselves to His will<sup>26</sup> is not as valued in today’s society as it has been in the past. Some Christian leaders of other faiths believe we are living in a post-Christian world.<sup>27</sup>

For generations, the religious-based virtue of humility and the civic virtues of modesty and understatement have been the predominant standard.

In today’s world, there is an increased emphasis on pride, self-aggrandizement, and so-called “authenticity,” which sometimes leads to a lack of true humility. Some suggest



the moral values for happiness today include “be real, be strong, be productive—and most important, don’t rely on other people . . . because your fate is . . . in your own hands.”<sup>28</sup>

The scriptures advocate a different approach. They suggest that we should be true disciples of Jesus Christ. This entails establishing a powerful feeling of accountability to God and a humble approach to life. King Benjamin taught that the natural man is an enemy to God and advocated that we need to yield ourselves “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.” He explained, among other things, that this requires becoming “submissive, meek, humble, patient, [and] full of love.”<sup>29</sup>

Some misuse *authenticity* as a celebration of the natural man and qualities that are the opposite of humility, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and civility. We can celebrate our individual uniqueness as children of God without using authenticity as an excuse for un-Christlike behavior.

In our quest for humility, the modern internet creates challenges to avoiding pride. Two examples are the self-indulgent “look at me” approach or attacking others by ranting on social media. One more example is the “humblebrag.” It is defined as “an ostensibly modest or self-deprecating statement [or picture] whose actual purpose is to draw attention to something of which one is proud.”<sup>30</sup> The

prophets have always warned about pride and emphasizing the vain things of the world.<sup>31</sup>

The widespread deterioration of civil discourse is also a concern. The eternal principle of agency requires that we respect many choices with which we do not agree. Conflict and contention now often breach “the boundaries of common decency.”<sup>32</sup> We need more modesty and humility.

Alma cautions against being “puffed up in the pride of your hearts,” “supposing that ye are better one than another,” and persecuting the humble who “walk after the holy order of God.”<sup>33</sup>

I have found a genuine goodness among people of all faiths who are humble and feel accountable to God. Many of them subscribe to the Old Testament prophet Micah, who declared, “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”<sup>34</sup>

When we are truly humble, we pray for forgiveness and forgive others. As we read in Mosiah, Alma taught that as often as we repent, the Lord will forgive our trespasses.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, as indicated in the Lord’s Prayer,<sup>36</sup> when we do not forgive others’ trespasses, we bring ourselves under condemnation.<sup>37</sup> Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, through repentance our sins are forgiven. When we do not forgive those who trespass against us, we are in effect rejecting the

Savior's Atonement. Holding a grudge and refusing to forgive and refusing to humbly approach our relationships in a Christlike manner truly brings us under condemnation. Holding a grudge is poisonous to our souls.<sup>38</sup>

Let me also caution against any form of arrogance. The Lord, through the prophet Moroni, makes a stark contrast between the arrogant and the humble: "Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek." The Lord further declared, "I give unto men weakness that they may be *humble*; and my grace is sufficient for all men that *humble* themselves before me; for if they *humble* themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."<sup>39</sup>

Humility also includes being grateful for our numerous blessings and divine assistance. Humility isn't some grand identifiable achievement or even overcoming some major challenge. It is a sign of spiritual strength. It is having the quiet confidence that day by day and hour by hour we can rely on the Lord, serve Him, and achieve His purposes. It is my prayer that in this contentious world we will continuously strive for true humility every day. A favorite poem puts it this way:

*The test of greatness is the way  
One meets the eternal Everyday.*<sup>40</sup>

I bear a sure witness of the Savior and His Atonement and the overwhelming importance of humbly serving Him each and every day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Kathy Lette, in "Town and Country Notebook," ed. Victoria Marston, *Country Life*, June 7, 2017, 32; emphasis added.
2. Annie Tempest, "Tottering-by-Gently," *Country Life*, Oct. 3, 2012, 128.



3. See Psalm 90:4. Whether short or long in terms of earth years, our life span is very short from an eternal perspective. "All is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men" (Alma 40:8). The Apostle Peter declared, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).
4. See Moses 1:6–9. This is Christ speaking with divine investiture of authority (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 47, footnote 11).
5. Moses 1:10.
6. Moses 1:39.
7. 2 Nephi 26:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 1:34–35; 38:16; Official Declaration 2.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 begins, "All those who humble themselves before God." It then sets forth the requirements for baptism. See also Matthew 11:28.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
10. We know if we do not repent, receive the ordinances, and follow the covenant pathway that prepares us for eternity, "the night of darkness [comes] wherein there can be no labor performed" (Alma 34:33).
11. See 3 Nephi 27:27.
12. Alma 34:32.
13. See 1 Nephi 11:26–33; 2 Nephi 9:53; Jacob 4:7; Doctrine and Covenants 122:8.
14. Alma 5:26.
15. Alma 5:27.
16. See Alma 4:19.
17. Joseph Smith, in Heber C. Kimball, "History of Heber Chase Kimball by His Own Dictation," ca. 1842–1856, Heber C. Kimball Papers, 54, Church History Library; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle; the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (1888), 116.
18. Heber C. Kimball, "History of Heber Chase Kimball by His Own Dictation," 54; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 116.
19. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the

place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

20. See *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, ed. Brent M. Rogers and others (2017), 412–17. Vilate Kimball reported in a letter to her husband, Heber C. Kimball, that she had copied the revelation from "Elder Marshs book as he wrote it from Josephs mouth" (Vilate Murray Kimball to Heber C. Kimball, Sept. 6, 1837, in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838*, 412).
21. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10; emphasis added.
22. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 136–37.
23. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 149.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 112:21–22; emphasis added.
25. "While we do not ask to be released from a calling, if our circumstances change it is quite in order for us to counsel with those who have issued the call and then let the decision rest with them" (Boyd K. Packer, "Called to Serve," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 8).
26. See "Humility," in chapter 6 of *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 120.
27. See Charles J. Chaput, *Strangers in a Strange Land* (2017), 14–15; see also Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option* (2017).
28. Carl Cederstrom, "The Dangers of Happiness," *New York Times*, July 19, 2015, SR8.
29. Mosiah 3:19.
30. *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, "humblebrag," [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com).
31. In some ways this echoes the book of Alma's description of those who had acquired "all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; . . . [but] were . . . lifted up in the pride of their eyes" (Alma 4:6). It has been noted that a "humblebrag" is still a brag.
32. David Brooks, "Finding a Way to Roll Back Fanaticism," *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2017, A23.
33. Alma 5:53, 54.
34. Micah 6:8.
35. See Mosiah 26:30.
36. See Matthew 6:12, 15.
37. See Mosiah 26:31.
38. As Nelson Mandela said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies" (in Jessica Durando, "15 of Nelson Mandela's Best Quotes," *USA Today*, Dec. 5, 2013, [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com)).
39. Ether 12:26, 27; emphasis added.
40. Edmund Vance Cooke, "The Eternal Everyday," *Impertinent Poems* (1907), 21.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## By Divine Design

*The Lord's hand is guiding you. By "divine design," He is in the small details of your life as well as the major milestones.*

Brothers and sisters, as I stand here in this inspiring worldwide general conference and feel your strength and your spirits, I cannot help but think of the words of the Apostle Peter: "[Lord], it is good for us to be here."<sup>1</sup>

That is not exactly what Alma said after preaching to the people in Ammonihah. Alma left the city due to the wickedness of the people. Soon an angel appeared to Alma and called him to "return to the city of Ammonihah, and preach again unto the people of the city."<sup>2</sup>

Alma did so "speedily," entering "the city by another way."<sup>3</sup>

"As he entered the city he was an hungered, and he said to a man: Will ye give to an humble servant of God something to eat?

"And the man said unto him: I am a Nephite, and I know that thou art a holy prophet of God, for thou art the man whom an angel said in a vision: Thou shalt receive."<sup>4</sup>

The man was Amulek.

Now, did Alma just happen upon Amulek? No, it was no coincidence that he went into the city by the way that would lead him to this faithful man who would become his missionary companion.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell once explained: "None of us ever fully utilizes the people-opportunities allocated to us within our circles of friendship. You and I may call these intersectings 'coincidence.' This word is understandable for mortals to use, but *coincidence* is not an appropriate word to describe the workings of an omniscient God. He does not do things by 'coincidence' but . . . by 'divine design.'"<sup>5</sup>

Our lives are like a chessboard, and the Lord moves us from one place to another—if we are responsive to spiritual promptings. Looking back, we can see His hand in our lives.

We can see such heavenly intervention when Nephi returns to get the

plates from Laban. He "was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things [that he] should do."<sup>6</sup> Laban was soon before him in a drunken stupor, and Nephi slew him, retrieved the plates, and fled back to his brothers. Was he fortunate to just happen upon Laban? Or was it by "divine design"?

Significant events unfold in the gospel and in the Church that further the kingdom of God on earth. They are not by accident but by God's plan. He who fashioned this world can calm the seas with His word and can steer both Alma and Amulek and Nephi and Laban to be at the right place at precisely the right time.

Likewise, events and associations unfold in each of our lives that further God's work on earth.

Dear Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin spoke of an occasion when President Thomas S. Monson said to him: "There is a guiding hand above all things. Often when things happen, it's not by accident. One day, when we look back at the seeming coincidences of our lives, we will realize that perhaps they weren't so coincidental after all."<sup>7</sup>

Most often, our good works are known to only a few. They are, however, recorded in heaven. One





day, we will stand as a witness of our whole-souled devotion to works of righteousness. No trial or calamity can derail God's plan of happiness. Indeed, by "divine design," "joy cometh in the morning."<sup>8</sup> "I came into the world to do the will of [the] Father,"<sup>9</sup> Jesus taught. Dear brothers and sisters, so have we.

Through the experience of my own life's journey, I know that the Lord will move us on that seeming chessboard to do His work. What may appear to be a random chance is, in fact, overseen by a loving Father in Heaven, who can number the hairs of every head.<sup>10</sup> Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's notice.<sup>11</sup> The Lord is in the small details of our lives, and those incidents and opportunities are to prepare us to lift our families and others as we build the kingdom of God on earth. Remember, as the Lord said to Abraham, "I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee."<sup>12</sup>

The Lord placed me in a home with loving parents. By the world's standards, they were very ordinary people; my father, a devoted man, was a truck driver; my angel mother, a stay-at-home mom. The Lord helped me find my lovely wife, Melanie; He prompted a businessman, who became a dear friend, to give me an employment

opportunity. The Lord called me to serve in the mission field, both as a young man and as a mission president; He called me to the Quorum of the Seventy; and now He has called me as an Apostle. Looking back, I realize I did not orchestrate any of those moves; the Lord did, just as He is orchestrating important moves for you and for those you love.

What should you be looking for in your own life? What are God's miracles that remind you that He is close, saying, "I am right here"? Think of those times, some daily, when the Lord has acted in your life—and then acted again. Treasure them as moments the Lord has shown confidence in you and in your choices. But allow Him to make more of you than you can make of yourself on your own. Treasure His involvement. Sometimes we consider changes in our plans as missteps on our journey. Think of them more as first steps to being "on the Lord's errand."<sup>13</sup>

Some months ago our granddaughter joined a youth group to tour several Church history sites. The final itinerary noted that she would be passing through the very area where her missionary brother, our grandson, was serving. Our granddaughter had no intention of seeing her brother on his mission. However, as the bus entered

the town where her brother was serving, two missionaries could be seen walking down the street. One of the missionaries was her brother.

Anticipation filled the bus as the youth asked the bus driver to pull over so she could greet her brother. In less than one minute, after tears and sweet words, her brother was back on his way to fulfill his missionary duties. We later learned that her brother had been on that street for less than five minutes, walking from an appointment to his car.

Heavenly Father can put us in situations with specific intent in mind. He has done so in my life, and He is doing so in yours, as He did in the lives of our dear grandchildren.

Each of us is precious and loved by the Lord, who cares, who whispers, and who watches over us in ways unique to each of us. He is infinitely wiser and more powerful than mortal men and women. He knows our challenges, our triumphs, and the righteous desires of our hearts.

Over a year ago, as I was walking through Temple Square, one of the sister missionaries approached me and asked, "Do you remember me? I am from Florida." She told me her name, Sister Aida Chilan. Yes, I remembered meeting her and her family. Her stake president had suggested we visit her family. It became apparent that we were there for their daughter Aida, who had not been baptized. After our visit and more than a year of teaching and fellowshipping, Aida was baptized.

After we visited on Temple Square, she wrote me a letter. She said: "I know with all my heart that Heavenly Father knows each of us and that He continues to place us in each other's paths for a reason. Thank you for being one of my missionaries, for reaching out to me and finding me five years

ago.”<sup>14</sup> Aida also sent me her conversion story recounting the “divine coincidences” which have taken place in her life that have led to her baptism and confirmation, serving a mission on Temple Square, and her recent temple marriage.<sup>15</sup>

Was it a mere coincidence that the stake president had steered us to the Chilan home or that she and I would later meet on Temple Square? Aida’s testimony bears record that this was all part of God’s “divine design.”

The Lord loves to be with us. It is no coincidence that when you are feeling His Spirit and acting on first promptings that you feel Him as He promised: “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.”<sup>16</sup>

We all have similar things happen in our lives. We may meet someone who seems familiar, renew an acquaintance, or find common ground with a stranger. When those occur, perhaps the Lord is reminding us that we are all truly brothers and sisters. We are really engaged in the same cause—in what Joseph Smith called “the cause of Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Now, where does our agency fit in a “divine design”? We have a choice to follow or to not follow our Savior and His chosen leaders. The pattern is clear in the Book of Mormon when the Nephites had turned away from the Lord. Mormon lamented:

“And they saw . . . that the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them; yea, it had withdrawn from them because the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples—

“Therefore the Lord did cease to preserve them by his miraculous and matchless power, for they had fallen



into a state of unbelief and awful wickedness.”<sup>18</sup>

Not all that the Lord asks of us is a result of how strong we are, how faithful we are, or what we may know. Think of Saul, whom the Lord stopped on the road to Damascus. He was going the wrong direction in his life, and it had nothing to do with north or south. Saul was divinely redirected. When he was known later as Paul, his apostolic ministry reflected what the Lord already knew he was capable of doing and becoming, not what he had set out to do as Saul. In the same manner, the Lord knows what each of us is capable of doing and becoming. What did the Apostle Paul teach? “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”<sup>19</sup>

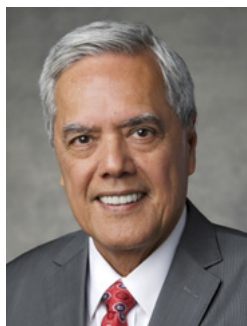
When we are righteous, willing, and able, when we are striving to be worthy and qualified, we progress to places we never imagined and become part of Heavenly Father’s “divine design.” Each of us has divinity within us. When we see God working through us and with us, may we be encouraged, even grateful for that guidance. When our Father in Heaven said, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,”<sup>20</sup> He was

talking about all of His children—you in particular.

The Lord’s hand is guiding you. By “divine design,” He is in the small details of your life as well as the major milestones. As it says in Proverbs, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; . . . and he shall direct thy paths.”<sup>21</sup> I testify that He will bless you, sustain you, and bring you peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 9:33.
2. Alma 8:16.
3. Alma 8:18.
4. Alma 8:19–20.
5. Neal A. Maxwell, “Brim with Joy” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 23, 1996), 2, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu).
6. 1 Nephi 4:6.
7. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 9; *Liahona*, May 2001, 38; taken from a talk given by Elder Wirthlin at a Church Educational System fireside at Brigham Young University, Nov. 7, 1999.
8. Psalm 30:5.
9. 3 Nephi 27:13.
10. See Luke 12:7.
11. See Matthew 10:29.
12. Abraham 2:8.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
14. Letter from Aida Chilan, Apr. 20, 2017.
15. Letter from Aida Chilan, May 30, 2017.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
17. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 349–57.
18. Helaman 4:24–25.
19. Romans 8:28.
20. Moses 1:39.
21. Proverbs 3:5–6.



By Elder O. Vincent Haleck  
Of the Seventy

# The Heart of the Widow

*Let us do that which is necessary to have the widow's heart, truly rejoicing in the blessings that will fill the "want" that results.*

I have had the great blessing of serving among the Saints of the Pacific for most of my adult life. The faith, love, and amazing sacrifices of these devoted Saints fill me with inspiration, gratitude, and joy. Their stories are like your own.

It has occurred to me that these Saints have much in common with the widow whom the Savior observed while He "sat . . . and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites. . .

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For . . . they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."<sup>1</sup>

Even though her two mites were a meager contribution, to the Savior her gift was of supreme value, because she gave everything. In that moment, the Savior fully knew the widow, for her gift showed Him her heart. The quality and depth of her love and faith were such that she gave knowing that her "want" would be supplied.

I have seen that same heart in the Saints of the Pacific. In a small village

on one of these islands, an older man and his wife accepted the invitation of the missionaries to sincerely ask the Lord if the lessons they were being taught were true. In this process, they also considered the consequences of the commitments that they would need to make if the answer that they received led to their accepting the restored gospel. They fasted and prayed to know the truthfulness of the Church and the veracity of the Book of Mormon. The answer to their prayers came in the form of a sweet but ringing affirmation: "Yes! It is true!"

Having received this witness, they chose to be baptized. This was not a choice without personal cost. Their decision and baptism carried with them a high price. They lost employment, they sacrificed social standing, important friendships dissolved, and the support, love, and respect of family were withdrawn. They now walked to church each Sunday, exchanging awkward glances with friends and neighbors who were walking in the opposite direction.

In these difficult circumstances, this good brother was asked how he felt about their decision to join the Church. His simple and unwavering reply was "It is true, isn't it? Our choice was clear."

These two newly converted Saints truly had the heart of the widow. They, like the widow, "cast in all" that they could give, knowingly giving of their "want." As a product of their believing hearts and enduring faith during those hard times, their burdens were lightened. They were aided and surrounded by supportive and ministering Church members, and they were personally strengthened by their service in Church callings.



After they cast in their “all,” the greatest day came when they were sealed in the temple as an eternal family. Like He did the converts under Alma’s leadership, “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.”<sup>2</sup> Such is the heart of the widow exemplified in this wonderful couple.

Let me speak of another experience where the heart of the widow was in full view. In Samoa, we labor with village councils to gain access for missionaries to preach the gospel. A few years ago, I had a conversation with a chief from a village where the missionaries had been prohibited for many, many years. My conversation occurred not too long after the paramount chief had opened the village to the Church, permitting our missionaries to teach those interested in learning about the gospel and its doctrines.

After so many years, to have this miraculous turn of events, I was curious to learn about what had happened to cause the paramount chief to take this action. I asked about this, and the chief with whom I was conversing replied, “A man can live in the dark for a period, but there will come a time when he will long to come into the light.”

The paramount chief, in opening the village, demonstrated the heart of the widow—a heart that softens when the warmth and light of the truth is revealed. This leader was willing to relinquish years of tradition, confront much opposition, and stand firm so that others might be blessed. This was a leader whose heart was focused on the welfare and happiness of his people rather than on considerations of tradition, culture, and personal power. He gave away those concerns in favor of



what President Thomas S. Monson has taught us: “As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, let me share with you one more experience among the Saints of the Pacific that remains deeply and spiritually rooted in my soul. Some years ago I was a young counselor to a bishop in a new ward in American Samoa. We had 99 members, consisting of subsistence farmers, cannery workers, government employees, and their families. When the First Presidency announced in 1977 that a temple was going to be constructed in Samoa, there was joy and thanksgiving expressed by all of us. Going to the temple from American Samoa at that time required traveling either to Hawaii or New Zealand. This was a costly journey that was beyond the reach of many faithful Church members.

During this period of time members were encouraged to donate to a building fund to assist in the construction of temples. In this spirit, our bishopric asked the ward members to prayerfully consider what they could give. A date was set for families to gather to offer their donations. Later, as these donations were opened in private, our bishopric was humbled and touched by the faith and generosity of our wonderful ward members.

Knowing each family and their circumstances, I felt a deep and abiding sense of awe, respect, and humility. These were, in every way, modern-day widow’s mites given freely from their “want,” with a joy in the promised blessing of the construction of a holy temple of the Lord in Samoa. These families had consecrated all that they could to the Lord, with the faith that they would not be left wanting. Their gift manifested their widow’s hearts. All who gave did so willingly and joyfully because the widow’s heart within them could see with the eye of faith the great crowning blessings in store for their families and for all of the people of Samoa and American Samoa for generations to come. I know that their consecrated offerings, their widow’s mites, were known and accepted by the Lord.

The heart of the widow who gave her two mites is a heart that will give all by making sacrifices; by enduring hardship, persecution, and rejection; and by bearing burdens of many kinds. The heart of the widow is a heart that senses, feels, and knows the light of truth and will give anything to embrace that truth. It also helps others to see that same light and come to the same measure of eternal happiness and joy. Finally, the heart of the widow is defined by a willingness to give all for

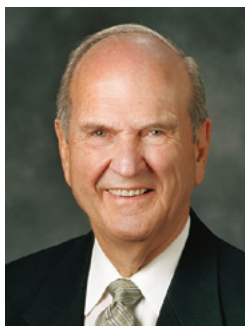
building up the kingdom of God on the earth.

Let us join as worldwide Saints in doing that which is necessary to have the widow's heart, truly rejoicing in the blessings that will fill the "want" that results. My prayer for each of us is a plea to have the heart to bear our burdens, make necessary sacrifices, and have the will to do and to give. I promise that the Lord will not leave you wanting. The heart of the widow is filled with thanksgiving that the Savior was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"<sup>4</sup> so that we would not need to taste the "bitter cup."<sup>5</sup> In spite of our weaknesses and failings, and because of them, He continues to offer His hands, which were pierced for our sakes. He will lift us up if we are willing to come into the light of His gospel, embrace Him, and allow Him to fill our "want."

I bear my testimony of the great love that we can share as disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I love and sustain President Thomas S. Monson as the prophet of God on the earth. The Book of Mormon is another witness of Jesus Christ to the world, and I invite all to read it and discover its message for you. All who accept the Lord's invitation to come unto Him will find peace, love, and light. Jesus Christ is our great Exemplar and Redeemer. It is only through Jesus Christ, and the miracle of His infinite Atonement, that we can receive eternal life. Of this I bear witness in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mark 12:41–44.
2. Mosiah 24:15.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Be an Example and a Light," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 88.
4. Isaiah 53:3.
5. 3 Nephi 11:11.



By President Russell M. Nelson

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?

*In a most miraculous and singular way, the Book of Mormon teaches us of Jesus Christ and His gospel.*

In 1986, I was invited to give a special lecture at a university in Accra, Ghana. There I met a number of dignitaries, including an African tribal king. As we visited prior to the lecture, the king spoke to me only through his linguist, who then translated for me. I responded to the linguist, and the linguist then translated my responses to the king.

After my lecture, the king made his way directly to me, but this time without his linguist. To my surprise, he spoke in perfect English—the Queen's English, I might add!

The king seemed puzzled. "Just who are you?" he asked.

I replied, "I am an ordained Apostle of Jesus Christ."

The king asked, "What can you teach me about Jesus Christ?"

I responded with a question: "May I ask what you already know about Him?"

The king's response revealed he was a serious student of the Bible and one who loved the Lord.

I then asked if he knew about the ministry of Jesus Christ to the people of ancient America.

As I expected, he did not.

I explained that after the Savior's Crucifixion and Resurrection, He came to the people of ancient America, where He taught His gospel. He organized His Church and asked His disciples to keep a record of His ministry among them.

"That record," I continued, "is what we know as the Book of Mormon. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. It is a companion scripture to the Holy Bible."

At this point, the king became *very* interested. I turned to the mission president accompanying me and asked if he had an extra copy of the Book of Mormon with him. He pulled one from his briefcase.

I opened it to 3 Nephi chapter 11, and together the king and I read the Savior's sermon to the Nephites. I then presented the copy of the Book of Mormon to him. His response lodged in my mind and heart forever: "You

could have given me diamonds or rubies, but nothing is more precious to me than this additional knowledge about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

After experiencing the power of the Savior’s words in 3 Nephi, the king proclaimed, “If I am converted and join the Church, I will bring my whole tribe with me.”

“Oh, King,” I said, “it doesn’t work that way. Conversion is an individual matter. The Savior ministered to the Nephites one by one. Each individual receives a witness and testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

My brothers and sisters, how precious *is* the Book of Mormon to you? If you were offered diamonds or rubies *or* the Book of Mormon, which would you choose? Honestly, which *is* of greater worth to you?

Remember in the Sunday morning session of the April 2017 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson pleaded with “each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.”<sup>2</sup> Many have responded to our prophet’s plea.

Let me say that neither I nor eight-year-old Riley knew anyone was taking our pictures. Notice that Riley



Riley reads his Book of Mormon with the help of an “I Am a Child of God” bookmark.



President Nelson is following President Thomas S. Monson’s counsel from the April 2017 general conference to study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.

is reading his Book of Mormon with the help of an “I Am a Child of God” bookmark.

Something powerful happens when a child of God seeks to know more about Him and His Beloved Son. Nowhere are those truths taught more clearly and powerfully than in the Book of Mormon.

Since President Monson’s challenge six months ago, I have tried to follow his counsel. Among other things, I’ve made lists of what the Book of Mormon *is*, what it *affirms*, what it *refutes*, what it *fulfills*, what it *clarifies*, and what it *reveals*. Looking at the Book of Mormon through these lenses has been an insightful and inspiring exercise! I recommend it to each of you.

During these six months, I have invited various groups—including my Brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve, missionaries in Chile, and mission presidents and their wives gathered in Argentina—to consider three related

questions that I urge you to think about today:

First, what would your life be like *without* the Book of Mormon? Second, what would you *not know*? And third, what would you *not have*?

Enthusiastic answers from these groups came straight from their hearts. Here are just a few of their comments:

“Without the Book of Mormon, I would be confused about the conflicting teachings and opinions about so *many* things. I would be just like I was before I found the Church, when I was searching for knowledge, faith, and hope.”

Another said: “I would not know about the role the Holy Ghost can play in my life.”

Another: “I would not clearly understand my purpose here on earth!”

Another respondent said: “I would not know that there is continuing progress after this life. Because of the Book of Mormon, I know that there really is



It teaches the doctrine of Christ.<sup>5</sup> It expands and clarifies many of the “plain and precious”<sup>6</sup> truths that were lost through centuries of time and numerous translations of the Bible.

The Book of Mormon provides the fullest and most authoritative understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to be found anywhere. It teaches what it really means to be born again. From the Book of Mormon we learn about the gathering of scattered Israel. We know why we are here on earth. These and other truths are more powerfully and persuasively taught in the Book of Mormon than in any other book. The full power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is contained in the Book of Mormon. Period.

The Book of Mormon both illuminates the teachings of the Master and exposes the tactics of the adversary.<sup>7</sup> The Book of Mormon teaches true doctrine to dispel false religious traditions—such as the erroneous practice of performing infant baptisms.<sup>8</sup> The Book of Mormon gives purpose to life by urging us to ponder the potential of eternal life and “never-ending happiness.”<sup>9</sup> The Book of Mormon shatters the false beliefs that happiness can be found in wickedness<sup>10</sup> and that individual goodness is all that is required to return to the presence of God.<sup>11</sup> It abolishes forever the false concepts that revelation ended with the Bible and that the heavens are sealed today.

When I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word *power*. The truths of the Book of Mormon have the *power* to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.

My dear brothers and sisters, I promise that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon *every day*, you will make better decisions—*every day*. I promise that as you ponder what

life after death. That is the ultimate goal for which we are working.”

This last comment made me reflect on my life decades ago as a young surgical resident. One of the sobering responsibilities a surgeon bears, on occasion, is to inform the family when a loved one passes away. In one hospital where I worked, a special room was built with padded walls where family members could receive such news. There, some people manifested their grief by banging their heads against those padded walls. How I longed to teach those individuals that death, though difficult for surviving loved ones, is a necessary part of our immortal existence. Death allows us to progress to the next world.<sup>3</sup>

Another respondent to my question said: “I did not have a life until I read the Book of Mormon. Even though I had prayed and gone to my church all my life, the Book of Mormon helped me to really communicate with Heavenly Father for the first time.”

Another said: “Without the Book of Mormon, I wouldn’t understand that the Savior not only suffered for my sins, but He can heal my pains and sorrows.”<sup>4</sup>

And yet another: “I would not know that we have prophets to lead us.”

Immersing ourselves regularly in the truths of the Book of Mormon can be a life-changing experience. One of our missionary granddaughters, Sister Olivia Nelson, promised an investigator that if he would read the Book of Mormon daily, his test scores on his university exams would improve. He did, and they did.

My dear brothers and sisters, I testify that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God. It contains the answers to life’s most compelling questions.



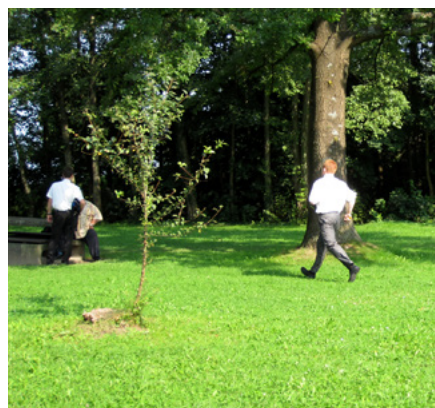
President Nelson’s granddaughter Olivia.

you study, the windows of heaven will open, and you will receive answers to your own questions and direction for your own life. I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon, you can be immunized against the evils of the day, even the gripping plague of pornography and other mind-numbing addictions.

Whenever I hear anyone, including myself, say, “I know the Book of Mormon is true,” I want to exclaim, “That’s nice, but it is not enough!” We need to feel, deep in “the inmost part” of our hearts,<sup>12</sup> that the Book of Mormon *is* unequivocally the word of God. We must feel it so deeply that we would never want to live even one day without it. I might paraphrase President Brigham Young in saying, “I wish I had the voice of seven thunders to wake up the people”<sup>13</sup> to the truth and power of the Book of Mormon.

We need to be like this young missionary serving in Europe who felt so deeply about the truth of the Book of Mormon that he literally ran with a copy of this sacred record to the man in a park he and his companion had just found.

I testify that Joseph Smith was and *is* the prophet of this last dispensation.



A young missionary runs to share the Book of Mormon with a man in a park.

It was he who, through the gift and power of God, translated this holy book. This *is* the book that will help to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.

I testify that Jesus Christ is the literal and living Son of our living God. He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our great Exemplar, and our Advocate with the Father. He was the promised Messiah, the mortal Messiah, and will be the millennial Messiah. I testify with my whole soul that in a most miraculous and singular way, the Book of Mormon teaches us of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

I know that President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of God on the earth today. I love him and sustain him with all of my heart. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### *President Nelson’s Book of Mormon Lists*

##### **The Book of Mormon is:**

- Another testament of Jesus Christ. Its major writers—Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, Moroni—and its translator, Joseph Smith, were *all* eyewitnesses of the Lord.
- A record of His ministry to people who lived in ancient America.
- True, as attested by the Lord Himself.

##### **The Book of Mormon affirms:**

- The individual identity of Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.
- The necessity of the Fall of Adam and the wisdom of Eve, that men might have joy.

##### **The Book of Mormon refutes notions that:**

- Revelation ended with the Bible.
- Infants need to be baptized.
- Happiness can be found in wickedness.
- Individual goodness is adequate for exaltation (ordinances and covenants are needed).
- The Fall of Adam tainted mankind with “original sin.”

##### **The Book of Mormon fulfills biblical prophecies that:**

- “Other sheep” shall hear His voice.
- God will do “a marvelous work and a wonder,” speaking “out of the dust.”
- The “stick of Judah” and the “stick of Joseph” will become one.
- Scattered Israel will be gathered “in the latter days” and how that will be done.

- The land of inheritance for the lineage of Joseph is the Western Hemisphere.

##### **The Book of Mormon clarifies understanding about:**

- Our premortal existence.
- Death. It is a necessary component of God’s great plan of happiness.
- Postmortal existence, which begins in paradise.
- How the resurrection of the body, reunited with its spirit, becomes an immortal soul.
- How our judgment by the Lord will be according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.
- How ordinances are properly performed: for example, baptism, sacrament, conferring the Holy Ghost.
- The Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- The Resurrection.
- The important role of angels.
- The eternal nature of priesthood.
- How human behavior is influenced more by the power of the word than the power of the sword.

##### **The Book of Mormon reveals information previously unknown:**

- Baptisms were performed before Jesus Christ was born.
- Temples were built and used by people in ancient America.
- Joseph, 11th son of Israel, foresaw the prophetic role of Joseph Smith.
- Nephi (in 600–592 BC) foresaw the discovery and colonizing of America.
- Plain and precious parts of the Bible have been lost.
- The Light of Christ is given to each person.
- The importance of individual agency and the need for opposition in all things.
- Warnings about “secret combinations.”

#### **NOTES**

1. See 3 Nephi 17:9–12.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 87.
3. See Alma 42:8.
4. See Alma 7:11–12.
5. See, for example, 2 Nephi 31:2–21.
6. See 1 Nephi 13:29–33.
7. See 2 Nephi 26–33.
8. See Moroni 8:11–15.
9. Mosiah 2:41; see also Alma 28:12.
10. See Alma 41:10–11.
11. Special sacred ordinances and covenants are also required.
12. See Alma 13:27.
13. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 299. He was referring to the importance of temple and family history work.



By Elder Dale G. Renlund  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Priesthood and the Savior's Atoning Power

*For Heavenly Father's purposes to be accomplished, Christ's atoning power needs to be made available to God's children. The priesthood delivers these opportunities.*

Picture with me a rocket being maneuvered to a launchpad so it can be readied for liftoff. Now visualize the ignition. Fuel, in a controlled burn, is converted into hot gas that spews out, providing the necessary thrust to propel the rocket into space. Finally, envision the payload, or cargo, that sits atop the rocket. The payload's worth is fully realized only when it gets where it needs to be and functions as it should. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to appreciate that an expensive global communications satellite is of little value sitting in a warehouse. The rocket's mission is simply to deliver a payload.

This evening I would like to compare *the priesthood that we hold* to a rocket and *the opportunity to benefit from the Savior's atoning power* to the payload that a rocket delivers.

Because of His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ has the power and authority to redeem all mankind. To make His atoning power accessible, He has delegated a portion of His power and authority to men on earth. This delegated power and authority is called

*priesthood*. It permits priesthood holders to help Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in Their work—to bring about the salvation and exaltation of God's children. It does so because it provides His children the opportunity to receive the blessings of the Savior's atoning power.

The atoning power of Jesus Christ is essential because none of us can return to our heavenly home without

help. In mortality, we invariably make mistakes and violate God's laws. We become stained by sin and cannot be allowed back to live in God's presence. We need the Savior's atoning power so that we can be reconciled to Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ broke the bands of physical death, allowing resurrection for all. He offers forgiveness of sins, conditioned on obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel. Through Him, exaltation is offered. The opportunity to benefit from the Savior's atoning power is creation's most important payload.

For Heavenly Father's purposes to be accomplished, Christ's atoning power needs to be made available to God's children.<sup>1</sup> The priesthood delivers these opportunities. It is the rocket. Priesthood is essential because necessary ordinances and covenants on earth are administered only by its authority. If the priesthood fails to deliver the opportunity to benefit from the Savior's atoning power, what would be its purpose? Would it just be a complex, attention-grabbing firecracker?





God intends priesthood to be used for more than just a class on Sunday or as a service opportunity. He intends for it to deliver the payload.

Minor defects in rockets can cause mission failure. Brittle seals and material fatigue can cause a rocket to malfunction. To guard the priesthood from, metaphorically, brittle seals and material fatigue, God protects both its conferral and use.<sup>2</sup> Priesthood conferral is safeguarded by priesthood keys, which are the rights of presidency given to man.<sup>3</sup> Priesthood use is likewise safeguarded by priesthood keys but also by covenants that the priesthood holder makes. The use of the priesthood is consequently governed by both priesthood keys and covenants. A man's priesthood commission is individually given and does not exist independent of him;<sup>4</sup> priesthood is not an amorphous source of autonomous power.

Both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods are received by covenant.<sup>5</sup> God determines the terms and man accepts. Broadly speaking, priesthood

holders covenant to help God in His work. Early in this dispensation, Jesus Christ explained that the priesthood covenant "is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world . . . because they come not unto me."<sup>6</sup>

This teaches that the purpose of the priesthood is to invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel. We have the priesthood so that we can help Heavenly Father's children be relieved of the burden of sin and become like Him. Through the priesthood, the power of godliness is manifest in the lives of all who make and keep gospel covenants and receive the associated ordinances.<sup>7</sup> This is the way each of us comes unto Christ, is purified, and is reconciled to God. Christ's atoning power is made accessible through the priesthood, which delivers the payload.

Covenants with God are serious and solemn. A man should prepare for, learn about, and enter such covenants with the intent to honor them.

A covenant becomes a pledge of self. Paraphrasing the English playwright Robert Bolt, a man makes a covenant only when he wants to commit himself quite exceptionally to a promise. He makes an identity between the truth of the promise and his own virtue. When a man makes a covenant, he is holding himself, like water, in his cupped hands. And if he opens his fingers, he need not hope to find himself again. A covenant-breaker no longer has a self to commit or a guarantee to offer.<sup>8</sup>

An Aaronic Priesthood holder covenants to avoid evil, help others be reconciled to God, and prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>9</sup> These sacred responsibilities are fulfilled as he teaches, baptizes, strengthens Church members, and invites others to accept the gospel. These are his "rocket" functions. In return, God promises hope, forgiveness, the ministering of angels, and the keys of the gospel of repentance and baptism.<sup>10</sup>

A Melchizedek Priesthood holder covenants to fulfill the responsibilities



associated with the Aaronic Priesthood and to magnify his calling in the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>11</sup> He does so by keeping the commandments associated with the covenant. These commandments include giving “diligent heed to the words of eternal life” by living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,<sup>12</sup> bearing testimony of Jesus Christ and His latter-day work,<sup>13</sup> not boasting of himself,<sup>14</sup> and becoming the Savior’s friend, trusting Him as a friend would.<sup>15</sup>

In return, God promises that a Melchizedek Priesthood holder will receive keys to understand the mysteries of God. He will become perfect so that he can stand in the presence of God. He will be able to fulfill his role in the work of salvation. Jesus Christ will prepare the way before the priesthood holder and will be with him. The Holy Ghost will be in the priesthood holder’s heart, and angels will bear him up. His body will be strengthened and renewed. He will become heir to the blessings of Abraham and, along with his wife, joint-heir with Jesus Christ to Heavenly Father’s kingdom.<sup>16</sup> These are “exceeding great and precious promises.”<sup>17</sup> No greater promises can be imagined.

To each man who receives the Melchizedek Priesthood, God affirms His covenant promises with an oath.<sup>18</sup> This oath pertains only to the Melchizedek Priesthood,<sup>19</sup> and it is God who swears the oath, not the

priesthood holder.<sup>20</sup> Because this unique situation involves His divine power and authority, God uses an oath, employing the most forceful language He can, to assure us of the binding and irreversible nature of His promises.

Severe consequences result from breaking priesthood covenants and altogether turning from them.<sup>21</sup> Being casual or apathetic in a priesthood calling is like introducing material fatigue into a rocket component. It jeopardizes the priesthood covenant because it can lead to mission failure. Disobedience to God’s commandments breaks the covenant. For a perpetual, unrepentant covenant-breaker, the promised blessings are withdrawn.

I came to understand more fully the relationship between the “priesthood” rocket and the “opportunity to benefit from Christ’s atoning power” payload several years ago. During a weekend, I had two assignments. One was to create the first stake in a country, and the other was to interview a young man and, if all was in order, restore his priesthood and temple blessings. This 30-year-old man had joined the Church in his late teens. He served an honorable mission. But when he returned home, he lost his way, and he lost his membership in the Church. After some years, “he came to himself,”<sup>22</sup> and with the help of loving priesthood leaders and kind members, he repented and was readmitted by baptism into the Church.

Later, he applied to have his priesthood and temple blessings restored. We set an appointment for Saturday at 10:00 a.m. at the meetinghouse. When I arrived for the earlier interviews, he was already there. He was so anxious to have the priesthood once again, he just could not wait.

During our interview, I showed him the letter explaining that President Thomas S. Monson had personally reviewed his application and authorized the interview. This otherwise stoic young man wept. I then told him that the date of our interview would have no official meaning in his life. He looked puzzled. I informed him that after I restored his blessings, his membership record would show only his original baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordination, and endowment dates. He choked up again.

I asked him to read from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“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.”<sup>23</sup>

Tears filled his eyes a third time. Then I placed my hands on his head, and in the name of Jesus Christ and by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and with the authorization of the President of the Church, I restored his priesthood and temple blessings.

The joy that came over us was profound. He knew he was once again authorized to hold and exercise the priesthood of God. He knew that his temple blessings were again fully operative. He had a bounce in his step and a radiant light about him. I was so proud of him, and I sensed how proud Heavenly Father was of him too.

Thereafter, the stake was organized. The meetings were well attended by enthusiastic, faithful Saints, and a wonderful stake presidency was sustained. However, for me, the historic occasion of organizing this first stake in a country was overshadowed by the joy I felt in restoring the blessings to this young man.

I have come to realize that the purpose of organizing a stake, or using the priesthood of God in any way, is to assist Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in Their work—to provide the opportunity for redemption and exaltation to each of God’s children. Like the rocket whose purpose is to deliver a payload, the priesthood delivers the gospel of Jesus Christ, enabling all to make covenants and receive the associated ordinances. “The atoning blood of Christ”<sup>24</sup> can thereby be applied in our lives as we experience the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost and receive the blessings God promises.

In addition to obeying the laws and ordinances of the gospel yourself, I

invite you to make and keep priesthood covenants. Receive God’s oath and His promise. Magnify your responsibilities in the priesthood to help Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Use the priesthood to help deliver the opportunity to benefit from the Savior’s atoning power to someone else! As you do, great blessings will come to you and your family. I testify that the Redeemer lives and directs this work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 1 Nephi 11:31; 2 Nephi 2:8.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:11; see also Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 49–52.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:95, 130, 132. The priesthood a man receives is no more independent of him than Christ’s atoning power is independent of Christ.
5. References to a covenant related to the lesser priesthood are found in Numbers 25:10–13; Nehemiah 13:29; and Malachi 2:2–8. References to a covenant related to the Melchizedek Priesthood are found in Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:26–37 (in the Bible appendix); Psalm 110:1, 4; and Doctrine and Covenants 84:39–42. See

- also Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrine of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 32–34.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:48, 50.
  7. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
  8. See Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play in Two Acts* (1990), xiii–xiv, 140.
  9. See Numbers 25:12–13; Nehemiah 13:29; Ezekiel 34:2–6; Malachi 2:2–9; Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 20:46–59; 84:33–40.
  10. See Hebrews 7:19; Doctrine and Covenants 84:26–27.
  11. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
  12. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:43–44.
  13. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:61–62.
  14. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:73.
  15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:77–88.
  16. See Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:26–37 (in the Bible appendix); Hebrews 7:11; Doctrine and Covenants 84:19, 33–34, 38, 42, 77–88.
  17. 2 Peter 1:4.
  18. See Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:27–31 (in the Bible appendix); Psalm 110:1, 4; Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:19–21 (in the Bible appendix); Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–40, 48.
  19. See *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 223; Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 59; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 323.
  20. There is no scriptural reference or account of the recipient swearing an oath as he makes the Melchizedek Priesthood covenant. Instead, in Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:27–31 (in the Bible appendix); Psalm 110:1, 4; Hebrews 7:21; and Doctrine and Covenants 84:40, it is God who swears an oath as He makes the covenant with the recipient. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “The Lord swears with an oath in his own name . . . that everyone who keeps the covenant made in connection with the Melchizedek Priesthood shall inherit, receive, and possess all things in his everlasting kingdom. . . . God swore with an oath that Christ would be exalted, and he swears anew, at the time each of us receives the Melchizedek Priesthood, that we will have a like exaltation if we are true and faithful in all things” (“The Doctrine of the Priesthood,” 33).

21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:41–42. Repentance is always possible for those willing to change. See, for instance, Dale G. Renlund, “Repentance: A Joyful Choice,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 121–24.
22. Luke 15:17.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
24. Mosiah 4:2.





By Elder David F. Evans  
Of the Seventy

# The Truth of All Things

*Each of us has a personal responsibility to do what is necessary to obtain and keep a strong testimony.*

We come tonight with the hope and faith that in some way, we will leave strengthened and blessed by the Holy Ghost, who teaches truth.<sup>1</sup> It is about our individual search for truth that I wish to speak.

As a young man, I had many questions about the Church. Some of my questions were sincere. Others were not and reflected the doubts of others.

I often discussed my questions with my mother. I am sure that she could sense that many of my questions were sincere and from my heart. I think she was a little disappointed in those questions that were less sincere and more argumentative. However, she never put me down for having questions. She would listen and try to answer them. When she sensed that she had said all that she could and that I still had questions, she would say something like this: “David, that is a good question. While *you* are searching and reading and praying for the answer, why don’t *you* do the things you know you should and not do the things you know you should not?” This became the pattern for my search for truth. Through study, prayer, and keeping the commandments, I found that there are answers to all of my important questions. I also found that for some

questions, continuing faith, patience, and revelation are needed.<sup>2</sup>

Mom put the responsibility of developing faith and finding answers on me. She knew that the important answers would come from my seeking truth the way that Heavenly Father has prescribed. She knew that I needed to find the truth. She knew that I needed to be sincere in my questions and be willing to act on what I already knew to be true. She knew that I needed to study and pray and that I needed to develop

greater patience as I sought answers from the Lord. Willingness to be patient is part of our search for truth and part of the Lord’s pattern of revealing truth.<sup>3</sup>

Over time I came to know that my mother was teaching me Heavenly Father’s pattern for seeking truth. Faith grew, answers began to come, and I accepted a mission call.

There came a time, early in my mission, when I knew that I had to know whether the Church was true and Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I felt what President Thomas S. Monson expressed so clearly in our last general conference: “If you do not have a firm testimony of these things, do that which is necessary to obtain one. It is essential for you to have your own testimony in these difficult times, for the testimonies of others will carry you only so far.”<sup>4</sup> I knew what was necessary. I needed to read the Book of Mormon with a sincere heart, with real intent, and ask God whether it is true.

Listen to our Heavenly Father’s remarkable promise given through



the prophet Moroni: “When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of 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.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to receive what was in the Book of Mormon, I needed to read it. I started at the beginning of the book and read every day. Some receive a witness very quickly. For others, it will take more time and more prayer and may include reading the book several times. I needed to read the entire book before I received the promised witness. However, God did manifest the truth of it unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost.

In my missionary journal, I described my joy in knowing the truth as well as my personal expression of commitment and real intent to act on the truth I had received. I wrote: “I have pledged with my Father in Heaven and with myself to do my very best, to give it 100 percent for the rest of my life, whatever I am asked, I’ll do, but for now I have the rest of my mission and I am going to make it a great mission, one that I won’t feel bad about, but not for me, for the Lord. I love the Lord, and I love the work, and I just pray that that feeling will never leave me.”

I came to know that constant nourishment and continuing effort to repent and keep the commandments are needed to never have that feeling leave. President Monson said, “A testimony needs to be kept vital and alive through continued obedience to the commandments of God and through daily prayer and scripture study.”<sup>6</sup>

Over the years I have asked missionaries and young people around the world how they started in their



personal effort to seek truth and gain a testimony. Almost without exception, they respond that their own effort to gain a personal testimony started with the personal decision to read the Book of Mormon from the beginning and ask God if it is true. In doing this, they chose to “act” rather than to be “acted upon”<sup>7</sup> by the doubts of others.

To know the truth, we need to live the gospel<sup>8</sup> and “experiment”<sup>9</sup> on the word. We are cautioned to not resist the Spirit of the Lord.<sup>10</sup> Repentance, coupled with a determination to keep the commandments, is an important part of each individual’s search for truth.<sup>11</sup> In fact, we may need to be willing to “give away all” our sins in order to know the truth.<sup>12</sup>

We are commanded to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” and to “seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom.”<sup>13</sup> Our search for truth should focus on “the best books” and the best sources. Among the very best are the scriptures and the words of living prophets.

President Monson has asked each of us to “do [what] is necessary” to obtain and keep a strong testimony.<sup>14</sup> What is necessary to deepen and strengthen your testimony? Each of us has a

personal responsibility to do what is necessary to obtain and keep a strong testimony.

Patiently keeping our covenants while we “do [what] is necessary” to receive answers from the Lord is part of God’s pattern for learning truth. Especially when things are hard, we may be required to “submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”<sup>15</sup> Patient covenant keeping increases our humility, deepens our desire to know truth, and allows the Holy Ghost to “guide [us] in wisdom’s paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved.”<sup>16</sup>

My wife, Mary, and I have someone we love dearly who has struggled for much of her life with certain aspects of the Church. She loves the gospel, and she loves the Church but still has questions. She is sealed in the temple, is active in the Church, fulfills her callings, and is a wonderful mother and wife. Through the years she has tried to do those things that she knew to be right and refrain from doing those things that she knew to be wrong. She has kept her covenants and continued to search. At times she has been grateful to hold on to the faith of others.



Not long ago her bishop asked to see her and her husband. He asked them to accept a temple assignment to act as proxies for those who needed temple ordinances. This calling surprised them, but they accepted and began their service in the house of the Lord. Their teenage son had recently participated in family history research and found a family name for whom temple ordinances had not been completed. In time they acted as proxies and did the temple ordinances for this person and his family. As they knelt at the altar and the sealing ordinance was performed, this wonderful, patient woman who has searched for so long had a private spiritual experience by which she came to know that the temple and the ordinances performed therein are true and real. She called her mother and told her of her experience and said that while she still has some questions, she knows that the temple is true, that temple ordinances are true, and that the Church is true. Her mother wept with gratitude for a loving, patient Heavenly Father and for a daughter who patiently continues to search.

Patient covenant keeping brings the blessings of heaven into our lives.<sup>17</sup>

I have found great comfort in the Lord's promise that "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."<sup>18</sup> Without knowing everything, we can know the truth. We

can know that the Book of Mormon is true. In fact, as President Russell M. Nelson taught this afternoon, we can "feel, deep in 'the inmost part' of our hearts [see Alma 13:27], that the Book of Mormon *is* unequivocally the word of God." And we can "feel it so deeply that we would never want to live even one day without it."<sup>19</sup>

We can know that God is our Father, who loves us, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. We can know that membership in His Church is to be cherished and that weekly partaking of the sacrament will help us and our family be safe. We can know that through temple ordinances, families really can be together forever. We can know that the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the blessings of repentance and forgiveness are true and real. We can know that our dear prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is the Lord's prophet and that his counselors and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve are apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators.

All of this I know to be true and bear my witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Moroni 10:5.
2. One such question concerned the availability of the priesthood to all worthy men. This question was resolved by a revelation received by President Spencer W. Kimball,

his counselors, and the members of the Twelve on June 1, 1978. This revelation is Official Declaration 2 in the Doctrine and Covenants.

3. See, for example, Luke 21:15; Romans 8:5; Alma 32:41–43; Ether 12:19; Doctrine and Covenants 21:5; 101:38; 107:30–31.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "The Power of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 87.
5. Moroni 10:4.
6. Thomas S. Monson, "The Power of the Book of Mormon," 87.
7. 2 Nephi 2:14; see also David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 63–65; *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 19–21.
8. See, for example, John 7:17, in which the Lord promised, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." See also Alma 32.
9. See Alma 32:27.
10. See Alma 32:28.
11. See Alma 22:18; Doctrine and Covenants 93:27–28.
12. Alma 22:18.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
14. Thomas S. Monson, "The Power of the Book of Mormon," 87.
15. Mosiah 24:15; see also Mosiah 24:13–14; David A. Bednar, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 87–90.
16. Mosiah 2:36.
17. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 45. In this message, Elder Holland stated, "Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*."
18. Moroni 10:5.
19. Russell M. Nelson, "The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 63.



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Randall K. Bennett



Shayne M. Bowen



Mark A. Bragg



Craig A. Cardon



Yoon Hwan Choi



Kim B. Clark



Weatherford T. Clayton



Carl B. Cook



Lawrence E. Corbridge



Valeri V. Cordin



J. Devin Cornish



Claudio R. M. Costa



Joaquin E. Costa



LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.



Massimo De Ieo



Benjamin De Hoyos



Edward Dube



Kevin R. Durcan



Timothy J. Dyckes



Larry J. Echo Hawk



David F. Evans



Enrique R. Galabella



Bradley D. Foster



Randy D. Funk



Eduardo Gagarret



Robert C. Gay



Carlos A. Godby



Taylor G. Godby



Christoffel Golden



Walter F. Gonzalez



C. Scott Grow



O. Vincent Haleck



Donald L. Halstrom



Kevin S. Hamilton



Allen D. Haynie



Paul V. Johnson



Larry S. Kachler



Von G. Keetch



Jörg Klebingat



Joni L. Koch



Erich W. Kopschke



Hugo E. Martinez



James B. Martino



Richard J. Maynes



Peter F. Meurs



Hugo Montoya



Marcus B. Nash



K. Brett Nattress



S. Gifford Nielsen



Brent H. Nielson



Adrian Ochao



Allan F. Packer



S. Mark Palmer



Adilson de Paula Parrela



Kevin W. Pearson



Anthony D. Perkins



Paul B. Pieper



John C. Pingree Jr.



Rafael E. Pino



Michael T. Ringwood



Gary B. Sahin



Evan A. Schmutz



Gregory A. Schwizer



Joseph W. Stati



Steven E. Snow



Vern P. Stanfill



Brian K. Taylor



Michael John U. Teh



Jose A. Teixeira



Arnulfo Valenzuela



Terence M. Vinson



Taneela B. Wakolo



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By Elder Richard J. Maynes  
Of the Seventy

# Earning the Trust of the Lord and Your Family

*Men who have “integrity of heart” are men to be trusted—because trust is built on integrity.*

**B**rethren, perhaps there is no greater compliment we could receive from the Lord than to know He trusts us to be worthy priesthood holders and great husbands and fathers.

One thing is for certain: earning the Lord’s trust is a blessing that comes through great effort on our part. Trust is a blessing based on obedience to God’s laws. Earning the Lord’s trust comes as a result of being true to the covenants we have made in the waters of baptism and in the holy temple. When we keep our promises to the Lord, His trust in us grows.

I love both ancient and modern-day scriptures that use the phrase “integrity of heart” when describing a righteous person’s character.<sup>1</sup> Integrity or the lack of integrity is a fundamental element of one’s character. Men who have “integrity of heart” are men to be trusted—because trust is built on integrity.

Being a man of integrity simply means your intentions, as well as your actions, are pure and righteous in all aspects of your life, both in public and in private. With each decision we make, we either merit more of God’s

trust or diminish His trust. This principle is perhaps most clearly manifest in our divinely appointed responsibilities as husbands and fathers.

As husbands and fathers, we have received a divine charge from modern-day prophets, seers, and revelators in the document “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” This document teaches us that (1) “fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness,” (2) fathers “are

responsible to provide the necessities of life,” and (3) fathers are responsible to protect their families.<sup>2</sup>

For us to earn God’s trust, we will need to accomplish these three divinely appointed responsibilities to our families in the Lord’s way. As further stated in the family proclamation, the Lord’s way is to fulfill these responsibilities together with our wives “as equal partners.”<sup>3</sup> To me, this means we do not move forward with any significant decision regarding these three responsibilities without total unity with our wives.

The first step in our quest to earn the Lord’s trust is to place our trust in Him. The prophet Nephi exemplified this type of commitment when he prayed: “O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh.”<sup>4</sup> Nephi was fully committed to doing the Lord’s will. In addition to *saying* he would “do the things which the Lord hath commanded,” Nephi was unwavering in his commitment to *accomplishing* his assignments, as illustrated in this statement: “As the Lord liveth, and





to me that both of them independently considered the blessing of peace in the home to be a direct consequence of having a husband they could trust. As illustrated by my daughters' examples, the principle of trust plays an extremely important role in the development of a Christ-centered home.

I was also able to enjoy that same Christ-centered culture growing up in a home where my father honored his priesthood and gained the trust of the entire family due to "the integrity of his heart."<sup>7</sup> Let me share with you an experience from my youth that illustrates the lasting positive impact that a father who understands and lives the principle of trust built on integrity can have on his family.

When I was very young, my father founded a company that specialized in factory automation. This business engineered, fabricated, and installed automated production lines worldwide.

When I was in middle school, my father wanted me to learn how to work. He also wanted me to learn the business from the ground up. My first job included maintaining the grounds

as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us."<sup>5</sup>

Because Nephi first trusted in God, God put great trust in Nephi. The Lord blessed him with great outpourings of the Spirit that blessed his life, the lives of his family, and the lives of his people. Because Nephi presided in love and righteousness and provided for and protected his family and people, he records, "We lived after the manner of happiness."<sup>6</sup>

In order to represent a woman's perspective on this subject, I asked my two married daughters to help me. I asked if they would provide a sentence or two on how they viewed the importance of trust as it affects their marriage and family life. Here are the thoughts of Lara Harris and Christina Hansen.

First, Lara: "One of the most important things to me is knowing that as my husband goes about his day, he is making choices that show respect and love toward me. When we can trust each other in this way, it brings peace to our home, where we can enjoy raising our family together."

Now Christina's thoughts: "Having trust in someone is similar to having faith in someone. Without that trust and faith, there's fear and doubt. For me, one of the greatest blessings that come from being able to fully trust my husband is peace—peace of mind knowing that he actually does what he says he will do. Trust brings peace, love, and an environment where that love can grow."

Lara and Christina never saw what the other had written. It is so interesting



and painting areas of the facility not visible to the general public.

When I entered high school, I was promoted to work on the factory floor. I started to learn how to read blueprints and run heavy steel fabrication machinery. After high school graduation, I attended university and then entered the mission field. Returning home from my mission, I went straight back to work. I needed to earn money for the next year's school expenses.

One day soon after my mission, I was working in the factory when my father called me into his office and asked if I would like to go with him on a business trip to Los Angeles. This was the first time my father invited me to accompany him on a business trip. He was actually letting me go out in public to help represent the company.

Before we left on the trip, he prepared me with a few details about this potential new client. First, the client was a multinational corporation. Second, they were upgrading their production lines worldwide with the latest in automation technology. Third, our company had never previously supplied them with engineering services or technology. And finally, their top corporate officer in charge of purchasing had called this meeting to review our bid on a new project. This meeting represented a new and potentially important opportunity for our company.

After arriving in Los Angeles, my father and I went to the executive's hotel for the meeting. The first order of business was to discuss and analyze the engineering design specifications of the project. The next discussion item concerned operational details, including logistics and delivery dates. The concluding agenda item focused on

pricing, terms, and conditions. This is where things got interesting.

This corporate officer explained to us that our price proposal was the lowest of those who had submitted bids on the project. He then, curiously, told us the price of the second-lowest bid. He then asked us if we would be willing to take our proposal back and resubmit it. He stated that our new price should come in just below the next highest bid. He then explained that we would split the newly added dollars 50–50 with him. He rationalized this by saying that everyone would win. Our company would win because we would be making considerably more money than our original bid provided. His company would win because they would still be doing business with the lowest bidder. And, of course, he would win by taking his cut because he put this great deal together.

He then gave us a post office box number where we could send the money he requested. After all of this, he looked at my father and asked, "So, do we have a deal?" Much to my surprise, my father stood up, shook his hand, and told him we would get back to him.

After leaving the meeting, we got into the rental car, and my father turned to me and asked, "Well, what do you think we should do?"

I responded by saying I didn't think we should accept this offer.

My father then asked, "Don't you think we have a responsibility to all of our employees to maintain a good backlog of work?"

While I was contemplating his question and before I could answer, he answered his own question. He said, "Listen, Rick, once you take a bribe or compromise your integrity, it is very difficult to ever get it back. Don't ever do it, not even once."



The fact that I'm sharing this experience means that I have never forgotten what my father taught me on that first business trip with him. I share this experience to illustrate the lasting influence we have as fathers. You can imagine the trust I had in my father due to the integrity of his heart. He lived these same principles in his private life with my mother, his children, and all with whom he associated.

Brethren, it is my prayer this evening that we might all first place our trust in the Lord, as Nephi exemplified, and then, through the integrity of our hearts, earn the trust of the Lord, as well as the trust of our wives and children. As we understand and apply this sacred principle of trust built on integrity, we will be true to our sacred covenants. We will also succeed in presiding in our families with love and righteousness, providing the necessities of life, and protecting our families from the evils of the world. Of these truths I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, 1 Kings 9:4; Doctrine and Covenants 124:15.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 129.
4. 2 Nephi 4:34.
5. 1 Nephi 3:7, 15.
6. 2 Nephi 5:27.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 124:15.



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

# Bearers of Heavenly Light

*As a bearer of God's priesthood and as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are a bearer of light.*

**A**n elderly man was standing in line at the post office to buy stamps at the service counter. A young woman noticed that he walked with difficulty and offered to show him how to buy stamps from a machine to save time. The elderly gentleman said, “Thank you, but I prefer waiting. The machine won’t ask me about my arthritis.”

Sometimes it helps to talk to someone who cares about our troubles.

Pain, sorrow, and illness are experiences we all share—the moments of mishap, misery, and misfortune can add up to a sizable memory on our soul’s own internal hard drive.

When it comes to our physical well-being, we accept aging and illness as part of our mortal journey. We seek the counsel of professionals who understand the physical body. When we suffer from emotional distress or mental illness, we seek the help of experts who treat these kinds of ailments.

Just as we face physical and emotional trials in this mortality, we also face spiritual challenges. Most of us have experienced times in our lives when our testimony burns brightly. We also

may have experienced times when our Heavenly Father seems distant. There are times when we treasure the things of the Spirit with all our hearts. There may also be times when they appear less precious or of diminished significance.

Today I wish to speak of spiritual wellness—how we can find healing from stagnation and walk a path of vibrant spiritual health.



## Spiritual Sickness

Sometimes spiritual illness comes as a result of sin or emotional wounds. Sometimes spiritual breakdowns come so gradually that we can scarcely tell what is happening. Like layers of sedimentary rock, spiritual pain and grief can build over time, weighing upon our spirits until it is almost too heavy to bear. For example, this can happen when our responsibilities at work, home, and church become so overwhelming that we lose sight of the joy of the gospel. We might even feel as though we have no more to give or that living the commandments of God is beyond our strength.

But just because spiritual trials are real does not mean that they are incurable.

We can heal spiritually.

Even the deepest spiritual wounds—yes, even those that may appear to be incurable—can be healed.

My dear friends, the healing power of Jesus Christ is not absent in our day.

The Savior’s healing touch can transform lives in our day just as it did in His. If we will but have faith, He can take our hands, fill our souls with heavenly light and healing, and speak to us the blessed words, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”<sup>1</sup>

## Darkness and Light

Whatever causes our spiritual ailments, they all have one thing in common: the absence of divine light.

Darkness reduces our ability to see clearly. It dims our vision of that which was at one time plain and clear. When we are in darkness, we are more likely to make poor choices because we cannot see dangers in our path. When we are in darkness, we are more likely to lose hope because we cannot see the peace and joy

that await us if we just keep pressing forward.

Light, on the other hand, allows us to see things as they really are. It allows us to discern between truth and error, between the vital and the trivial. When we are in the light, we can make righteous choices based on true principles. When we are in the light, we have “a perfect brightness of hope”<sup>2</sup> because we can see our mortal trials from an eternal perspective.

We will find spiritual healing as we step away from the shadows of the world and into the everlasting Light of Christ.

The more we understand and apply the doctrinal concept of light, the more we can guard against spiritual sicknesses that afflict or trouble us on every side and hand, and the better we can serve as energetic, courageous, caring, and humble bearers of the holy priesthood—true servants and disciples of our beloved and eternal King.

### The Light of the World

Jesus Christ said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in [the] darkness, but shall have the light of life.”<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean?

Simply this: He who humbly follows Jesus Christ will experience and share in His light. And that light will grow until it eventually dispels even the most profound darkness.

It means that there is a power, a strong influence, that emanates from the Savior. It proceeds “forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space.”<sup>4</sup> Because this power enlightens, uplifts, and illuminates our lives, the scriptures often call it light, but it is also referred to as spirit and truth.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “The word of the Lord is truth,



and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

This profound insight—that light is spirit, which is truth, and that this light shines upon every soul who comes into the world—is as important as it is hopeful. The Light of Christ enlightens and saturates the souls of all who hearken to the voice of the Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

The Light of Christ fills the universe. It fills the earth.

And it can fill every heart.

“God is no respecter of persons.”<sup>7</sup>

His light is available to all—great or small, rich or poor, privileged or disadvantaged.

If you open your mind and heart to receive the Light of Christ and humbly follow the Savior, you will receive more light. Line upon line, here a little and there a little, you will gather more light and truth into your souls until darkness has been banished from your life.<sup>8</sup>

God will open your eyes.

God will give you a new heart.

God’s love, light, and truth will cause dormant things to spring to life, and you will be reborn into a newness of life in Christ Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

The Lord has promised, “If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.”<sup>10</sup>

This is the ultimate remedy for spiritual sickness. Darkness vanishes in the presence of light.

### A Metaphor for Spiritual Darkness

However, God will not force us to embrace His light.

If we become comfortable with darkness, it is unlikely that our hearts will change.

For change to take place, we need to actively let the light in.

During my flights as an airline captain across our planet earth, I was always fascinated by the beauty and perfection of God’s creation. I found especially captivating the relationship between the earth and the sun. I consider it a profound object lesson of how darkness and light exist.

As we all know, within every 24 hours night turns to day and day turns to night.

So, then, what is night?

Night is nothing more than a shadow.

Even in the darkest of nights, the sun does not cease to radiate its light. It continues to shine as bright as ever. But half of the earth is in darkness.

The absence of light causes darkness.

When the darkness of night falls, we do not despair and worry that the sun is extinguished. We do not postulate that the sun is not there or is dead. We

understand that we are in a shadow, that the earth will continue to rotate, and that eventually the rays of the sun will reach us once again.

Darkness is not an indication that there is no light. Most often, it simply means we're not in the right place to receive the light. During the recent solar eclipse, many made great efforts to get into the narrow band of a shadow created by the moon in the middle of a bright sunny day.

In a very similar way, spiritual light continually shines upon all of God's creation. Satan will make every effort to create a shadow or get us into a shadow of our own making. He will coerce us to create our own eclipse; he will push us into the darkness of his cavern.

Spiritual darkness can draw a veil of forgetfulness around even those who once walked in the light and rejoiced in the Lord. Nevertheless, even in moments of greatest darkness, God hears our humble petitions, as we pray, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."<sup>11</sup>

In the days of Alma there were many who struggled to accept spiritual things, and "because of their unbelief," God's light and truth could not enter their souls "and their hearts were hardened."<sup>12</sup>

#### **We Are Bearers of Light**

Brethren, it is up to us to be in the right place to see the divine light and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even when night has fallen and the world seems dark, we can choose to walk in Christ's light, keep His commandments, and courageously testify of His reality and His greatness.

As a bearer of God's priesthood and as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are a bearer of light. Keep doing the things that will nurture His divine light.



"Hold up your light"<sup>13</sup> and "let [it] shine before men"—not so that they will see and admire you, but "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."<sup>14</sup>

My dear brothers, you are instruments in the hands of the Lord with the purpose of bringing light and healing to the souls of Heavenly Father's children. Perhaps you do not feel qualified to heal those who are spiritually ill—certainly not any more than a post office employee is qualified to help with arthritis. Maybe you face spiritual challenges of your own. Nevertheless, the Lord has called you. He has given you authority and responsibility to reach out to those in need. He has endowed you with His sacred priesthood power to bring light into the darkness and uplift and bless God's children. God has restored His Church and His precious gospel, "which healeth the wounded soul."<sup>15</sup> He has prepared the path to spiritual wellness, to find healing from stagnation and move toward vibrant spiritual health.

Every time you turn your hearts to God in humble prayer, you experience

His light. Every time you seek His word and will in the scriptures, the light grows in brightness. Every time you notice someone in need and sacrifice your own comfort to reach out in love, the light expands and swells. Every time you reject temptation and choose purity, every time you seek or extend forgiveness, every time you courageously testify of truth, the light chases away darkness and attracts others who are also seeking light and truth.

Think about your own personal experiences, moments of service to God and fellowmen when divine light has shined in your life—in the holy temple, at the sacrament table, in a quiet moment of prayerful pondering, in your family gatherings, or during an act of priesthood service. Share those moments with family, friends, and especially with our youth, who are seeking light. They need to hear from you that with this light come hope and healing, even in a world full of darkness.

Christ's light brings hope, happiness, and healing of any spiritual wound or

ailment.<sup>16</sup> Those who experience this refining influence become instruments in the hands of the Light of the World to give light to others.<sup>17</sup> They will feel what King Lamoni felt: “This light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and . . . the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul.”<sup>18</sup>

My dear brethren, my dear friends, it is our quest to seek the Lord until His light of everlasting life burns brightly within us and our testimony becomes confident and strong even in the midst of darkness.

It is my prayer and blessing that you will succeed in fulfilling your destiny as priesthood holders of Almighty God and always be joyful bearers of His heavenly light. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Master, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 5:8.
2. 2 Nephi 31:20.
3. John 8:12.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 88:12; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:6–7.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 84:45.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
7. Acts 10:34.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 88:40 teaches that “light cleaveth unto light.” In other words, the more light, truth, wisdom, and virtue we receive, the more we will attract into our lives. “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (Doctrine and Covenants 50:24).
9. This is one of the promises of baptism—that as we bury our mortal, carnal lives, we emerge from the waters of baptism alive in Christ. We emerge as new creatures who walk in a newness of life (see Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:67; see also Matthew 6:22.
11. Mark 9:24.
12. Mosiah 26:3.
13. 3 Nephi 18:24.
14. Matthew 5:16.
15. Jacob 2:8.
16. See 1 John 1:7; Alma 7:11–13.
17. See Matthew 5:14.
18. Alma 19:6.



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

## The Lord Leads His Church

*The Lord's leadership of His Church requires great and steady faith from all who serve Him on earth.*

My dear brethren who hold the priesthood of God, tonight I wish to speak about the wonderful way in which the Lord leads His kingdom on earth. You already know the fundamentals. I pray that the Holy Ghost will confirm them to you.

First, Jesus Christ is the head of the Church in all the earth.

Second, He leads His Church today by speaking to men called as prophets, and He does it through revelation.

Third, He gave revelation to His

prophets long ago, still does, and will continue to do so.

Fourth, He gives confirming revelation to those who serve under the leadership of His prophets.

From those fundamentals, we recognize that the Lord's leadership of His Church requires great and steady faith from all who serve Him on earth.

For instance, it takes faith to believe that the resurrected Lord is watching over the daily details of His kingdom. It takes faith to believe that He calls





I saw such confidence when a boy sat with his deacons quorum presidency one Sunday morning. He was their newly called secretary. That young presidency counseled together. They talked about several ways they could fulfill the bishop's request to bring a less-active boy back to church. After prayer and discussion, they appointed the secretary to go to the home of a boy who had never come to a meeting and to invite him.

The secretary didn't know the boy, but he knew that one of the boy's parents was less active and the other was not a member and not friendly. The secretary felt anxiety but not fear. He knew that the prophet of God had asked priesthood holders to bring back the lost sheep. And he had heard the prayer of his presidency. He heard them come to agreement on the name of the boy to be rescued and on his own name.

I was watching when the secretary walked up the street toward the less-active boy's house. He walked slowly as if he were going into great danger. But within a half hour he came back down the road with the boy, smiling happily. I'm not sure he knew it then, but he had gone with faith that he was on the Lord's errand. That faith has stayed with him and has grown over his years as a missionary, a father, a leader of young men, and a bishop.

Let's talk about what such faith means for a bishop. A bishop is sometimes called to serve people who know him well. Ward members know something of his human weaknesses and his spiritual strengths, and they know that others in the ward could have been called—others who seem better educated, more seasoned, more pleasant, or even better looking.

These members have to know the call to serve as a bishop came from the

imperfect people into positions of trust. It takes faith to believe that He knows the people He calls perfectly, both their capacities and their potential, and so makes no mistakes in His calls.

That may bring a smile or a shake of the head to some in this audience—both those who think their own call to serve might have been a mistake as well as those who picture some they know who seem poorly suited to their place in the Lord's kingdom. My counsel to both groups is to delay such judgments until you can better see what the Lord sees. The judgment you need to make, instead, is that *you* have the capacity to receive revelation and to act on it fearlessly.

It takes faith to do so. It takes even greater faith to believe that the Lord has called imperfect human servants to lead you. My purpose tonight is to build your faith that God directs

you in your service to Him. And even more importantly, my hope is to build your faith that the Lord is inspiring the imperfect persons He has called as your leaders.

You may think, at first, that such faith is not important to the success of the Lord's Church and kingdom. However, you may discover—no matter where you are in the chain of priesthood service, from the Lord's prophet to a new Aaronic Priesthood holder—that faith is essential.

Let's start with what faith means for a teachers or a deacons quorum president. It is important for him to have faith that the Lord called him personally, knowing that teacher's weaknesses and strengths. He has to have faith that the man who issued the call received revelation by the Spirit of God. His counselors and members of his quorum need the same faith to follow him with fearless confidence.

Lord, by revelation. Without their faith, the bishop, who was called of God, will find it harder to get the revelation he needs to help them. He will not succeed without the faith of the members to sustain him.

Happily, the reverse is also true. Think of the Lord's servant King Benjamin, who led his people to repentance. The people's hearts were softened by their faith that he was called of God, despite his human weaknesses, and that his words came from God. You remember what the people said: "Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; . . . we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2).

For a leader to succeed in the Lord's work, the people's trust that he is called of God must override their view of his infirmities and mortal weaknesses. You remember how King Benjamin explained his own leadership role:

"I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man.

"But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind; yet I have been chosen by this people, and consecrated by my father, and was suffered by the hand of the Lord that I should be a ruler and a king over this people; and have been kept and preserved by his matchless power, to serve you with all the might, mind and strength which the Lord hath granted unto me" (Mosiah 2:10–11).

Your leader in the Lord's Church may seem to you weak and human or may appear to you strong and inspired. The fact is that every leader is a mixture of

those traits and more. What helps servants of the Lord who are called to lead us is when we can see them as the Lord did when He called them.

The Lord sees His servants perfectly. He sees their potential and their future. And He knows how their very nature can be changed. He also knows how they can be changed by their experiences with the people they will lead.

You may have had the experience of being made stronger by the people you were called to serve. I was once called as a bishop of young single adults. I am not sure whether the Lord's purposes were more for what changes I could help Him make in them or the changes He knew they would make in me.

To a degree I do not understand, most of those young people in that ward acted as if I was called of God especially for them. They saw my weaknesses but looked past them.

I remember one young man who asked for counsel about his educational choices. He was a freshman at a very good university. A week after I had given the advice, he scheduled an appointment with me.

When he came into the office, he surprised me by asking, "Bishop, could

we pray before we talk? And could we kneel? And may I pray?"

His requests surprised me. But his prayer surprised me even more. It went something like this: "Heavenly Father, You know that Bishop Eyring gave me advice last week, and it didn't work. Please inspire him to know what I am to do now."

Now you might smile at that, but I didn't. He already knew what the Lord wanted him to do. But he honored the office of a bishop in the Lord's Church and perhaps wanted me to have the chance to gain greater confidence to receive revelation in that calling.

It worked. As soon as we stood up and then sat down, the revelation came to me. I told him what I felt the Lord would have him do. He was only 18 years old then, but he was mature in spiritual years.

He already knew he didn't need to go to a bishop on such a problem. But he had learned to sustain the Lord's servant even in his mortal weaknesses. He eventually became a stake president. He carried with him the lesson we learned together: if you have faith that the Lord leads His Church through revelation to those imperfect servants He calls, the





Lord will open the windows of heaven to them, as He will to you.

From that experience, I carried away the lesson that the faith of the people we serve, sometimes more than our own faith, brings us revelation in the Lord's service.

There was another lesson for me. If that boy had judged me for my failure to give him good advice the first time, he never would have come back to ask again. And so, by choosing not to judge me, he received the confirmation he desired.

Yet another lesson from that experience has served me well. As far as I know, he never told anyone in the ward that I had not given good counsel at first. Had he done that, it might have reduced the faith of others in the ward to trust the bishop's inspiration.

I try not to judge servants of the Lord or to speak of their apparent weaknesses. And I try to teach that by example to my children. President James E. Faust shared a credo that I am trying to make my own. I commend it to you:

"We . . . need to support and sustain our local leaders, because they . . . have been 'called and chosen.' Every member of this Church may receive counsel from a bishop or a branch president, a stake or a mission president, and the President of the Church and his associates. None of these brethren asked for his calling. None is perfect. Yet they are the servants of

the Lord, called by Him through those entitled to inspiration. Those called, sustained, and set apart are entitled to our sustaining support.

" . . . Disrespect for ecclesiastical leaders has caused many to suffer spiritual weakening and downfall. We should look past any perceived imperfections, warts, or spots of the men called to preside over us, and uphold the office which they hold" ("Called and Chosen," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 54–55).

That counsel blesses servants of God under all conditions.

In the early days of the Lord's Church, leaders close to the Prophet Joseph Smith began to speak of his faults. Even with all they had seen and knew of his standing with the Lord, their spirit of criticism and jealousy spread like a plague. One of the Twelve set for us all the standard of faith and loyalty we must have if we are to serve in the Lord's kingdom.

Here is the report: "Several elders called a meeting in the temple for all those who considered Joseph Smith to be a fallen Prophet. They intended to appoint David Whitmer as the new Church leader. . . . After listening to the arguments against the Prophet, Brigham [Young] arose and testified, 'Joseph was a Prophet, and I knew it, and that they might rail and slander him as much as they pleased; they could not destroy the appointment of

the Prophet of God, they could only destroy their own authority, cut the thread that bound them to the Prophet and to God, and sink themselves to hell'" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times Student Manual* [Church Educational System manual, 2003], 2nd ed., 174; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 79).

There is a thread that binds us to the Lord in our service. It runs from wherever we are called to serve in the kingdom, up through those called to preside over us in the priesthood, and to the prophet, who is bound to the Lord. It takes faith and humility to serve in the place to which we are called, to trust that the Lord called us and those who preside over us, and to sustain them with full faith.

There will be times, as there were in the days of Kirtland, when we will need the faith and the integrity of a Brigham Young to stand in the place the Lord has called us to, loyal to His prophet and to the leaders He has put in place.

I bear you my solemn and yet joyful witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the helm. He leads His Church and His servants. I bear witness that Thomas S. Monson is the only man who holds and exercises all the keys of the holy priesthood on earth at this time. And I pray blessings on all the humble servants who serve so willingly and well in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, which He leads personally. I testify that Joseph Smith saw God the Father and Jesus Christ. They spoke to him. The keys of the priesthood were restored for the blessing of all of Heavenly Father's children. It is our mission and our trust to serve in our place in the Lord's cause. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Jean B. Bingham  
Relief Society General President

# That Your Joy Might Be Full

*Jesus Christ is the source of all healing, peace, and eternal progress.*

Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you. And that's what I would like to talk with you about this morning—having a fulness of joy.

A recent news headline reads, “Disasters rock the nation [and] world.”<sup>1</sup> From hurricanes and floods to heat waves and droughts, from wildfires and earthquakes to wars and devastating diseases, it seems “the whole earth [is] in commotion.”<sup>2</sup>

Millions of people have been displaced, and countless lives have been disrupted by these challenges. Contention in families and communities as well as inner struggles with fear, doubt, and unfulfilled expectations also leave us in turmoil. It can be difficult to feel the joy that Lehi taught is the purpose of life.<sup>3</sup> We have all asked at times: “Where can I turn for peace? Where is my solace . . . ?”<sup>4</sup> We wonder, how do I find joy despite the difficulties of mortal life?

The answer may seem too simple, but it has proven true from the days of Adam. Lasting joy is found in focusing on our Savior, Jesus Christ, and living the gospel as demonstrated and taught by Him. The more we *learn about*, *have faith in*, and *emulate* Jesus Christ,

the more we come to understand that He is the source of all healing, peace, and eternal progress. He invites each of us to come unto Him,<sup>5</sup> an invitation that President Henry B. Eyring has characterized as “the most important invitation anyone could accept.”<sup>6</sup>

## Learn of Jesus Christ

How do we come unto Him? Last April, President Russell M. Nelson and

Elder M. Russell Ballard encouraged us to study “The Living Christ”<sup>7</sup> as part of learning about the Savior. Many have accepted the challenge and been blessed. Not long ago a dear friend gave each of her adult children copies of the document with gospel pictures to illustrate each phrase. She encouraged her children to help her grandchildren understand and memorize it. Sometime later my friend shared a video of her six-year-old granddaughter, Laynie, reciting her memorized version with enthusiasm and poise. I realized that if a six-year-old could do it, so can I!

As I have studied the life and teachings of Jesus Christ with more focus and committed “The Living Christ” to memory, my gratitude and love for our Savior have increased. Each sentence of that inspired document contains a sermon and has enhanced my understanding of His divine roles and earthly mission. What I have learned and felt through this period of study and reflection confirms that Jesus truly “is the light, the life, and the hope of the world.”<sup>8</sup> Ancient



scripture and latter-day prophets' words written or spoken in praise of Him bear witness that "His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>9</sup>

#### Have Faith in Jesus Christ

As you study Christ's life and teachings in a myriad of ways, your faith in Him will increase. You will come to know that He loves you individually and understands you perfectly. In His 33 years of mortality, He suffered rejection; persecution; bodily hunger, thirst, and fatigue;<sup>10</sup> loneliness; verbal and physical abuse; and finally, an excruciating death at the hands of sinful men.<sup>11</sup> In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross of Calvary, He felt all of *our* pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, and infirmities.<sup>12</sup>

No matter what we have suffered, He is the source of *healing*. Those who have experienced any manner of abuse, devastating loss, chronic illness or disabling affliction, untrue accusations, vicious persecution, or spiritual damage from sin or misunderstandings can all be made whole by the Redeemer of the world. However, He will not enter without invitation. We must come unto Him and allow Him to work His miracles.

One beautiful spring day I left the door open to enjoy the fresh air. A small bird flew in the open door and then realized this was not where it wanted to be. It flew desperately around the room, repeatedly flying into the window glass in an attempt to escape. I tried to gently guide it toward the open door, but it was frightened and kept darting away. It finally landed on top of the window drapes in bewildered exhaustion. I took a broom and slowly reached the bristle end up to where the bird nervously perched.

As I held the head of the broom next to its feet, the bird tentatively stepped onto the bristles. Slowly, very slowly, I walked to the open door, holding the broom as steady as I could. As soon as we reached the open door, the bird swiftly flew to freedom.

Like that bird, sometimes we are afraid to trust because we don't understand God's absolute love and desire to help us. But when we study Heavenly Father's plan and Jesus Christ's mission, we understand that Their only objective is our eternal happiness and progress.<sup>13</sup> They delight to help us when we ask, seek, and knock.<sup>14</sup> When we exercise faith and humbly open ourselves to Their answers, we become free from the constraints of our misunderstandings and assumptions, and we can be shown the way forward.

Jesus Christ is also the source of *peace*. He invites us to "lean on [His] ample arm"<sup>15</sup> and promises the "peace . . . which passeth all understanding,"<sup>16</sup> a feeling that comes when His Spirit "speak[s] peace to our

souls"<sup>17</sup> no matter what challenges surround us. Whether they are personal struggles, family troubles, or community crises, peace will come as we trust that God's Only Begotten Son has power to soothe our aching souls.

Snježana Podvinski, one of a small number of Saints in Karlovac, Croatia, leaned on the Savior when her husband and both of her parents died within a six-month period last year. Grief-stricken, but having a testimony that families are forever, she used all of her savings to travel to the temple, where she was sealed to her husband and parents. She shared that those days in the temple were a highlight in her life. Because of her firm testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, she has felt peace and experienced healing that have also been a strength to those around her.

Faith in Jesus Christ brings even more gifts than healing and peace. As President Henry B. Eyring shared: "I have been thankful for the many ways the Lord has visited me with the Comforter when I needed peace. Yet our Father in Heaven is concerned not just about our comfort but even more about our upward progress."<sup>18</sup>

Because of Jesus Christ's Atonement, which includes the gifts of redemption and resurrection, we are able to repent, change, and *progress eternally*. Because of the power He gives us as we are obedient, we are able to become more than we ever could on our own. We may not understand completely how, but each of us who has felt faith in Christ increase has also received a greater understanding of our divine identity and purpose, leading us to make choices that are consistent with that knowledge.

Despite a world that will try to knock us down to the level of "mere animals,"<sup>19</sup> knowing that God is our Father assures us that we have divine





potential and royal promise. Despite a world that tells us this life is a dead end, knowing that God's Only Begotten Son has made it possible for us to be redeemed and resurrected gives us hope for eternal progress.

#### Emulate Jesus Christ

As we learn more about Jesus Christ, we develop greater faith in Him and we naturally want to follow His example. Keeping His commandments becomes our greatest desire. Our hearts yearn to relieve others' suffering, as He did, and we want them to experience the peace and happiness we have found.

Why is trying to do as He did so powerful? Because when we put our faith into action, the Holy Ghost bears witness of eternal truth.<sup>20</sup> Jesus instructs His disciples to keep His commandments because He knows that as we follow His example, we will begin to experience joy, and as we continue on His path, we will come to a fulness of joy. He explained, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."<sup>21</sup>

Are our testimonies built on the bedrock foundation of Jesus Christ and His gospel? When the storms of life press upon us, do we frantically look for a

how-to book or an internet post for help? Taking the time to build and strengthen our knowledge and testimony of Jesus Christ will yield rich dividends in times of trial and adversity. Daily reading of scriptures and pondering the words of living prophets, engaging in meaningful personal prayer, mindfully partaking of the sacrament each week, giving service as the Savior would—each of these simple activities becomes a building block for a joyful life.

What brings you joy? The sight of your loved ones at the end of a long day? The satisfaction of a job done well? The light in someone's eyes when you share their burden? The words of a hymn that reaches deep into your heart? The handclasp of a close friend? Take a private moment to reflect on your blessings, and then find ways to share them. As you reach out to serve and lift your brothers and sisters within your neighborhood or throughout this world that is in so much commotion, you will feel greater peace and healing and even progress.

Come unto Him. I testify that as you center your life on Jesus Christ, you will find joy in your circumstances, whatever they may be. Indeed, "He, only One,"<sup>22</sup> is the answer. Make time and take time to come to know Jesus Christ

through studying diligently, developing greater faith in Him, and striving to become ever more like Him. As we do so, we too will be moved to say, with little Laynie, "God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son."<sup>23</sup> In the blessed and sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Tamara Lush and Jay Reeves, "Disasters Rock the Nation, World," *Deseret News*, Sept. 10, 2017, A1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 45:26.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
4. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, no. 129.
5. See 3 Nephi 9:14, 22.
6. Henry B. Eyring, "Come unto Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, Mar. 2008, 49.
7. See "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.
8. "The Living Christ," 3.
9. "The Living Christ," 3.
10. See Mosiah 3:7.
11. See Luke 24:7.
12. See Alma 7:11–12.
13. See Moses 1:39.
14. See Matthew 7:7.
15. "Lean on My Ample Arm," *Hymns*, no. 120.
16. Philippians 4:7.
17. Alma 58:11.
18. Henry B. Eyring, "My Peace I Leave with You," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 17.
19. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
20. See John 7:17.
21. John 15:11.
22. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" no. 129.
23. "The Living Christ," 3.



By Elder Donald L. Hallstrom  
Of the Seventy

# Has the Day of Miracles Ceased?

*Our supreme focus should be on the spiritual miracles that are available to all of God's children.*

A year ago, on assignment in the state of California, I went with a stake president to visit with Clark and Holly Fales and their family in their home. I was told they recently had experienced a miracle. Upon our arrival, Clark struggled to stand and greet us as he was wearing a back brace, a neck brace, and braces on his arms.

Just over two months prior, Clark, his son Ty, and about 30 other young men and leaders set out on a stake high-adventure activity, hiking to the 14,180-foot (4,322 m) summit of Mount Shasta, one of the highest peaks in California. On the second day of the arduous hike, most of the climbers reached the summit—a thrilling accomplishment made possible because of months of preparation.

One of the first people to the top that day was Clark. After a brief rest near the edge of the summit, he stood and began to walk. As he did, he tripped and fell backward over the edge of a cliff, suffering a free fall of about 40 feet (12 m) and then an out-of-control tumble down the icy slope for another 300 feet (91 m).

Remarkably, Clark survived, but he was severely injured and unable to move.

The miracles Clark experienced during this traumatic event were just beginning. Some of the first to reach him “happened” to be a group of hikers that included mountain rescue guides and emergency medical professionals. They immediately treated Clark for shock and provided gear to keep him warm. This group also “happened” to

be testing a new communication device and sent an emergency request for help from an area where cell phones could not get a signal. A small helicopter was immediately dispatched to Mount Shasta from an hour away. After two dangerous but unsuccessful attempts to land at an altitude that pushed the limits of the aircraft, and struggling with treacherous wind conditions, the pilot began a third and final try. As the helicopter approached from a different angle, the winds “happened” to change and the aircraft landed just long enough for the group to quickly and painfully squeeze Clark into the small compartment behind the pilot's seat.

When Clark was evaluated at a trauma center, tests revealed that he had sustained multiple fractures in his neck, back, ribs, and wrists; a punctured lung; and a multitude of cuts and abrasions. A renowned neurotrauma surgeon “happened” to be on duty that day; he is at this hospital only a few times a year. This doctor later stated that he had never seen anyone sustain so much damage to the spinal cord



and carotid arteries and live. Clark was not only expected to live but to return to full function. Describing himself as agnostic, the surgeon said Clark's case went against all his scientific learning about neurological injuries and could only be described as a miracle.

As Clark and Holly finished relating this intense account, I found it difficult to speak. It was not simply because of the obvious miracles, but because of a greater one. I had a profound impression—a spiritual witness—that Holly and each of the five beautiful children who sat in the living room around their parents have such faith that they could have accepted whatever the outcome might have been that day and they still would have spiritually prospered. Clark and Holly and their two oldest children, Ty and Porter, are with us today in the Conference Center.

In pondering the experience of the Fales family, I have thought much about the circumstances of so many others. What about the innumerable faith-filled, priesthood-blessing-receiving, unendingly-prayed-for, covenant-keeping, full-of-hope Latter-day Saints whose miracle never comes? At least in the way they understand a miracle. At least in the way that others appear to receive miracles.

What about those who suffer from profound afflictions—physically, mentally, emotionally—for years or for decades or for their entire mortal life? What about those who die so very young?

Just two months ago, two temple-recommend-holding married couples, with three full-time missionary children and five other children between them, took off in a small airplane for a short flight. I am confident they prayed for safety before the flight and prayed fervently when their aircraft



encountered serious mechanical problems before crashing. None survived. What about them?

Do good people and their loved ones have reason to ask the question posed by Mormon: “Has the day of miracles ceased?”<sup>1</sup>

My limited knowledge cannot explain why sometimes there is divine intervention and other times there is not. But perhaps we lack an understanding of what constitutes a miracle.

Often we describe a miracle as being healed without a full explanation by medical science or as avoiding catastrophic danger by heeding a clear prompting. However, defining a *miracle* as “a beneficial event brought about through divine power that mortals do not understand”<sup>2</sup> gives an expanded perspective into matters more eternal in nature. This definition also allows us to contemplate the vital role of faith in the receipt of a miracle.

Moroni taught, “Neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith.”<sup>3</sup> Ammon proclaimed, “God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles.”<sup>4</sup> The Lord revealed to Joseph

Smith, “For I am God, . . . and I will show miracles . . . unto all those who believe on my name.”<sup>5</sup>

King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worship the golden image he set up as a god, threatening, “If ye worship not, ye shall be cast . . . into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Then he taunted them with “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”<sup>6</sup>

These three devout disciples said: “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. . . . But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.”<sup>7</sup>

They possessed full confidence that God could save them, “but if not,” they had complete faith in His plan.

Similarly, Elder David A. Bednar once asked a young man who had requested a priesthood blessing, “If it is the will of our Heavenly Father that you are transferred by death in your youth to the spirit world to continue your ministry, do you have the faith to submit to His will and not be healed?”<sup>8</sup> Do *we* have the faith “not [to] be

healed” from our earthly afflictions so we might be healed eternally?

A critical question to ponder is “Where do we place our faith?” Is our faith focused on simply wanting to be relieved of pain and suffering, or is it firmly centered on God the Father and His holy plan and in Jesus the Christ and His Atonement? Faith in the Father and the Son allows us to understand and accept Their will as we prepare for eternity.

Today I testify of miracles. Being a child of God is a miracle.<sup>9</sup> Receiving a body in His image and likeness is a miracle.<sup>10</sup> The gift of a Savior is a miracle.<sup>11</sup> The Atonement of Jesus Christ is a miracle.<sup>12</sup> The potential for eternal life is a miracle.<sup>13</sup>

While it is good to pray for and work for physical protection and healing during our mortal existence, our supreme focus should be on the spiritual miracles that are available to all of God’s children. No matter our ethnicity, no matter our nationality, no matter what we have done if we repent, no matter what may have been done to us—all of us have equal access to these miracles. We are living a miracle, and further miracles lie ahead. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moroni 7:35.
2. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992), “Miracles,” 2:908.
3. Ether 12:18.
4. Mosiah 8:18.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 35:8.
6. Daniel 3:15.
7. Daniel 3:17–18.
8. David A. Bednar, “Accepting the Lord’s Will and Timing,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 31–32; *Liahona*, Aug. 2016, 19–20.
9. See Psalm 82:6; Acts 17:29.
10. See Abraham 4:26.
11. See Isaiah 9:6.
12. See Matthew 20:28; Alma 7:11–13; Doctrine and Covenants 76:69.
13. See John 10:28; Moroni 7:41; Doctrine and Covenants 45:8.



By Elder David A. Bednar

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Exceeding Great and Precious Promises

*Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness includes the doctrine, the ordinances, the covenants, and the exceeding great and precious promises whereby we can become partakers of the divine nature.*

One of the great challenges each of us faces every day is to not allow the concerns of this world to so dominate our time and energy that we neglect the eternal things that matter most.<sup>1</sup> We can be too easily diverted from remembering and focusing upon essential spiritual priorities because of our many responsibilities and busy schedules. Sometimes we try to run so fast that we may forget where we are going and why we are running.



The Apostle Peter reminds us that for disciples of Jesus Christ, “his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto *life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

“Whereby are given unto us *exceeding great and precious promises*: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”<sup>2</sup>

My message emphasizes the importance of the exceeding great and precious promises described by Peter as true reminders of where we are going in our mortal journey and why. I also will discuss the respective roles of the Sabbath day, the holy temple, and our homes in helping us to remember these important spiritual promises.

I earnestly pray that the Holy Ghost will instruct each of us as we consider together these important truths.

#### Our Divine Identity

Our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness includes the doctrine, the ordinances, the covenants, and the

exceeding great and precious promises whereby we can become partakers of the divine nature. His plan defines our eternal identity and the pathway we must follow to learn, change, grow, and ultimately dwell with Him forever.

As explained in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”:

“All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. . . .

“In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

God promises His children that if they follow the precepts of His plan and the example of His Beloved Son, keep the commandments, and endure in faith to the end, then by virtue of the Savior’s Redemption, they “shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>4</sup> Eternal life is the ultimate exceeding great and precious promise.

### Spiritual Rebirth

We comprehend more fully the exceeding great and precious promises and begin to partake of the divine nature by responding affirmatively to the call from the Lord to glory and virtue. As described by Peter, this call is fulfilled by striving to escape the corruption that is in the world.

As we press forward submissively with faith in the Savior, then because of His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, “a mighty change [takes place] in us, or in our hearts, that



we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>5</sup> We are “born again; yea, born of God, changed from [our] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God.”<sup>6</sup> “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”<sup>7</sup>

Such a comprehensive change in our nature typically does not occur quickly or all at once. Like the Savior, we also receive “not of the fulness at the first, but [receive] grace for grace.”<sup>8</sup> “For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom.”<sup>9</sup>

Priesthood ordinances and sacred covenants are essential in this ongoing process of spiritual rebirth; they also are the means God has appointed whereby we receive His exceeding great and precious promises. Ordinances that are received worthily and remembered continually open the heavenly channels through which the power of godliness can flow into our lives. Covenants that are honored steadfastly and remembered always provide purpose and the assurance of blessings in both mortality and for eternity.

For example, God promises us, according to our faithfulness, the

constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost,<sup>10</sup> that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can receive and always retain a remission of our sins,<sup>11</sup> that we can receive peace in this world,<sup>12</sup> that the Savior has broken the bands of death and was victorious over the grave,<sup>13</sup> and that families can be together for all eternity.

Understandably, all of the exceeding great and precious promises Heavenly Father offers to His children cannot be counted or described comprehensively. However, even the partial list of promised blessings I just presented should cause each of us to “stand all amazed”<sup>14</sup> and “fall down and worship the Father”<sup>15</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ.

### Remembering the Promises

President Lorenzo Snow warned, “We are too apt to forget the great object of life, the motive of our Heavenly Father in sending us here to put on mortality, as well as the holy calling with which we have been called; and hence, instead of rising above the little transitory things . . . , we too often allow ourselves to come down to the level of the world without availing ourselves of the divine help which God has instituted, which alone can enable us to overcome [those transitory things].”<sup>16</sup>

The Sabbath day and the holy temple are two specific sources of



divine help instituted by God to assist us in rising above the level and corruption of the world. We initially may think that the overarching purposes of keeping the Sabbath day holy and attending the temple are related but distinctive. I believe, however, that those two purposes are precisely the same and work together to strengthen us spiritually as individuals and in our homes.

#### *The Sabbath*

After God created all things, He rested on the seventh day and commanded that one day each week be a time of rest to help people remember Him.<sup>17</sup> The Sabbath is God's time, a **sacred time** specifically set apart for worshipping Him and for receiving and remembering His great and precious promises.

The Lord has directed in this dispensation:

"That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and

to pay thy devotions unto the Most High."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, on the Sabbath we worship the Father in the name of the Son by participating in ordinances and learning about, receiving, remembering, and renewing covenants. On His holy day, our thoughts, actions, and demeanor are signs we give to God and an indicator of our love for Him.<sup>19</sup>

An additional purpose of the Sabbath is to elevate our vision from the things of the world to the blessings of eternity. Removed during this sacred time from many of the regular routines of our busy lives, we can "look to God and live"<sup>20</sup> by receiving and remembering the great and precious promises whereby we become partakers of the divine nature.

#### *The Holy Temple*

The Lord always has commanded His people to build temples, holy places in which worthy Saints perform sacred gospel ceremonies and ordinances for themselves and for the dead. Temples are the most holy of all places of worship. A temple literally is the

house of the Lord, a **sacred space** specifically set apart for worshipping God and for receiving and remembering His great and precious promises.

The Lord has directed in this dispensation, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."<sup>21</sup> The principal focus of temple worship is participating in ordinances and learning about, receiving, and remembering covenants. We think, act, and dress differently in the temple than in other spaces that we may frequent.

A principal purpose of the temple is to elevate our vision from the things of the world to the blessings of eternity. Removed for a short time from the worldly settings with which we are familiar, we can "look to God and live"<sup>22</sup> by receiving and remembering the great and precious promises whereby we become partakers of the divine nature.

Please note that the Sabbath day and the temple, respectively, are a

*sacred time* and a *sacred space* specifically set apart for worshipping God and for receiving and remembering His exceeding great and precious promises to His children. As instituted by God, the principal purposes of these two divine sources of help are exactly the same: to powerfully and repeatedly focus our attention upon our Heavenly Father, His Only Begotten Son, the Holy Ghost, and the promises associated with the ordinances and covenants of the Savior's restored gospel.

#### Our Homes

Importantly, a home should be the ultimate combination of **time and space** wherein individuals and families remember most effectively God's great and precious promises. Leaving our homes to spend time in Sunday meetings and to enter the sacred space of a temple is vital but insufficient. Only as we bring the spirit and strength derived from those holy activities back with us into our homes can we sustain our focus upon the great purposes of mortal life and overcome the corruption that is in the world. Our Sabbath and temple experiences should be spiritual catalysts that imbue individuals and families and our homes with continual reminders of key lessons learned, with the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, with ongoing and deepening conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, and with "a perfect brightness of hope"<sup>23</sup> in God's eternal promises.

The Sabbath and the temple can help us to establish in our homes "a more excellent way"<sup>24</sup> as we "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."<sup>25</sup> What we do in our homes with His *sacred time* and with what we learn in His *sacred space*

is pivotal to becoming partakers of the divine nature.

#### Promise and Testimony

We easily can be overcome by the routine and mundane matters of mortality. Sleeping, eating, dressing, working, playing, exercising, and many other customary activities are necessary and important. But ultimately, what we become is the result of our knowledge of and willingness to learn from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; it is not merely the sum total of our daily pursuits over the course of a lifetime.

The gospel is so much more than a routine checklist of discrete tasks to be performed; rather, it is a magnificent tapestry of truth "fitly framed"<sup>26</sup> and woven together, designed to help us become like our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, even partakers of the divine nature. Truly, we are blinded "by looking beyond the mark"<sup>27</sup> when this overarching spiritual reality is overshadowed by the cares, concerns, and casualness of the world.

As we are wise and invite the Holy Spirit to be our guide,<sup>28</sup> I promise He will teach us what is true. "He will testify of Christ, [and] light our minds with heaven's view"<sup>29</sup> as we strive to fulfill our eternal destiny and become partakers of the divine nature.

I bear my witness that the exceeding great and precious promises associated with our ordinances and covenants are sure. The Lord has so declared:

"I give unto you directions how you may act before me, that it may turn to you for your salvation.

"I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise."<sup>30</sup>

I witness that our Heavenly Father lives and is the author of the plan of salvation. Jesus Christ is His



Only Begotten Son, our Savior and Redeemer. He lives. And I testify that the Father's plan and promises, the Savior's Atonement, and the companionship of the Holy Ghost make possible "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>31</sup> Of these things I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
2. 2 Peter 1:3–4; emphasis added.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
5. Mosiah 5:2.
6. Mosiah 27:25.
7. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 93:12.
9. 2 Nephi 28:30.
10. See Moroni 2:2; Guide to the Scriptures, "Holy Ghost," [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).
11. See Mosiah 4:10–12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
13. See Mosiah 16:7–8.
14. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 18:40.
16. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 101–2.
17. See Exodus 20:8–11.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–10.
19. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 130.
20. Alma 37:47; see also Alma 37:46.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
22. Alma 37:47.
23. 2 Nephi 31:20.
24. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.
25. Ephesians 1:10.
26. Ephesians 2:21.
27. Jacob 4:14.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
29. "Let the Holy Spirit Guide," *Hymns*, no. 143.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:9–10.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.



**By Bishop W. Christopher Waddell**  
Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

# Turn to the Lord

*We cannot control all that happens to us, but we have absolute control over how we respond to the changes in our lives.*

In the spring of 1998, Carol and I were able to combine a business trip with a family vacation and bring our four children, along with my recently widowed mother-in-law, to Hawaii for a few days.

The night before our flight to Hawaii, our four-month-old son, Jonathon, was diagnosed with a double ear infection, and we were told that he could not travel for at least three to four days. The decision was made for Carol to stay home with Jonathon, while I would make the trip with the rest of the family.

My first indication that this was not the trip I had envisioned occurred soon after our arrival. Walking down a moonlit, palm-lined path, with a view of the ocean in front of us, I turned to comment on the beauty of the island, and in that romantic moment, rather than seeing Carol, I found myself looking into the eyes of my mother-in-law—whom, I may add, I love dearly. It just wasn't what I had anticipated. Nor had Carol expected to spend her vacation at home alone with our sick infant son.

There will be times in our lives when we find ourselves on an unexpected path, facing circumstances much more severe than a disrupted vacation. How do we respond when events, often out of our control, alter

the life we had planned or hoped for?

On June 6, 1944, Hyrum Shumway, a young second lieutenant in the United States Army, went ashore at Omaha Beach as part of the D-day invasion. He made it safely through the landing, but on July 27, as part of the Allied advance, he was severely injured by an exploding anti-tank mine. In an instant, his life and future medical career had been dramatically impacted. Following

*Hyrum Shumway, blinded during World War II, left behind a legacy of faith and trust in the Lord to his posterity.*



multiple surgeries, which helped him recover from most of his serious injuries, Brother Shumway never did regain his sight. How would he respond?

Following three years in a rehabilitation hospital, he returned home to Lovell, Wyoming. He knew that his dream of becoming a medical doctor was no longer possible, but he was determined to move ahead, get married, and support a family.

He eventually found work in Baltimore, Maryland, as a rehab counselor and employment specialist for the blind. In his own rehabilitation process, he had learned that the blind are capable of much more than he had realized, and during his eight years in this position, he placed more blind people into employment than any other counselor in the nation.

Now confident in his ability to provide for a family, Hyrum proposed to his sweetheart by telling her, "If you will read the mail, sort the socks, and drive the car, I can do the rest." They were soon sealed in the Salt Lake Temple and ultimately blessed with eight children.

In 1954 the Shumways returned to Wyoming, where Brother Shumway worked for 32 years as the State



Director of Education for the Deaf and Blind. During that time, he served for seven years as bishop of the Cheyenne First Ward and, later, 17 years as stake patriarch. Following his retirement, Brother and Sister Shumway also served as a senior couple in the London England South Mission.

Hyrum Shumway passed away in March 2011, leaving behind a legacy of faith and trust in the Lord, even under trying conditions, to his large posterity of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>

Hyrum Shumway's life may have been changed by war, but he never doubted his divine nature and eternal potential. Like him, we are spirit sons and daughters of God, and we "accepted His plan by which [we] could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life."<sup>2</sup> No amount of change, trial, or opposition can alter that eternal course—only our choices, as we exercise our agency.

The changes, and resulting challenges, that we encounter in mortality come in a variety of shapes and sizes and impact each of us in unique ways. Like you, I have witnessed friends and family face challenges caused by:

- The death of a loved one.
- A bitter divorce.
- Perhaps never having the opportunity to marry.
- A serious illness or injury.
- And even natural disasters, as we have recently witnessed around the world.

And the list goes on. Although each "change" may be unique to our individual circumstances, there is a common element in the resulting trial



or challenge—hope and peace are always available through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Atonement of Jesus Christ provides the ultimate corrective and healing measures to every wounded body, damaged spirit, and broken heart.

He knows, in a way that no one else can understand, what it is that we need, individually, in order to move forward in the midst of change. Unlike friends and loved ones, the Savior not only sympathizes with us, but He can empathize perfectly because He has been where we are. In addition to paying the price and suffering for our sins, Jesus Christ also walked every path, dealt with every challenge, faced every hurt—physical, emotional, or spiritual—that we will ever encounter in mortality.

President Boyd K. Packer taught: "The mercy and grace of Jesus Christ are not limited to those who commit sins . . . , but they encompass the promise of everlasting peace to all who will accept and follow Him. . . . His mercy is the mighty healer, even to the wounded innocent."<sup>3</sup>

In this mortal experience, we cannot *control* all that happens to us, but we have absolute control over how we *respond* to the changes in our lives. This does not imply that the challenges and trials we face are of no consequence and easily handled or dealt with. It does not imply that we will

be free from pain or heartache. But it does mean that there is cause for hope and that due to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can move forward and find better days—even days full of joy, light, and happiness.

In Mosiah we read the account of Alma, the ex-priest of King Noah, and his people, who, "having been warned of the Lord . . . [,] departed into the wilderness before the armies of king Noah." After eight days, "they came to . . . a very beautiful and pleasant land" where "they pitched their tents, and began to till the ground, and began to build buildings."<sup>4</sup>

Their situation looked promising. They had accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ. They had been baptized as a covenant that they would serve the Lord and keep His commandments. And "they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land."<sup>5</sup>

However, their circumstances would soon change. "An army of the Lamanites was in the borders of the land."<sup>6</sup> Alma and his people were soon placed in bondage, and "so great were their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God." In addition, they were even commanded by their captors to stop praying, otherwise, "whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death."<sup>7</sup> Alma and his people had done nothing to deserve their new condition. How would they respond?



- Regular study of the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets.
- Frequent, sincere prayer and fasting.
- Worthily partaking of the sacrament.
- Regular temple attendance.
- Priesthood blessings.
- Wise counseling through trained professionals.
- And even medication, when properly prescribed and used as authorized.

Rather than blame God, they turned to Him and “did pour out their hearts to him.” In response to their faith and silent prayers, the Lord responded: “Be of good comfort. . . . I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs.” Soon after, “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.”<sup>8</sup> Although not yet delivered from bondage, by turning *to* the Lord, and not *from* the Lord, they were blessed according to their needs and according to the Lord’s wisdom.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught: “Healing blessings come in many ways, each suited to our individual needs, as known to Him who loves us best. Sometimes a ‘healing’ cures our illness or lifts our burden. But sometimes we are ‘healed’ by being given strength or understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.”<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, “so great was their faith and their patience” that Alma and his people were delivered by the Lord, as will we, “and they gave thanks,” “for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God.”<sup>10</sup>

The sad irony is that, too often, those most in need turn away from

their one perfect source of help—our Savior, Jesus Christ. A familiar scriptural account of the brazen serpent teaches us that we have a choice when faced with challenges. After many of the children of Israel were bitten by “fiery flying serpents,”<sup>11</sup> “a type was raised up . . . that whosoever would look . . . might live. [But it was a choice.] And many did look and live.

“ . . . But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished.”<sup>12</sup>

Like the ancient Israelites, we are also invited and encouraged to look to the Savior and live—for His yoke is easy and His burden is light, even when ours may be heavy.

Alma the Younger taught this sacred truth when he said, “I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>13</sup>

In these latter days, the Lord has provided us with numerous resources, our “brazen serpents,” all of which are designed to help us look to Christ and place our trust in Him. Dealing with the challenges of life is not about ignoring reality but rather where we choose to focus and the foundation upon which we choose to build.

These resources include, but are not limited to:

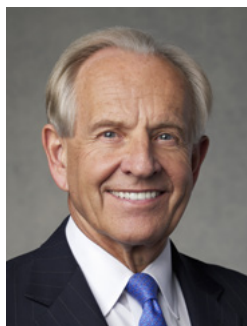
Whatever change in life’s circumstance may come our way, and whatever unexpected path we may have to travel, how we respond is a choice. Turning to the Savior and grasping His outstretched arm is always our best option.

Elder Richard G. Scott taught this eternal truth: “True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. . . . There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord’s time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.”<sup>14</sup>

To these truths I share my witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. History received directly from Joseph Shumway, a descendant of Hyrum Smith Shumway.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. Boyd K. Packer, “The Reason for Our Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 7.
4. Mosiah 23:1–5.
5. Mosiah 23:20.
6. Mosiah 23:25.
7. Mosiah 24:10–11.
8. Mosiah 24:12–15.
9. Dallin H. Oaks, “He Heals the Heavy Laden,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 7–8.
10. Mosiah 24:16, 21, 22.
11. 1 Nephi 17:41.
12. Alma 33:19–20.
13. Alma 36:3.
14. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.



By Elder W. Craig Zwick  
Emeritus Member of the Seventy

# Lord, Wilt Thou Cause That My Eyes May Be Opened

*We must look at others through the eyes of our Savior.*

**T**he *Lion King* is a classic animated film about the African savanna. When the lion king dies while saving his son, the young lion prince is forced into exile while a despot ruler destroys the balance of the savanna. The lion prince reclaims the kingdom through the help of a mentor. His eyes are opened to the necessity of balance in the great circle of life on the savanna. Claiming his rightful place as king, the young lion followed counsel to “look beyond what you see.”<sup>1</sup>

As we learn to become inheritors of all our Father has, the gospel mentors us to look beyond what we see. To look beyond what we see, we must look at others through the eyes of our Savior. The gospel net is filled with people in all their variety. We can’t fully understand the choices and psychological backgrounds of people in our world, Church congregations, and even in our families, because we rarely have the whole picture of who they are. We must look past the easy assumptions and stereotypes and widen the tiny lens of our own experience.

I had my eyes opened to “looking beyond what I could see” while serving as a mission president. A young elder arrived with apprehension in his eyes. As we met in an interview, he said dejectedly, “I want to go home.” I thought to myself, “Well, we can fix this.” I counseled him to work hard and to pray about it for a week and then call me. A week later, almost to the

minute, he called. He still wanted to go home. I again counseled him to pray, to work hard, and to call me in a week. In our next interview, things had not changed. He insisted on going home.

I just wasn’t going to let that happen. I began teaching him about the sacred nature of his call. I encouraged him to “forget [himself] and go to work.”<sup>2</sup> But no matter what formula I offered, his mind did not change. It finally occurred to me that I might not have the whole picture. It was then that I felt a prompting to ask him the question: “Elder, what is hard for you?” What he said pierced my heart: “President, I can’t read.”

The wise counsel which I thought was so important for him to hear was not at all relevant to his needs. What he needed most was for me to look beyond my hasty assessment and allow the Spirit to help me understand what was really on this elder’s mind. He needed me to see him correctly and offer a reason to hope. Instead, I acted like a giant demolition wrecking ball. This valiant elder did learn to read and became a very pure disciple of



Jesus Christ. He opened my eyes to the Lord's words: "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

What a blessing it is when the Spirit of the Lord widens our view. Remember the prophet Elisha, who woke up to find the Syrian army surrounding his city with their horses and chariots? His manservant was frightened and asked Elisha what they were going to do against such odds. Elisha told him not to worry, with the memorable words: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). The manservant had no idea what the prophet was talking about. He could not look beyond what he could see. However, Elisha saw battalions of angels prepared to do battle for the prophet's people. So Elisha prayed to the Lord to open the eyes of the young man, "and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

We often separate ourselves from others by the differences in what we

see. We feel comfortable around those who think, talk, dress, and act like we do and uncomfortable with those who come from different circumstances or backgrounds. In reality, don't we all come from different countries and speak different languages? Don't we all see the world through the enormous limitations of our own life experience? For some see and speak with spiritual eyes, as the prophet Elisha, and some see and communicate with literal sight, as I experienced with my illiterate missionary.

We live in a world that feeds on comparisons, labeling, and criticism. Instead of seeing through the lens of social media, we need to look inward for the godly attributes to which we each lay claim. These godly qualities and longings cannot be posted on Pinterest or Instagram.

To accept and love others does not mean we must embrace their ideas. Obviously, truth mandates our highest allegiance, though it should never be a barrier to kindness. Truly loving others requires the ongoing practice of accepting the best efforts of people

whose life experiences and limitations we may never fully know. Looking beyond what we can see requires conscious focus on the Savior.

On May 28, 2016, 16-year-old Beau Richey and his friend Austin were at a family ranch in Colorado. Beau and Austin climbed into their all-terrain vehicles with great anticipation for a day of adventure. They had not gone far when they encountered precarious conditions, at which point tragedy struck. The vehicle Beau was driving flipped over suddenly, pinning Beau under 400 pounds (180 kg) of steel. When Beau's friend Austin got to him, he saw Beau struggling for his life. With every bit of his strength, he tried to pull the vehicle off his friend. It wouldn't budge. He prayed for Beau and then frantically went for help. Emergency personnel finally arrived, but a few hours later Beau died. He was released from this mortal life.

His heartbroken parents arrived. As they stood in the small hospital with Beau's dearest friend and family members, a police officer entered the room and handed Beau's cell phone to his mother. As she took the phone, an audible alarm sounded. She opened the phone and saw Beau's daily alarm. She read aloud the message her fun-loving, highly adventurous teenage son had set to read every day. It said, "Remember to put Jesus Christ at the center of your life today."

Beau's focus on his Redeemer does not lessen his loved ones' sorrow in his absence. However, it gives great hope and meaning to Beau's life and life choices. It allows his family and friends to look beyond only the grief of his early death to the joyful realities of the next life. What a tender mercy for Beau's parents to see through their son's eyes the thing he most prized.



As members of the Church, we have been gifted personal spiritual alarms that warn us when we are looking with only mortal eyes away from salvation. The sacrament is our weekly reminder to continually focus on Jesus Christ that we might always remember Him and that we might always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77). Yet we sometimes ignore these feelings of reminder and alarm. When we have Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, He will cause that our eyes may be opened to larger possibilities than we alone can comprehend.

I received this really interesting letter about a protective alarm experienced by a faithful sister. She told me that in an effort to help her husband understand how she felt, she began to keep an electronic list on her phone of things he did or said that irritated her. She reasoned that when the time was right, she would have compiled written proof to share with him that would make him want to change his ways. However, one Sunday while partaking of the sacrament and focusing on the Atonement of the Savior, she realized that documenting her negative feelings about her husband was truly driving the Spirit from her and was never going to change him.

A spiritual alarm went off in her heart that said: “Let it go; let it all go. Delete those notes. They are not helpful.” She then wrote, and I quote: “It took me a while to hit ‘select all’ and even longer to hit ‘delete.’ But as I did, all of those negative feelings were lost in space. My heart filled with love—love for my husband and love for the Lord.” Like Saul on the road to Damascus, she had her vision changed. The scales of distortion fell from her eyes.

Our Savior frequently opened eyes of the physically and spiritually blind. Opening our eyes to divine truth,



literally and figuratively, prepares us to be healed of mortal shortsightedness. When we pay attention to spiritual “alarms” that signal a need for course correction or larger eternal perspective, we are receiving the sacramental promise to have His Spirit to be with us. This happened to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple when compelling truths were taught by Jesus Christ, who promised that “the veil” of mortal limitations would be “taken from [their] minds, and the eyes of [their] understanding [would be] opened” (D&C 110:1).

I witness that through the power of Jesus Christ, we become able to look spiritually beyond what we see literally. As we remember Him and have His Spirit with us, our eyes of understanding will be opened. Then the great reality of the divinity within every one of us will be more powerfully impressed upon our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. From *The Lion King* 1½ (2004); outside North America, known as *The Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata*.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 201.



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

# Fear Not to Do Good

*The Lord tells us that when we stand with faith upon His rock, doubt and fear are diminished; the desire to do good increases.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, I pray humbly that the Spirit of the Lord will be with us as I speak today. My heart is full of gratitude to the Lord, whose Church this is, for the inspiration we have felt in fervent prayers, inspired sermons, and angelic singing in this conference.

Last April, President Thomas S. Monson gave a message that stirred hearts across the world, including mine. He spoke of the power of the Book of Mormon. He urged us to study, ponder, and apply its teachings. He promised that if we dedicated time each day to studying and pondering and kept the commandments the Book of Mormon contains, we would have a vital testimony of its truth, and the resultant testimony of the living Christ would see us through to safety in times of trouble. (See “The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 86–87.)

Like many of you, I heard the prophet’s words as the voice of the Lord to me. And, also like many of you, I decided to obey those words. Now, since I was a young boy, I have felt the witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that the Father and the Son appeared and spoke with Joseph Smith, and that

ancient Apostles came to the Prophet Joseph to restore priesthood keys to the Lord’s Church.

With that testimony, I have read the Book of Mormon every day for more than 50 years. So perhaps I could have reasonably thought that President Monson’s words were for someone else. Yet, like many of you, I felt the prophet’s encouragement and his promise invite me to make a greater effort. Many of you have done what I did: prayed with increased intent, pondered scripture

more intently, and tried harder to serve the Lord and others for Him.

The happy result for me, and for many of you, has been what the prophet promised. Those of us who took his inspired counsel to heart have heard the Spirit more distinctly. We have found a greater power to resist temptation and have felt greater faith in a resurrected Jesus Christ, in His gospel, and in His living Church.

In a season of increasing tumult in the world, those increases in testimony have driven out doubt and fear and have brought us feelings of peace. Heeding President Monson’s counsel has had two other wonderful effects on me: First, the Spirit he promised has produced a sense of optimism about what lies ahead, even as the commotion in the world seems to increase. And, second, the Lord has given me—and you—an even greater feeling of His love for those in distress. We have felt an increase in the desire to go to the rescue of others. That desire has been at the heart of President Monson’s ministry and teaching.



The Lord promised love for others and courage to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery when the tasks ahead of them could have seemed overwhelming. The Lord said that needed courage would come from their faith in Him as their rock:

“Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.

“Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.

“Behold, I do not condemn you; go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you.

“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

“Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” (D&C 6:33–37).

The Lord told His leaders of the Restoration, and He tells us, that when we stand with faith upon His rock, doubt and fear are diminished; the desire to do good increases. As we accept President Monson’s invitation to plant in our hearts a testimony of Jesus Christ, we gain the power, the desire, and the courage to go to the rescue of others without concern for our own needs.

I have seen that faith and courage many times when believing Latter-day Saints have faced fearsome trials. For one example, I was in Idaho when the Teton Dam broke on June 5, 1976. A wall of water came down. Thousands fled from their homes. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed. Miraculously, fewer than 15 people were killed.



What I saw there, I have seen whenever Latter-day Saints stand firmly on the rock of a testimony of Jesus Christ. Because they have no doubt He watches over them, they become fearless. They ignore their own trials to go to the relief of others. And they do so out of love for the Lord, asking no recompense.

For example, when the Teton Dam broke, a Latter-day Saint couple was traveling, miles away from their home. As soon as they heard the news on the radio, they hurried back to Rexburg. Rather than going to their own home to see if it was destroyed, they went looking for their bishop. He was in a building that was being used as the recovery center. He was helping to direct the thousands of volunteers

who were arriving in yellow school buses.

The couple walked up to the bishop and said, “We just got back. Bishop, where can we go to help?” He gave them the names of a family. That couple stayed mucking out mud and water in one home after another. They worked from dawn to dark for days. They finally took a break to go see about their own home. It was gone in the flood, leaving nothing to clean up. So they turned around quickly to go back to their bishop. They asked, “Bishop, do you have someone for us to help?”

That miracle of quiet courage and charity—the pure love of Christ—has been repeated over the years and across the world. It happened in the

terrible days of the persecutions and trials at the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Missouri. It happened as Brigham Young led the exodus from Nauvoo and then called Saints to desert places all over the western United States, to help each other create Zion for the Lord.

If you read the journal entries of those pioneers, you see the miracle of faith driving out doubt and fear. And you read of Saints leaving their own interests to help someone else for the Lord, before getting back to their own sheep or to their own unplowed fields.

I saw that same miracle a few short days ago in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas, and Florida, where Latter-day Saints partnered with other churches, local community groups, and national organizations to begin cleanup efforts.

Like my friends in Rexburg, one nonmember couple in Florida focused on helping the community rather than laboring on their own property. When some Latter-day Saint neighbors offered help with the two large trees blocking their driveway, the couple explained that they had been overwhelmed and so had turned to helping others, having faith that the Lord would provide the aid they needed at their own home. The husband then shared that before our Church members arrived with offers of assistance, the couple had been praying. They had received an answer that help would come. It came within hours of that assurance.

I have heard a report that some have started calling the Latter-day Saints who are wearing yellow Helping Hands T-shirts “The Yellow Angels.” One Latter-day Saint took her car in for service, and the man helping her described the “spiritual experience” he had when people in yellow shirts

removed trees from his yard and then, he said, they “sang some song to me about being a child of God.”

Another Florida resident—also not of our faith—related that Latter-day Saints came to her home when she was working in her devastated yard and feeling overwhelmed, overheated, and close to tears. The volunteers created, in her words, “a pure miracle.” They served not only with diligence but also with laughter and smiles, accepting nothing in return.

I saw that diligence and heard that laughter when, late on a Saturday, I visited with a group of Latter-day Saints in Florida. The volunteers stopped their cleanup labor long enough to let me shake some hands. They said that 90 members of their stake in Georgia had created a plan to join in the rescue in Florida just the night before.

They left Georgia at 4:00 in the morning, drove for hours, worked through the day and into the night, and planned to labor again the next day.

They described it to me all with smiles and good humor. The only stress I sensed was that they wanted to stop being thanked so they could get back to work. The stake president had restarted his chain saw and was working on a downed tree and a bishop was moving tree limbs as we got into our vehicle to go to the next rescue team.

Earlier that day, as we pulled away from another site, a man had walked up to the car, taken off his hat, and thanked us for the volunteers. He said, “I’m not a member of your church. I can’t believe what you have done for us. God bless you.” The LDS volunteer standing next to him in his yellow shirt smiled and shrugged his shoulders as if he deserved no praise.

While the volunteers from Georgia had come to help this man who couldn’t

believe it, hundreds of Latter-day Saints from that very devastated part of Florida had gone hundreds of miles south to another place in Florida where they had heard the people were harder hit.

That day I remembered and understood better the prophetic words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 426).

We see such love in the lives of Latter-day Saints everywhere. Each time there is a tragic event anywhere in the world, Latter-day Saints donate and volunteer to the Church’s humanitarian efforts. An appeal is seldom needed. In fact, on some occasions, we have had to ask would-be volunteers to wait to travel to the recovery site until those directing the work are prepared to receive them.

That desire to bless is the fruit of people gaining a testimony of Jesus Christ, His gospel, His restored Church, and His prophet. That is why the Lord’s people doubt not and fear not. That is



why missionaries volunteer for service in every corner of the world. That is why parents pray with their children for others. That is why leaders challenge their youth to take President Monson's request to immerse themselves in the Book of Mormon to heart. The fruit comes not by being urged by leaders but by the youth and members acting on faith. That faith, put into action, which requires selfless sacrifice, brings the change of heart that allows them to feel the love of God.

Our hearts, however, remain changed only as long as we continue to follow the prophet's counsel. If we stop trying after one burst of effort, the change will fade.

Faithful Latter-day Saints have increased their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Book of Mormon as the word of God, and in the restoration of priesthood keys in His true Church. That increased testimony has given us greater courage and concern for others of God's children. But the challenges and the opportunities ahead will require even more.

We cannot foresee the details, but we know the larger picture. We know that in the last days, the world will be in commotion. We know that in the midst of whatever trouble comes, the Lord will lead faithful Latter-day Saints to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And we know that the Lord's true disciples will be worthy and prepared to receive Him when He comes again. We need not fear.

So, as much as we have already built faith and courage in our hearts, the Lord expects more from us—and from the generations after us. They will need to be stronger and braver because they will do even greater and harder things than we have done. And they will face



increasing opposition from the enemy of our souls.

The way to optimism as we go forward was given by the Lord: "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36). President Monson told us how to do that. We are to ponder and apply the Book of Mormon and the words of prophets. Pray always. Be believing. Serve the Lord with all our heart, might, mind, and strength. We are to pray with all the energy of our hearts for the gift of charity, the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47–48). And above all, we are to be consistent and persistent in following prophetic counsel.

When the way is difficult, we can rely on the Lord's promise—the promise President Monson has reminded us of when he has often quoted these words of the Savior: "Whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

I testify that the Lord goes before your face whenever you are on His errand. Sometimes you will be the

angel the Lord sends to bear others up. Sometimes you will be the one surrounded by angels who bear you up. But always you will have His Spirit to be in your heart, as you have been promised in every sacrament service. You have only to keep His commandments.

The best days are ahead for the kingdom of God on the earth. Opposition will strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ, as it has since the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Faith always defeats fear. Standing together produces unity. And your prayers for those in need are heard and answered by a loving God. He neither slumbers nor does He sleep.

I bear my witness that God the Father lives and wants you to come home to Him. This is the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows you; He loves you; He watches over you. He atoned for your sins and mine and the sins of all of Heavenly Father's children. Following Him in your life and in your service to others is the only way to eternal life.

I so testify and leave you my blessing and my love. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

# The Trek Continues!

*A trek back to our Heavenly Father is the most important trek of our lives.*

One hundred seventy years ago, Brigham Young looked across the Salt Lake Valley for the first time and declared, “This is the right place!”<sup>1</sup> He knew the place because the Lord had revealed it to him.

By 1869, more than 70,000 Saints had made a similar trek. Despite their many differences in language, culture, and nationality, they shared a testimony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a desire to build Zion—a place of peace, happiness, and beauty in preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior.

Among those first Saints to arrive in Utah was Jane Manning James—the daughter of a freed slave, a convert to the restored Church, and a most remarkable disciple who faced difficult challenges. Sister James remained a faithful Latter-day Saint until her death in 1908.

She wrote: “I want to say right here, that my faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is as strong today, nay, it is if possible stronger than it was the day I was first baptized. I pay my tithes and offerings, keep the word of wisdom, I go to bed early and rise early, I try in my feeble way to set a good example to all.”<sup>2</sup>

Sister James, like so many other Latter-day Saints, not only built Zion with blood, sweat, and tears but also sought the Lord’s blessings through living gospel principles as best she could while holding on in faith to Jesus Christ—the great healer to all who sincerely seek Him.

The early Saints were not perfect, but they established a foundation upon which we are building families and a society that love and keep covenants, which is highlighted in various news



*Jane Manning James remained a faithful Latter-day Saint despite difficult challenges.*

stories around the world because of our commitment to Jesus Christ and our volunteer efforts to help those nearby and far away.<sup>3</sup>

President Eyring, may I add appreciation to the tens of thousands of yellow-shirt angels serving in Texas, Mexico, and other places to your tribute.

I have a deep conviction that if we lose our ties to those who have gone before us, including our pioneer forefathers and mothers, we will lose a very precious treasure. I have spoken about “Faith in Every Footstep” in the past and will continue in the future because I know that rising generations must have the same kind of faith that the early Saints had in the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored gospel.<sup>4</sup>

My own pioneer forefathers and mothers were among those faithful pioneers who pulled handcarts, rode wagons, and walked to Utah. They, like Sister Jane Manning James, had deep faith in every one of their footsteps as they made their own trek.

Their journals are filled with descriptions of hardships, hunger, and sickness and also testimonies of their faith in God and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

They had few worldly goods but enjoyed an abundance of the blessings from the brotherhood and sisterhood they found in the Church of Jesus Christ. When they could, they lifted the downtrodden and blessed the sick through service to one another and by the priesthood of God.

The sisters in Cache Valley, Utah, ministered to the Saints in the spirit of the Relief Society to “work in unity to help those in need.”<sup>5</sup> My great-grandmother Margaret McNeil Ballard served at the side of her husband, Henry, as he presided as bishop of the Logan Second Ward for 40 years. Margaret was the

ward Relief Society president for 30 of those years. She took into their home the poor, the sick, and the widowed and orphaned, and she even clothed the dead in their clean temple robes.

Although it is appropriate and important to remember the historic 19th-century Mormon pioneer trek, we need to remember that “the trek through life continues!” for each of us as we prove our own “faith in every footstep.”

New converts no longer gather to pioneer settlements in the western United States. Instead, converts gather to their local congregations, where the Saints worship our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. With more than 30,000 congregations established around the world, all are gathered to their own Zion. As the scriptures note, “For this is Zion—the pure in heart.”<sup>6</sup>

As we walk the road of life, we are tested to see if we will “observe to do all things whatsoever [the Lord has] commanded.”<sup>7</sup>

Many of us are on amazing journeys of discovery—leading to personal fulfillment and spiritual enlightenment. Some of us, however, are on a trek that leads to sorrow, sin, anguish, and despair.

In this context, please ask yourself: What is your final destination? Where are your footsteps taking you? And is your journey leading you to that “multiplicity of blessings” the Savior has promised?<sup>8</sup>

A trek back to our Heavenly Father is the most important trek of our lives, and it continues each day, each week, each month, and each year as we increase our faith in Him and in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We must be careful where our footsteps in life take us. We must be watchful and heed the counsel of Jesus to His disciples as He answered these questions: “Tell us, when shall these



things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man [and I add woman] deceive you.”<sup>9</sup>

Today I repeat earlier counsel from Church leaders.

- Brothers and sisters, keep the doctrine of Christ pure and never be deceived by those who tamper with the doctrine. The gospel of the Father and the Son was restored through Joseph Smith, the prophet for this last dispensation.
- Do not listen to those who have not been ordained and/or set apart to their Church calling and are not acknowledged by common consent of the members of the Church.<sup>10</sup>
- Be aware of organizations, groups, or individuals claiming secret answers to doctrinal questions that they say today’s apostles and prophets do not have or understand.
- Do not listen to those who entice

you with get-rich schemes. Our members have lost far too much money, so be careful.

In some places, too many of our people are looking beyond the mark and seeking secret knowledge in expensive and questionable practices to provide healing and support.

An official Church statement, issued one year ago, states: “We urge Church members to be cautious about participating in any group that promises—in exchange for money—miraculous healings or that claims to have special methods for accessing healing power outside of properly ordained priesthood holders.”<sup>11</sup>

The Church *Handbook* counsels: “Members should not use medical or health practices that are ethically or legally questionable. Local leaders should advise members who have health problems to consult with competent professional practitioners who are licensed in the countries where they practice.”<sup>12</sup>



everlasting joy and peace—even eternal life. Let us use our energy, strength, and testimonies in assisting our missionaries to find, teach, and baptize God’s children so they may have the power of the gospel doctrine guiding their daily lives.

We need to embrace God’s children compassionately and eliminate any prejudice, including racism, sexism, and nationalism. Let it be said that we truly believe the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are for every child of God.

I testify that “the trek continues,” and I invite you to stay on the gospel path as you continue pressing forward by reaching out to all of God’s children in love and compassion, that we may unitedly make our hearts pure and our hands clean to receive the “multiplicity of blessings” awaiting all who truly love our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, for which I humbly pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Brothers and sisters, be wise and aware that such practices may be emotionally appealing but may ultimately prove to be spiritually and physically harmful.

For our pioneer ancestors, independence and self-reliance were vital, but their sense of community was just as important. They worked together and helped one another overcome the physical and emotional challenges of their time. For the men, there was the priesthood quorum, and the women were served by the Relief Society. These outcomes have not changed in our day.

The Relief Society and the priesthood quorums provide for the spiritual and temporal well-being of our members.

Stay on the gospel path by having “faith in every footstep” so you can return safely back to the presence of Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is our precious Savior. He is the Redeemer of the world. We must honor His sacred name and not misuse it in any way, always striving to keep His commandments. If we do so, He will bless us and lead us safely home.

I invite everyone within the sound of my voice to welcome and embrace anyone who is making his or her own trek today, no matter where they are in their journey.

Please remember there is no blessing anyone can share greater than the message of the Restoration, which, when received and lived, promises

#### NOTES

1. Brigham Young, as remembered by Wilford Woodruff, in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
2. Jane Manning James autobiography, ca. 1902, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; see also James Goldberg, “The Autobiography of Jane Manning James,” Dec. 11, 2013, [history.lds.org](http://history.lds.org).
3. See, for example, Jill DiSanto, “Penn Research Shows That Mormons Are Generous and Active in Helping Others,” *Penn News*, Apr. 17, 2012.
4. See M. Russell Ballard, “Faith in Every Footstep,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 23–25.
5. “The Purpose of Relief Society,” [lds.org/callings/relief-society/purposes](http://lds.org/callings/relief-society/purposes); see also *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 97:25.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 97:28.
9. Matthew 24:3–4.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 26:2; 28:13; 43:6–7.
11. Church spokesman Eric Hawkins, Sept. 2016.
12. *Handbook 2*, 21.3.6.



**By Tad R. Callister**  
Sunday School General President

# God's Compelling Witness: The Book of Mormon

*The Book of Mormon is God's compelling witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, and the absolute truth of this Church.*

**T**he Book of Mormon is not only the keystone of our religion, but it can also become the keystone of our testimonies so that when trials or unanswered questions confront us, it can hold our testimonies securely in place. This book is the one weight on the scales of truth that exceeds the combined weight of all the critics' arguments. Why? Because if it is true, then Joseph Smith was a prophet and this is the restored Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of any historical or other arguments to the contrary. For this reason, the critics are intent on disproving the Book of Mormon, but the obstacles they face are insurmountable because this book is true.

First, the critics must explain how Joseph Smith, a 23-year-old farm boy with limited education, created a book with hundreds of unique names and places, as well as detailed stories and events. Accordingly, many critics propose that he was a creative genius who relied upon numerous books

and other local resources to create the historical content of the Book of Mormon. But contrary to their assertion, there is not a solitary witness who claims to have seen Joseph with any of these alleged resources before the translation began.

Even if this argument were true, it is woefully insufficient to explain the Book of Mormon's existence. One must also answer the question: how did Joseph read all of these alleged resources, winnow out the irrelevant, keep the intricate facts straight as to who was in what place and when, and then dictate it by perfect memory? For when Joseph Smith translated, he had no notes whatsoever. In fact, his wife Emma recalled: "He had neither manuscript nor book to read from. . . . If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me."<sup>1</sup>

So how did Joseph perform this remarkable feat of dictating a 500-plus-page book without any notes? To do so, he must not only have been a creative genius but also have had a photographic memory of prodigious proportions. But if that is true, why did his critics not call attention to this remarkable talent?

But there is more. These arguments account only for the book's historical content. The real issues still remain: how did Joseph produce a book that





with a heartbeat—messages that live and breathe and inspire. To suggest that Joseph Smith at age 23 possessed the skills necessary to write this monumental work in a single draft in approximately 65 working days is simply counter to the realities of life.

President Russell M. Nelson, an experienced and skilled writer, shared that he had over 40 rewrites of a recent general conference talk. Are we now to believe that Joseph Smith, on his own, dictated the entire Book of Mormon in a single draft with mainly minor grammatical changes made thereafter?

Joseph's wife Emma confirmed the impossibility of such an undertaking: "Joseph Smith [as a young man] could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictat[e] a book like the Book of Mormon."<sup>2</sup>

And finally, even if one accepts all of the foregoing arguments, dubious as they may be, the critics still face another looming obstacle. Joseph claimed that the Book of Mormon was written on golden plates. This claim received unrelenting criticism in his day—for "everyone" knew that ancient histories were written on papyrus or parchment, until years later, when metal plates with ancient writings were discovered. In addition, the critics claimed that the use of cement, as described in the Book of Mormon, was beyond the technical expertise of these early Americans—until cement structures were found in ancient America. How do the critics now account for these and similar unlikely discoveries? Joseph, you see, must also have been a very, very lucky guesser. Somehow, in spite of all the odds against him, against all existing scientific and academic knowledge, he guessed right when all the others were wrong.

radiates with the Spirit, and where did he get such profound doctrine, much of which clarifies or contradicts the Christian beliefs of his time?

For example, the Book of Mormon teaches, contrary to most Christian beliefs, that the Fall of Adam was a positive step forward. It reveals the covenants made at baptism, which are not addressed in the Bible.

In addition, one might ask: where did Joseph get the powerful insight that because of Christ's Atonement, He can not only cleanse us but also perfect us? Where did he get the stunning sermon on faith in Alma 32? Or King Benjamin's sermon on the Savior's Atonement, perhaps the most remarkable sermon on this subject in all scripture? Or the allegory of the olive tree with all its complexity and doctrinal richness? When I read this allegory, I have to map it out to follow its intricacies. Are we now supposed to believe that Joseph Smith just dictated these sermons off the top of his head with no notes whatsoever?

Contrary to such a conclusion, God's fingerprints are all over the Book of Mormon, as evidenced by its majestic doctrinal truths, particularly its masterful sermons on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

If Joseph were not a prophet, then in order to account for these and many other remarkable doctrinal insights, the critics must make the argument that he was also a theological genius. But if that were the case, one might ask: why was Joseph the only one in the 1,800 years following Christ's ministry to produce such a breadth of unique and clarifying doctrines? Because it was revelation, not brilliance, that was the source of this book.

But even if we suppose that Joseph were a creative and theological genius with a photographic memory—these talents alone do not make him a skilled writer. To explain the Book of Mormon's existence, the critics must also make the claim that Joseph was a naturally gifted writer at age 23. Otherwise, how did he interweave scores of names, places, and events into a harmonious whole without inconsistencies? How did he pen detailed war strategies, compose eloquent sermons, and coin phrases that are highlighted, memorized, quoted, and placed on refrigerator doors by millions of people, phrases such as, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17) or "Men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). These are messages

When all is said and done, one might wonder how someone could believe that all these alleged factors and forces, as proposed by the critics, fortuitously combined in such a way that enabled Joseph to write the Book of Mormon and thus foster a satanic hoax. But how does this make sense? In direct opposition to such an assertion, this book has inspired millions to reject Satan and to live more Christlike lives.

While someone might choose to believe the critics' line of reasoning, it is, for me, an intellectual and spiritual dead end. To believe such, I would have to accept one unproven assumption after another. In addition, I would have to disregard the testimony of every one of the 11 witnesses,<sup>3</sup> even

though each remained true to his testimony to the very end; I would have to reject the divine doctrine that fills page after page of this sacred book with its supernal truths; I would have to ignore the fact that multitudes, including myself, have come closer to God by reading this book than any other; and above all, I would have to deny the confirming whisperings of the Holy Spirit. This would be contrary to everything I know to be true.

One of my good and bright friends left the Church for a time. He recently wrote to me of his return: "Initially, I wanted the Book of Mormon to be proven to me historically, geographically, linguistically, and culturally. But when I changed my focus to what it teaches

about the gospel of Jesus Christ and His saving mission, I began to gain a testimony of its truthfulness. One day while reading the Book of Mormon in my room, I paused, knelt down, and gave a heartfelt prayer and felt resoundingly that Heavenly Father whispered to my spirit that the Church and the Book of Mormon were definitely true. My three-and-a-half-year period of reinvestigating the Church led me back wholeheartedly and convincingly to its truthfulness."

If one will take the time to humbly read and ponder the Book of Mormon, as did my friend, and give ear to the sweet fruits of the Spirit, then he or she will eventually receive the desired witness.

The Book of Mormon is one of God's priceless gifts to us. It is both sword and shield—it sends the word of God into battle to fight for the hearts of the just and serves as an arch defender of the truth. As Saints, we have not only the privilege to defend the Book of Mormon but also the opportunity to take the offense—to preach with power its divine doctrine and bear testimony of its crowning witness of Jesus Christ.

I bear my solemn testimony that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. It is God's compelling witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, and the absolute truth of this Church. May it become the keystone of our testimonies, so it may be said of us, as it was of the converted Lamanites, they "never did fall away" (Alma 23:6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Emma Smith, in "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald*, Oct. 1, 1879, 289, 290.
2. Emma Smith, in "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 290.
3. See "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" and "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon.





By Elder Joni L. Koch  
Of the Seventy

# Apart, but Still One

*In the Church, in spite of our differences, the Lord expects us to be one!*

In June 1994, I was anxiously driving back home from work to watch on TV our national soccer team play in the World Cup. Soon after I started my journey, I saw from afar on the sidewalk a man quickly moving forward in a wheelchair, which I noticed was decorated with our Brazilian flag. I knew then he was also going home to watch the game!

When our paths crossed and our eyes met, for a fraction of a second, I felt strongly united with that man! We were going in different directions, didn't know each other, and had clearly different social and physical conditions, but our same passion for soccer and love for our country made us feel like one in that very moment! I haven't seen that man since then, but today, decades later, I can still see those eyes and feel that strong connection with that man. After all, we won the game and the World Cup that year!

In the Church, in spite of our differences, the Lord expects us to be one! He said in the Doctrine and Covenants, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>1</sup>

As we all enter a meetinghouse to worship as a group, we should leave behind our differences, including race, social status, political preferences, and academic and professional achievements, and instead concentrate

on our common spiritual objectives. Together we sing hymns, ponder about the same covenants during the sacrament, and say simultaneously an audible "amen" after talks, lessons, and prayers—meaning that we jointly agree with what was shared.

These things that we do collectively help create a strong sense of oneness within the congregation.

However, what really determines, solidifies, or destroys our unity is how we act when we are apart from our Church members. As we all know, it is inevitable and normal that eventually we will talk about each other.

Depending on what we choose to say about one another, our words will either have our "hearts knit together in unity,"<sup>2</sup> as Alma taught those he baptized in the Waters of Mormon, or they will erode the love, trust, and goodwill that should exist among us.

There are comments that subtly destroy unity, such as "Yes, he's a good bishop; oh, but you should have seen him when he was a young man!"

A more constructive version of this might be "The bishop is so good, and he has grown so much in maturity and wisdom over the years."

Oftentimes we put permanent labels on people by saying something like "Our Relief Society president is a lost cause; she is so stubborn!" In contrast, we might say, "The Relief Society president has been less flexible lately; maybe she's going through some difficult times. Let's help her and sustain her!"

Brothers and sisters, we have no right to portray anybody, including from our Church circle, as a badly finished product! Rather, our words about our fellow beings should



reflect our belief in Jesus Christ and His Atonement and that, in Him and through Him, we can always change for the better!

Some start criticizing and becoming divided from Church leaders and members for things that are so small.

Such was the case of a man called Simonds Ryder, who became a member of the Church in 1831. After reading a revelation that pertained to him, he was perplexed to see that his name was misspelled *Rider*, with the letter *i* instead of with the letter *y*. His reaction to this event contributed to his questioning the prophet and eventually led to persecuting Joseph and falling away from the Church.<sup>3</sup>

It is also likely that we will all experience some correction from our ecclesiastical leaders, which will be a test of how united we are with them.

I was only 11, but I remember that 44 years ago, the meetinghouse where my family attended church was to experience major remodeling. Before that undertaking began, there was a meeting in which local leaders and area leaders were discussing how the members would participate with labor in that effort. My father, who had previously presided over that unit for years, expressed his very strong opinion that this work should be done by a contractor and not by amateurs.

Not only was his opinion rejected, but we heard that he was severely and publicly rebuked on that occasion. Now, this was a man who was very dedicated to the Church and had been a World War II soldier in Europe, used to resisting and fighting for what he believed in! One wondered what his reaction might be after this incident. Would he persist with his opinion and continue to oppose the decision already made?



We had seen families in our ward who had become weaker in the gospel and had stopped attending meetings because they could not be one with those who were leading. I myself also witnessed many of my friends from Primary not remaining faithful in their youth because their parents were always finding fault with those inside the Church.

My dad, however, decided to remain one with our fellow Saints. Some days later, when ward members were gathering to help in the construction, he “invited” our family to follow him to the meetinghouse, where we would make ourselves available to help in any way.

I was furious. I felt like asking him, “Dad, why in the world are we going to help in the construction if you were against having the members do it?” But the look on his face discouraged me from doing that. I wanted to be well for the rededication. So, fortunately, I decided to be quiet and just go and help in the building!

Father did not get to see the new chapel, as he passed away before the conclusion of this work. But we in the family, led now by my mom, continued doing our part until it was finished, and that kept us united with my father, with the Church members, with our leaders, and, most important, with the Lord!

Just moments before His excruciating experiences in Gethsemane, when Jesus was praying to the Father for His Apostles and all of us, the Saints, He said, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.”<sup>4</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I testify that as we decide to be one with the members and leaders of the Church—both when we’re assembled together and especially when we are apart—we will also feel more perfectly united with our Heavenly Father and the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.

2. Mosiah 18:21.

3. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (1983), 93–94.

4. John 17:21.



By Elder Stanley G. Ellis  
Emeritus Member of the Seventy

# Do We Trust Him? Hard Is Good

*Regardless of the issue, hard can be good for those who will move forward with faith and trust the Lord and His plan.*

Before I begin, as one representing all of us impacted by the devastation of the recent hurricanes and earthquakes, I express my heartfelt appreciation for all the Helping Hands and their facilitators, who gave us help and hope.

In October 2006, I gave my first general conference talk. I felt an important message for the worldwide Church included the assertion “The Lord trusts us!”

He really does trust us in so many ways. He has given us the gospel of Jesus Christ and, in this dispensation, its fulness. He entrusts us with His priesthood authority, complete with the keys for its proper use. With that power we can bless, serve, receive ordinances, and make covenants. He trusts us with His restored Church, including the holy temple. He trusts His servants with the sealing power—to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven! He even trusts us to be the earthly parents, teachers, and caregivers of His children.

After these years of General Authority service in many parts of the world, I declare with even more certainty: He trusts us.

Now the question for this conference is “Do we trust Him?”

## Do We Trust Him?

President Thomas S. Monson often reminds us to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.



“Be not wise in thine own eyes” (Proverbs 3:5–7).

Do we trust His commandments to be for our good? His leaders, though imperfect, to lead us well? His promises to be sure? Do we trust that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do know us and want to help us? Even in the midst of trials, challenges, and hard times, do we still trust Him?

Looking back, I learned some of the best lessons during the hardest times—whether as a youth, on a mission, starting a new career, striving to magnify my callings, raising a large family, or struggling to be self-reliant. It seems clear that hard is good!

## Hard Is Good

Hard makes us stronger, humbles us, and gives us a chance to prove ourselves. Our beloved handcart pioneers came to know God *in their extremities*. Why did it take two chapters for Nephi and his brothers to obtain the brass plates and only three verses to enlist Ishmael’s family to join them in the wilderness? (see 1 Nephi 3–4; 7:3–5). It seems the Lord wanted to strengthen Nephi through the struggle of obtaining the plates.

The hard things in our lives should come as no surprise. One of the earliest covenants we make with the Lord is to live the law of sacrifice. Sacrifice, by definition, involves giving up something desirable. With experience we realize it is a small price to pay in relation to the blessings that follow. Under the direction of Joseph Smith, it was said that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Members of the Godhead are no strangers to hard things. God the Father



sacrificed His Only Begotten Son to the terrible suffering of the Atonement, including death by crucifixion. The scriptures say Jesus Christ learned “obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). He voluntarily suffered the agony of the Atonement. The Holy Ghost must be long-suffering to prompt, warn, and guide us, only to sometimes be ignored, misinterpreted, or forgotten.

#### Part of the Plan

Hard is part of the gospel plan. One of the purposes of this life is for us to be proven (see Abraham 3:25). Few have suffered more undeservedly than the people of Alma. They fled from wicked King Noah, only to become slaves to the Lamanites! Through those trials the Lord taught them that He chastens His people and tries “their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

During the terrible days in Liberty Jail, the Lord taught Joseph Smith to “endure it well” (D&C 121:8) and promised that if he did, “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

President Thomas S. Monson has pleaded, “May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.”<sup>2</sup> With regard to our temples, he stated that “no sacrifice is too great, no

price too heavy, no struggle too difficult in order to receive [temple] blessings.”<sup>3</sup>

In the world of nature, hard is part of the circle of life. It is hard for a baby chick to hatch out of that tough egg-shell. But when someone tries to make it easier, the chick does not develop the strength necessary to live. In a similar way, the struggle of a butterfly to escape the cocoon strengthens it for the life it will live.

Through these examples, we see that hard is the *constant*! We all have challenges. The *variable* is our reaction to the hard.

At one point, some Book of Mormon people suffered “great persecutions” and “much affliction” (Helaman 3:34). How did they react? “They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation” (Helaman 3:35). Another example occurred after years of war: “Because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, . . . and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God” (Alma 62:41).

We each choose our reaction to hard.

#### Be Careful with Easy

Before this calling I was a financial consultant in Houston, Texas. Most of my work was with multimillionaires who owned their own businesses. Almost all of them had created their successful businesses from nothing through lots of hard work. The saddest thing for me was to hear some of them say that they wanted to make it easier for their children. They did not want their children to suffer as they had. In other words, they would deprive their children of the very thing that had made them successful.

By contrast, we know a family who took a different approach. The parents were inspired by J. C. Penney’s experience where his father told him when he turned eight years old that he was on his own financially. They came up with their own version: as their children graduated from high school, they were on their own financially—for further education (college, graduate school) and for their financial maintenance (truly self-reliant) (see D&C 83:4). Happily, the children reacted wisely. All of them are college graduates, and several also completed graduate school—all on their own. It wasn’t easy, but they did it. They did it with hard work and faith.



### Faith to Trust Him

The question “Do we trust Him?” may be better stated, “Do we have the *faith* to trust Him?”

Do we have the *faith* to trust His promises regarding tithing that with 90 percent of our increase *plus the Lord’s help*, we are better off than with 100 percent *on our own*?

Do we have sufficient *faith* to trust that He will visit us in our afflictions (see Mosiah 24:14), that He will contend with those that contend with us (see Isaiah 49:25; 2 Nephi 6:17), and that He will consecrate our afflictions for our gain? (see 2 Nephi 2:2).

Will we exercise the *faith* necessary to keep His commandments so He can bless us both temporally and spiritually? And will we continue faithful to the end so that He can receive us into His presence? (see Mosiah 2:41).

Brothers and sisters, we can have the faith to trust Him! He wants what is best for us (see Moses 1:39). He will answer our prayers (see D&C 112:10). He will keep His promises (see D&C 1:38). He has the power to keep those promises (see Alma 37:16). He knows everything! And most important, He knows what is best (see Isaiah 55:8–9).

### A Dangerous World

Our world today is difficult. We have rampant evil, corruption in every nation, terrorism reaching even safe places, economic collapse, unemployment, disease, natural disasters, civil wars, despotic leaders, and so on. What should

we do? Do we flee or fight? Which is right? Either choice can be dangerous. It was dangerous for George Washington and his armies to fight but also for our pioneer ancestors to flee. It was dangerous for Nelson Mandela to struggle for freedom. It has been said that for evil to prevail, it is only necessary for good people to do nothing.<sup>4</sup>

### Fear Not!

In whatever we do, we should not decide nor act out of a spirit of fear. Truly, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7). (Do you realize the idea of “fear not” is emphasized throughout the scriptures?) The Lord has taught me that discouragement and fear are tools of the adversary. The Lord’s answer to hard times is to go forward with faith.

### What Is Hard?

Each of us may have a different opinion about what is hard. Some may consider it hard to pay tithing when finances are tight. Leaders sometimes find it difficult to expect the poor to pay tithing. It may be hard for some of us to go forward with faith to marry or to have a family. There are those who find it hard “to be content with [what] the Lord hath allotted unto [them]” (Alma 29:3). It may be hard to be content with our current calling (see Alma 29:6). Church discipline may seem very hard, but for some it marks the beginning of the true repentance process.

Regardless of the issue, hard can be good for those who will move forward with faith and trust the Lord and His plan.

### My Witness

My brothers and sisters, I witness that these leaders seated behind me are called of God. Their desire is to serve the Lord well and help us establish the gospel in our hearts. I love and sustain them.

I love our Savior, Jesus Christ. I marvel that He loved the Father and us enough to become our Savior and Redeemer; that by so doing, He had to suffer such that it caused Him “to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18). Yet faced with this awful prospect and its necessity, He affirmed to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). I glory in the angel’s words: “He is not here: for he is risen” (Matthew 28:6).

His example truly is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Only by following that example can we find “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). As I have followed His example and applied His teachings, I have learned for myself that each of His “exceedingly great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) is true.

My greatest desires are to stand with Mormon as a true disciple of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 5:13) and to one day hear from His lips, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2016, 86.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 92.
4. See John Stuart Mill, *Inaugural Address: Delivered to the University of St. Andrews, Feb. 1, 1867* (1867), 36.



By Elder Adilson de Paula Parrella  
Of the Seventy

# Essential Truths—Our Need to Act

*The First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth knowledge and truth that are essential to our happiness in this life and to our exaltation.*

When I was about seven years old, I asked my mother, “When you and I die and go to heaven, will you still be my mother?” She was not expecting such a question. But answering to the best of her knowledge, she said, “No, in heaven we are going to be brothers and sisters. I will not be your mother.” That was not the answer I was hoping for.

Sometime after that short interaction, two young men arrived at the gate of our home. By some miracle, my father allowed them to come in. They said they were missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These elders, as we learned to call them, started to teach our family. I vividly remember our feelings of happiness and excitement every time they came to our home. They told us that a young man had gone to a grove to ask God which church was true and that he saw God and Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The elders showed us an illustration of that vision, and when I saw it, I knew that Joseph Smith had indeed seen God the Father and Jesus Christ. The missionaries said that because of this vision, the true

Church of Jesus Christ was again upon the earth.<sup>2</sup>

The missionaries also taught us God’s plan of happiness and answered our family’s questions about religion. They taught us that families truly can be together after this life as father, mother, and sons and daughters.

Our family was baptized. The road to changing old habits, giving up traditions, and becoming active members of the Church was at times bumpy. But because of the mercy and love of God and with the help of many leaders and

members, we made it through the first challenging years.

Millions who have already joined the Church, as well as the many who are being converted and baptized each week, have gained a testimony of the First Vision. The Holy Ghost can repeat this witness often to each one of us as we strive to live the simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth additional knowledge and truth that are essential to our happiness in this life and our exaltation in the presence of God. I will mention three of the truths we gained and must act on because a young boy knelt in sincere prayer.

## God Calls Prophets to Lead and Guide Us

An essential truth we learn from the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith is that God calls prophets,<sup>3</sup> seers, and revelators to instruct, guide, warn, and lead us.<sup>4</sup> These men are God’s mouthpieces on earth,<sup>5</sup> with the authority to speak and act in the name of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> By strictly following their counsel, we will be protected and receive choice blessings in our journey on this earth.

While studying at Brigham Young University as a young, single returned



missionary, I attended a priesthood session of general conference in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. President Ezra Taft Benson, then-President of the Church, urged every returned missionary to take marriage seriously and make it a top priority in his life.<sup>7</sup> After the session, I knew I had been called to repentance and needed to act on the prophet's counsel.

Thus, I decided to go to my home country, Brazil, to find a wife. Before leaving for Brazil on a two-month internship, I called my mom and some friends on the phone and came up with a list of about 10 young women—each of them a potential wife.

While in Brazil, after much pondering and prayer, I met, dated, got engaged to, and set a date to marry one of the young women on the list. It was not record-breaking time for students in Provo, Utah, to date and become engaged, but it was fast by Brazil standards.

A few months later, I married Elaine. She is the love of my life and a choice blessing.

I am not suggesting that everyone should make a similar list, but I am suggesting—maybe more than suggesting—that we always act when our living prophets speak.

God's prophet today is President Thomas S. Monson, and we will be blessed by following his counsel with exactness.

### The Knowledge of the True Nature of God

Another truth we learn because of the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith is the true nature of God. Just imagine how blessed we are to know that God is a being with a body of flesh and bones as tangible as ours,<sup>8</sup> that we can worship a God who is real, whom we can understand, and who has shown and revealed Himself and His



Son to His prophets—both prophets of old and prophets in these latter days.<sup>9</sup> He is a God who hears and answers our prayers;<sup>10</sup> a God who watches us from heaven above<sup>11</sup> and is constantly concerned about our spiritual and temporal well-being; a God who gives us agency to decide for ourselves to follow Him and obey His commandments without coercion;<sup>12</sup> a God who gives us blessings and allows us to face trials so we can grow and become like Him.

He is a loving God who provided a plan through which we can enjoy happiness in this life and in eternity.

### Jesus Christ Is Our Savior

From the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith, we received knowledge of the reality and sacred mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the cornerstone of our religion.

Because death was introduced into the world, as surely as we live now, we will all die one day. One of the effects of death would be the permanent loss of our physical body; we wouldn't be able to do anything to reclaim it. In addition, because we all sin during our journey here on earth, we would never be able to return to our Heavenly Father's presence.

Can you imagine the consequences of being deprived of God's presence and never again having a body?

A Savior and Redeemer was needed to free us from death and sin. Under Heavenly Father's direction, Jesus Christ came to earth, suffered, died on

the cross, and was resurrected so that we too can be resurrected and, with sincere repentance and the making and keeping of sacred covenants, be once again in the presence of God.

Jacob explained, "O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Lawgiver, the Holy One of Israel, our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, our King, our All.

May we all continue to act upon these essential truths and knowledge, offering our obedience to God and His Beloved Son. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–18.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
3. See Amos 3:7.
4. See, for example, regarding *instruct*: Matthew 28:20; 2 Nephi 9:48; *guide*: *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 262–63; *warn*: Ezekiel 3:17; *lead*: Doctrine and Covenants 124:45.
5. See 2 Nephi 3:18.
6. See Ezekiel 3:4; Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
7. See Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Single Adult Brethren of the Church," *Ensign*, May 1988, 51–53.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:2–3.
10. See Mosiah 9:18.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:1.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:27; Helaman 14:30; Doctrine and Covenants 58:28.
13. 2 Nephi 9:10.



By Elder Ian S. Ardern  
Of the Seventy

# Seek Ye Out of the Best Books

*As we study from the best books, we protect ourselves against the menacing jaws of those that seek to gnaw at our spiritual roots.*

Early one morning, I saw a hungry and well-camouflaged caterpillar on a beautiful rosebush. From the look of some of the leafless shoots, it was obvious to even the casual observer that it had been gnawing its way through the tender leaves with its menacing jaws. Allegorically, I could not help but think that there are some people who are like this caterpillar; they are found throughout the world, and some are so cleverly disguised that we may allow them into our lives, and

before we know it, they have eaten away at our spiritual roots and those of our family members and friends.

We live in a day in which misinformation about our beliefs abounds. In times such as these, a failure to protect and deepen our spiritual roots is an invitation to have them gnawed at by those who seek to destroy our faith in Christ and our belief in His restored Church. In Book of Mormon times, it was Zeezrom who sought to destroy the faith of the believers.

His actions and words were “a snare of the adversary, which he . . . laid to catch [the] people, that he might bring [them] into subjection unto him, that he might encircle [them] about with his chains” (Alma 12:6). Those same snares exist today, and unless we are spiritually vigilant and build a sure foundation on our Redeemer (see Helaman 5:12), we may find ourselves bound with Satan’s chains and being led carefully down the forbidden paths spoken of in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 8:28).

The Apostle Paul sounded a warning in his day that is applicable to our day: “For I know this, . . . of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30).

His warning and those of our prophets and apostles remind us that we must do all we can to fortify ourselves spiritually against words of opposition and deception. As I visit wards and stakes of the Church, I am uplifted by what I see, hear, and feel as Saints positively and faithfully respond to the teachings of the Savior and His servants.

The increase in Sabbath day observance is but one example of members spiritually fortifying themselves by heeding prophetic invitations. Further strengthening is evidenced in the increase in temple and family history work as families gather their ancestors through temple ordinances. Our spiritual roots go deeper as sincere personal and family prayer become bastions of our faith and as we repent daily, seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and learn of our Savior and His attributes and strive to become like Him (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the Light of the World, and He beckons us to follow Him. We must look to Him at all times and especially so if there are dark





and stormy nights when the tempest of doubt and uncertainty, like a rolling fog, creeps in. Should the pointed fingers “from the other side of the river of water, [where] a great and spacious building [stands]” (1 Nephi 8:26) appear to be directed at you in the attitude of mocking, demeaning, and beckoning, I ask that you immediately turn away so that you are not persuaded by cunning and devious means to separate yourself from truth and its blessings.

However, this alone will not be enough in this day when perverse things are being spoken, written, and portrayed. Elder Robert D. Hales taught us, “Unless you are fully engaged in living the gospel—living it with all of your ‘heart, might, mind and strength’—you cannot generate enough spiritual light to push back the darkness” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 71; *Liahona*, July 2002, 78). Surely, our desire to follow Christ, who is the Light of the World (see John 8:12), means we must act on His teachings. We are spiritually strengthened, fortified, and protected as we act on the word of God.

The greater the light in our lives, the fewer the shadows. However, even in an

abundance of light, we are exposed to people and comments that misrepresent our beliefs and try our faith. The Apostle James wrote that “the trying of [our] faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). With this insight, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “A patient disciple . . . will not be surprised nor undone when the Church is misrepresented” (“Patience” [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 27, 1979], [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu)).

Questions about our Church history and beliefs do arise. Where we turn to find the correct answers requires great care. There is nothing to be gained in exploring the views and opinions of the less informed or disenchanted. The best counsel was given by the Apostle James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5).

Asking of God is to be preceded by careful study, for we are under scriptural mandate to seek “out of the best books words of wisdom” and to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). There is a rich abundance of these books, written by heaven-inspired Church leaders and recognized, safe, and reliable Church history and doctrine scholars. With that said, none surpass the majesty of the

revealed word of God in canonized scripture. From those thin pages thick with spiritual insights, we learn truth through the Holy Ghost and thereby increase in light.

President Thomas S. Monson has implored us “to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day” (“The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 87).

Several years ago, while I was serving as president of the Fiji Suva Mission, some missionaries had an experience which reinforced in them the converting power of the Book of Mormon. On a hot and humid day, two elders arrived at a home in a small settlement in Labasa.

The knock on the door was answered by a weathered man who listened as the missionaries testified of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. They gave him a copy and invited him to read and to pray to know, like them, that it is the word of God. His reply was brief: “Tomorrow I return to fishing. I will read it while at sea, and when I return, you may visit me again.”

While he was away, transfers were made, and a few weeks later, a new companionship of elders returned to visit the fisherman. By this time he had read the entire Book of Mormon, had received confirmation of its truthfulness, and was eager to learn more.

This man had been converted by the Holy Ghost, who witnessed of the truth of the precious words on every page of events and doctrine taught long ago and preserved for our day in the Book of Mormon. That same blessing is available to each of us.

The home is an ideal place for families to study and share valuable insights from the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to access Church material at [LDS.org](http://LDS.org). There you will find

an abundance of information about gospel topics such as the First Vision accounts. As we study from the best books, we protect ourselves against the menacing jaws of those that seek to gnaw at our spiritual roots.

With all our prayer, study, and pondering, there may still remain some yet-to-be-answered questions, but we must not let that extinguish the flame of faith that flickers within us. Such questions are an invitation to build our faith and should not fuel a passing moment of deceiving doubt. It is the very essence of religion not to have a sure answer to every question, for this is one of the purposes of faith. In that regard, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught us that “when those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes*” (“Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94).

We see around us the joy of so many who are standing strong by continually nourishing their spiritual roots. Their faith and obedience is sufficient to give them great hope in their Savior, and from that stems great happiness. They don’t profess to know all things, but they have paid the price to know enough to have peace and to live with patience as they seek to know more. Line upon line, their faith is cemented in Christ, and they stand strong as fellow citizens with the Saints.

Let each of us live so that the menacing jaws of camouflaged caterpillars find no place, not now or ever, in our lives so that we will remain “firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Jose L. Alonso  
Of the Seventy

## Love One Another as He Has Loved Us

*By serving and forgiving others with real love, we can be healed and receive the strength to overcome our own challenges.*

During the Last Supper, the Savior gave a new commandment to His disciples, saying:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”<sup>1</sup>

The Savior’s disciples were given a new commandment to do something more, something greater, and something more divine. This new commandment and invitation is summarized in the key phrase “as I have loved you.”

### Love Is Action; Love Is Service

“Love is a feeling of deep devotion, concern, and affection. The greatest example of God’s love for His children is found in the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> “For God so loved the world,” John recorded, “that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>3</sup> “Love for God and fellowmen is a characteristic of disciples of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Some years ago, when our oldest grandson, Jose, was four, he was

playing with my wife. While they were laughing and having a good time together, our grandson asked her, “Grandma, do you love me?”

She answered him, “Yes, Jose, I do love you.”

Then he asked her another question: “How do you know that you love me?”

She explained to him her feelings and also told him all she had done and was willing to do for him.





Later my wife asked Jose the same questions, including this penetrating inquiry: “How do you know that you love me?”

With an innocent but sincere response, he said, “I love you because I feel it inside my heart.” Jose’s loving behavior to his grandmother that day and always demonstrates that love is a combination of actions as well as deep feelings.

King Benjamin taught, “Behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”<sup>5</sup>

In today’s world of so much suffering because of different circumstances, sending a text message with a funny emoji or posting a nice picture with the words “I love you” is good and valuable. But what many of us need to do is leave our mobile devices behind and, with our hands and feet, help others in great need. Love without service is like faith without works; it’s dead indeed.

#### Love Is Forgiveness

The pure love of Christ, which is charity,<sup>6</sup> inspires us not only to act and provide service but also to have the strength to forgive, regardless of the situation. May I share with you an experience that has impacted and changed my life. Ted and Sharon, Cooper’s parents, who are here today, have given me permission to share what happened to their family more than nine years ago. I will tell the experience from the perspective of Ted, Cooper’s father:

August 21, 2008, was the first day of school, and Cooper’s three older brothers, Ivan, Garrett, and Logan, were all at the bus stop waiting to board buses. Cooper, who was four years old, was on his bike; my wife, Sharon, had walked.

My wife was across the street and motioned to Cooper to cross. At the same time, a car very slowly made a left turn and rolled over Cooper.

I received a phone call from a neighbor telling me Cooper had been hit by a car. I quickly drove down

to the bus stop to see him. Cooper was lying on the grass, struggling to breathe, but had no visible injuries.

I knelt down by Cooper and said encouraging things like “It’s going to be OK. Hang on.” At that moment my high priests group leader, Nathan, appeared with his wife. She suggested we give Cooper a priesthood blessing. We laid our hands on Cooper’s head. I can’t remember what I said in the blessing, but I clearly remember the presence of others around us, and it was at that moment I knew Cooper was going to pass away.

Cooper was flown by helicopter to the hospital but did, in fact, pass away. I felt Heavenly Father was telling me that my earthly stewardship had ended and that Cooper was now in His care.

We were able to spend some time with Cooper at the hospital. The workers there prepared him so we could hold him and say our goodbyes and allowed us to spend as much time with him, holding him, as we desired.

On the way home, my grief-stricken wife and I looked at each other and started talking about the boy who was driving the car. We didn’t know him, even though he lived just one street over and was within our ward boundaries.

The next day was very difficult for us as we were all completely overwhelmed with grief. I fell to my knees and prayed the most sincere prayer I had ever offered. I asked Heavenly Father in the name of my Savior to take away my overwhelming grief. He did so.

Later that day one of the counselors in our stake presidency arranged for us to meet with the young man—the driver of the car—and his parents at the counselor’s home. Sharon and I waited for the boy and his parents to arrive. When the door opened, we met them for the first time. My bishop whispered

in my ear, “Go to him.” Sharon and I embraced him in a big group hug. We wept together for what seemed to be a long time. We told him we knew that what had happened was the definition of an accident.

It was miraculous to Sharon and me, both that we felt the way we did and that we still do. By God’s grace,

we were able to take the big path, the obvious path, the only path, and love this good young man.

We have become very close to him and his family over the years. He has shared his most precious milestone moments with us. We even went to the temple with him as he prepared for his mission.<sup>7</sup>



Brothers and sisters, Ted knows without any doubt that our Heavenly Father loves us. He knows that being able to forgive, and to unburden himself in that way, is as sweet as being forgiven. This sweetness comes from following the example of our greatest Exemplar. In the Book of Mormon, Alma declared of the Savior, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.”<sup>8</sup>

Brothers and sisters, what a marvelous story of real love and forgiveness. We, likewise, can have joy and happiness as we serve and forgive others. Georgy, another of our grandsons, often says, “What kind of family are we?” And he responds, “We are a happy family!”

President Thomas S. Monson has counseled us, saying, “Let us examine our lives and determine to follow the Savior’s example by being kind, loving, and charitable.”<sup>9</sup>

I know that our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, love us and are willing to help us to act as we love one another as They have loved us. And I know that by serving and forgiving others with real love, we can be healed and receive the strength to overcome our own challenges. And I so declare in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 13:34–35.
2. “Love,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://topics.lds.org).
3. John 3:16.
4. “Love,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](https://topics.lds.org).
5. Mosiah 2:17.
6. See Moroni 7:47.
7. Excerpted and adapted from Ted Mardesich, unpublished manuscript.
8. Alma 7:11.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Kindness, Charity, and Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 67.



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

# The Voice of the Lord

*I testify that in this conference we have heard the Lord's voice. The test for each of us is how we respond.*

First, a kind word for the little children. Yes, this is the last session, and yes, I am the final speaker.

Recently, while visiting the Provo City Center Temple, I admired a painting entitled *First Vision from Afar*. The painting depicts the light and power from heaven as the Father and Son visited the young Joseph Smith.

While not making a comparison with the very sacred event that ushered in the Restoration, I can imagine a similar visual that would reflect the light and spiritual power of God descending upon this general conference and, in turn, that power and light moving across the world.

I give you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that He guides the affairs

of this sacred work, and that general conference is one of the very important times He gives direction to His Church and to us personally.

## Being Taught from on High

On the day the Church was organized, the Lord designated Joseph Smith a prophet, seer, and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup> and said to the Church:

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; . . . and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good.”<sup>2</sup>

Later, all members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were also sustained and ordained as prophets, seers, and revelators.<sup>3</sup>

Now, as we meet under the direction of President Thomas S. Monson, we anticipate hearing “the will of the Lord, . . . the mind of the Lord, . . . the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.”<sup>4</sup> We trust in His promise: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>5</sup>

In the commotion and confusion of our modern world, trusting and believing in the words of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve is vital to our spiritual growth and endurance.<sup>6</sup>

We have come together for this wonderful conference. Millions of Latter-day Saints and others of faith in more than 200 countries, speaking more than 93 languages, attend these sessions or read the conference messages.

We come having prayed and prepared. For many of us, there are pressing worries and earnest questions. We want to renew our faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and to strengthen our ability to resist temptation and avoid distractions. We come to be taught from on high.



The painting *First Vision from Afar* depicts light and power from heaven.



The light and spiritual power of God descend upon general conference.



Power and light from general conference in turn move across the world.



### The Mind and Will of the Lord

For the First Presidency and the Twelve, who normally speak each conference, the enormous responsibility of preparing their messages is both a recurring burden and a sacred trust.

Years ago, before serving as a General Authority, I asked Elder Dallin H. Oaks if he prepared a separate talk for each stake conference. He responded that he did not but added, “But my general conference talks are different. I may go through 12 to 15 drafts to be sure that I say what the Lord would have me say.”<sup>7</sup>

When and how does the inspiration for general conference talks come?

With no topics assigned, we see heaven beautifully coordinating the subjects and themes of eternal truth each and every conference.

One of my Brethren told me that his subject for this conference was given to him immediately after his talk last April. Another mentioned three weeks ago that he was still praying and waiting

upon the Lord. Another, when asked how long it had taken to compose an especially sensitive talk, responded, “Twenty-five years.”

At times the central idea may come quickly, but the content and details still require enormous spiritual climbing. Fasting and prayer, study and faith are always part of the process. The Lord wants no pretense diminishing His voice to His Saints.

Direction for a general conference talk often comes in the night or the early morning hours, when the talk is far from the thoughts of the mind. Suddenly, unanticipated insight and, at times, specific words and phrases flow as pure revelation.<sup>8</sup>

As you listen, the messages you receive may be very literal or they may be customized just for you.

Speaking many years ago in general conference, I told of a phrase that entered my mind as I wondered if I was prepared to serve a mission. The phrase was “You don’t know everything, but

you know enough!”<sup>9</sup> A young woman sitting in general conference that day told me that she was praying over a proposal for marriage, wondering how well she knew the young man. When I spoke the words “You don’t know everything, but you know enough,” the Spirit confirmed to her that she *did* know him well enough. They have been happily married for many years.

I promise you that as you prepare your spirit and come with the anticipation that you will hear the voice of the Lord, thoughts and feelings will come into your mind that are customized especially for you. You have already felt them in this conference, or you will as you study the messages in the weeks ahead.

### For Now and the Months Ahead

President Monson has said:

“Take the time to read the conference messages.”<sup>10</sup>

“Ponder [them]. . . I have found . . . that I gain even more from these



inspired sermons when I study them in greater depth.”<sup>11</sup>

The teachings of general conference are the considerations the Lord would have before us now and in the months ahead.

The shepherd “goeth before [his sheep], and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”<sup>12</sup>

Often His voice directs us to change something in our lives. He invites us to repent. He invites us to follow Him.

Think about these statements from this conference:

President Henry B. Eyring from this morning: “I bear my witness that God the Father lives and wants you to come home to Him. This is the true

Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows you; He loves you; He watches over you.”<sup>13</sup>

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf from yesterday: “I testify that when we embark upon or continue the incredible journey that leads to God, our lives will be better . . . and the Lord will use us in remarkable ways to bless those around us and bring about His eternal purposes.”<sup>14</sup>

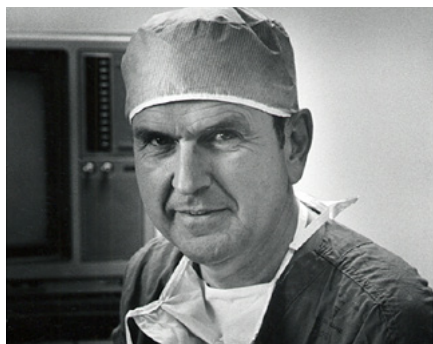
President Russell M. Nelson from yesterday afternoon: “I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon, you can be immunized against the evils of the day, even the gripping plague of pornography and other mind-numbing addictions.”<sup>15</sup>

Elder Dallin H. Oaks yesterday: “I testify that the proclamation on the family is a statement of eternal truth, the will of the Lord for His children who seek eternal life.”<sup>16</sup>

And Elder M. Russell Ballard from just a few minutes ago: “We need to embrace God’s children compassionately and eliminate any prejudice, including racism, sexism, and nationalism.”<sup>17</sup>

Because we have an extra minute, I would like to just add a brief reflection about Elder Robert D. Hales. The First Presidency had told Elder Hales that he could give a brief message in the Sunday morning session if his health permitted it. While his health did not permit it, he prepared a message, which he finished last week and shared with me. Given his passing approximately three hours ago, I share just three lines from his talk.

Quoting Elder Hales: “When we choose to have faith, we are prepared to stand in the presence of God. . . . After the Savior’s Crucifixion, He appeared only to those ‘who had been faithful in the testimony of [Him] while they lived in mortality.’ [D&C 138:12.] Those ‘who rejected the testimonies . . .



*In 1979, Dr. Nelson had a feeling that he should follow President Spencer W. Kimball’s counsel to study Mandarin Chinese.*



*Dr. Nelson’s desire to follow President Kimball’s counsel led to Dr. Wu Yingkai visiting Salt Lake City and to Dr. Nelson giving lectures and performing operations in China.*



*In October 2015, President Russell M. Nelson was honored with an official declaration naming him an “old friend of China.”*



We should pray for them and help them.’”<sup>18</sup>

At age 54, Brother Nelson had a feeling during the meeting that he should study the Mandarin language. Although a busy heart surgeon, he immediately secured the services of a tutor.

Not long after beginning his studies, Dr. Nelson, attending a convention, unexpectedly found himself sitting next to “a distinguished Chinese surgeon, Dr. Wu Yingkai. . . . Because [Brother Nelson] had been studying Mandarin, he began [a] conversation [with Dr. Wu].”<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Nelson’s desire to follow the prophet led to Dr. Wu visiting Salt Lake City and Dr. Nelson traveling to China to give lectures and perform surgical operations.

His love for the Chinese people, and their love and respect for him, grew.

In February 1985, ten months after his call to the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder Nelson received a surprise phone call from China pleading for Dr. Nelson to come to Beijing to operate on the failing heart of China’s most famous opera singer. With the encouragement of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Elder Nelson returned to China. The last surgical operation he ever performed was in the People’s Republic of China.

Just two years ago, in October 2015, President Russell M. Nelson was once again honored with an official declaration, naming him an “old friend of China.”

Then yesterday we heard the now 93-year-old President Russell M. Nelson speak of President Thomas S. Monson’s plea to “each of us [in last April’s conference] to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day.”

Just like he did as a busy heart surgeon, when he hired a Mandarin tutor, President Nelson immediately took

of the . . . prophets [could not] behold [the Savior’s] presence, nor look upon his face.’ [D&C 138:21.] . . . Our faith prepares us to be in the presence of the Lord.”

How kind of the Lord to impress upon President Russell M. Nelson right at the end of this morning’s session to quickly leave the building, skip his lunch, and hurry to the bedside of Elder Hales, where he could arrive and be there, his quorum president, with the angelic Mary Hales as Elder Hales graduated from mortality.

#### **Responding to the Voice of the Lord**

I testify that in this conference we have heard the voice of the Lord.

We should not be alarmed when the words of the Lord’s servants run counter to the thinking of the world and, at times, our own thinking. It has always been this way. I am on my knees in the temple with my Brethren. I attest to the goodness of their souls. Their greatest desire is to please the Lord and help God’s children return to His presence.

The Seventy; the Bishopric; the General Presidencies of the Relief Society, the Young Women, and the Primary; and other auxiliary leaders have added tremendous inspiration to this conference, as have the beautiful music and the thoughtful prayers.

There is a treasure chest of heavenly direction awaiting your discovery in the messages of general conference. The test for each of us is how we respond to what we hear, what we read, and what we feel.

Let me share an experience about responding to prophetic words from the life of President Russell M. Nelson:

In 1979, five years before his call as a General Authority, Brother Nelson attended a meeting just prior to general conference. “President Spencer W. Kimball challenged all present to lengthen their stride in taking the gospel to the entire world. Among the countries President Kimball specifically mentioned was China, declaring, ‘We should be of service to the Chinese. We should learn their language.

the counsel of President Monson and applied it to his own life. More than just reading, he said that he “made lists of what the Book of Mormon *is*, what it *affirms*, what it *refutes*, what it *fulfills*, what it *clarifies*, and what it *reveals*.”<sup>20</sup>

And then, interestingly, just this morning, as a second witness, President Henry B. Eyring also spoke of his response to President Monson’s admonition. Do you remember these words? “Like many of you, I heard the prophet’s words as the voice of the Lord to me. And, also like many of you, I decided to obey those words.”<sup>21</sup>

May we see these as examples for our own lives.

#### A Promise and a Blessing

I promise that as you hear the voice of the Lord to you in the teachings of this general conference, and then act on those promptings, you will feel heaven’s hand upon you, and your life and the lives of those around you will be blessed.<sup>22</sup>

During this conference, we have thought of our dear prophet. We love you, President Monson. I close with his words given from this pulpit. I believe it is a blessing that he would want to give to each of us today, were he able to be with us. He said: “As we leave this conference, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. . . . I pray our Heavenly Father will bless you and your families. May the messages and spirit of this conference find expression in all that you do—in your homes, in your work, in your meetings, and in all your comings and goings.”

He concluded: “I love you. I pray for you. May God bless you. May His promised peace be with you now and always.”<sup>23</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 21:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5–6.
3. Joseph Smith recorded that the following occurred at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836:  
“I then made a short address, and called upon the several quorums, and all the congregation of Saints, to acknowledge the [First] Presidency as Prophets and Seers, and uphold them by their prayers. They all covenanted to do so, by rising.  
“I then called upon the quorums and congregation of Saints to acknowledge the Twelve Apostles, who were present, as Prophets, Seers, Revelators, and special witnesses to all the nations of the earth, holding the keys of the kingdom, to unlock it, or cause it to be done, among them, and uphold them by their prayers, which they assented to by rising” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 199).
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:4.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
6. President Henry B. Eyring once said:  
“The choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late.  
“Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm’s way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety” (“Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).
7. See Neil L. Andersen, “Teaching Our Children to Love the Prophets,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 47.
8. Boyd K. Packer said once:  
“I heard President Harold B. Lee begin many a statement about matters involving revelation with an expression something like this: ‘In the early hours of the morning, while I was pondering upon that subject . . .’ He made it a practice to work in the fresh, alert hours of the early morning on the problems that required revelation.  
“The Lord knew something when He directed in the Doctrine and Covenants,

‘Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.’ (D&C 88:124.) . . .

“I’ve learned the power of the dictum, ‘Early to bed, early to rise.’ When I’m under pressure, you won’t find me burning the midnight oil. I’d much rather be in bed early and getting up in the wee hours of the morning, when I can be close to Him who guides this work” (*Teach Ye Diligently* [2005], 244–45).

9. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 13.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 115.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “God Be with You Till We Meet Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 110.
12. John 10:4.
13. Henry B. Eyring, “Fear Not to Do Good,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 103.
14. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Yearning for Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 22, 24.
15. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 63.
16. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Plan and the Proclamation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 30.
17. M. Russell Ballard, “The Trek Continues!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 106.
18. Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 215.
19. Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson*, 215.
20. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” 61.
21. Henry B. Eyring, “Fear Not to Do Good,” 100.
22. Gordon B. Hinckley once said:  
“The test will come in the application of the teachings given. If, hereafter, we are a little more kind, if we are a little more neighborly, if we have drawn nearer to the Savior, with a more firm resolution to follow His teachings and His example, then this conference will have been a wonderful success. If, on the other hand, there is no improvement in our lives, then those who have spoken will have in large measure failed.  
“Those changes may not be measurable in a day or a week or a month. Resolutions are quickly made and quickly forgotten. But, in a year from now, if we are doing better than we have done in the past, then the efforts of these days will not have been in vain” (“An Humble and a Contrite Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 88).
23. Thomas S. Monson, “A Word at Closing,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 113.

*These selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.*

Speaker	Story
Jose L. Alonso	(119) Jose L. Alonso's grandson questions his grandma's love for him. Parents whose son dies in an accident unburden themselves through forgiveness.
Neil L. Andersen	(122) The Holy Ghost helps a young woman accept a marriage proposal. Russell M. Nelson blesses the Chinese people because he followed prophetic counsel.
Ian S. Ardern	(117) A fisherman receives a testimony of the Book of Mormon while at sea.
M. Russell Ballard	(104) Latter-day Saint pioneer Jane Manning James remains faithful despite challenges. M. Russell Ballard's great-grandparents faithfully serve for decades.
Jean B. Bingham	(85) Jean B. Bingham memorizes "The Living Christ." A Croatian sister travels to the temple to be sealed to her deceased husband and parents.
Tad R. Callister	(107) A friend of Tad R. Callister returns to the Church after receiving a witness of the Church and the Book of Mormon.
D. Todd Christofferson	(36) A mission president repents and changes his heart following a dream.
Quentin L. Cook	(51) Heber C. Kimball undertakes a mission to England. While meeting with Thomas B. Marsh, Joseph Smith receives Doctrine and Covenants section 112.
Stanley G. Ellis	(112) A father and mother strengthen their children by not helping them financially after they finish high school.
Sharon Eubank	(6) A woman changes the course of her family by repenting. A human chain saves swimmers in a rip current. Young women text a girl moving into their ward.
David F. Evans	(68) Young David F. Evans finds answers to gospel questions and gains a witness of the Book of Mormon. A woman gains a testimony of temple ordinances.
Henry B. Eyring	(81) A deacons quorum secretary invites a less-active boy to church. A young adult prays that Bishop Henry B. Eyring will be inspired in giving him counsel. Brigham Young testifies of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling. (100) Henry B. Eyring is blessed for obeying President Monson's counsel to study the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints help disaster victims.
O. Vincent Haleck	(58) An elderly couple makes sacrifices to join the Church. A Samoan chief opens his village to the gospel. Samoan Saints give of their "want" to build a temple.
Donald L. Hallstrom	(88) A Church member in California miraculously survives a fall from a cliff. David A. Bednar asks a young man if he has faith "not to be healed."
Jeffrey R. Holland	(40) In an account by Leo Tolstoy, an imperfect priest defends the path he imperfectly follows.
Joy D. Jones	(13) The Holy Ghost confirms to three women their divine worth as daughters of God.
Joni L. Koch	(110) Joni L. Koch "feels like one" with a fellow Brazilian soccer fan. Joni L. Koch's father decides "to remain one" with fellow Saints despite being ridiculed.
Neill F. Marriott	(10) Primary boys tell a lonely class member why he is special. Neill F. Marriott prays for help loving a "difficult" relative.
Richard J. Maynes	(75) Richard J. Maynes learns from his father never to compromise his integrity.
Russell M. Nelson	(60) Russell M. Nelson presents a Book of Mormon to an African tribal king. Russell M. Nelson follows President Monson's counsel to study the Book of Mormon. As a surgical resident, Russell M. Nelson longs to teach grieving family members that death is part of our immortal existence.
Bonnie L. Oscarson	(25) A 10-year-old and 17-year-old look for ways to serve family members. A Relief Society president receives an impression to serve her neighbor.
Stephen W. Owen	(48) Stephen W. Owen realizes that new missionaries "have experienced faith unto repentance." A returned missionary works to keep himself "in the right way."
Adilson de Paula Parrella	(115) Missionaries teach the Parrella family that they can be together forever. As a college student, Adilson de Paula Parrella follows prophetic counsel to find a wife.
John C. Pingree Jr.	(32) A Church member from Nepal serves Nepalese refugees in Utah and helps translate the Book of Mormon into Nepali. The Holy Ghost helps John C. Pingree Jr. understand the purpose of "divine assignments." The Lord works through spiritual gifts and trials to bless His children.
Ronald A. Rasband	(55) Ronald A. Rasband's granddaughter enjoys an emotional meeting with her brother on his mission. Ronald A. Rasband meets a sister missionary on Temple Square whom he helped bring into the Church.
Dale G. Renlund	(64) Dale G. Renlund rejoices in restoring a young man's priesthood blessings.
Gary E. Stevenson	(44) Saints celebrate President Monson's birthday. A total solar eclipse in the United States captivates millions.
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	(21) A lost dog walks 2,000 miles (3,220 km) home. Early Church leaders become real to Dieter F. Uchtdorf during a family visit to Church history sites.
W. Christopher Waddell	(94) A Waddell family vacation doesn't turn out as planned. A Latter-day Saint blinded during World War II leaves behind a legacy of faith, service, and trust in the Lord.
W. Craig Zwick	(97) The Holy Ghost helps W. Craig Zwick understand the needs of an illiterate missionary. A son's focus on the Savior before his death helps his family look with joy to the next life. A wife is filled with love after she lets go of her negative feelings toward her husband.



**Elder Juan A. Uceda**

*Presidency of the Seventy*

While hiking to the Machu Picchu ruins in Peru as a young missionary, Elder Juan A. Uceda slipped off the narrow trail. Desperately clinging to some branches and hanging 2,000 feet (610 m) above a river, he prayed intensely for help. Earlier that day he had prayed with his lips, he said, but “when I was about to perish, I prayed from the heart.” Just as he was about to fall, another missionary pulled him to safety.

One of the many lessons he said he learned that day was “always, always pray ‘with a sincere heart, with real intent, [exercising] faith in Christ’ (Moroni 10:4).”

Elder Uceda was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 3, 2010. He was serving as an Assistant Executive Director in the Missionary Department and an Area Assistant in the North America Southeast Area when he was called to the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1, 2017.

From 2010 to 2013 he served as a counselor in the South America Northwest Area Presidency, and from 2013 to 2016 he served as the President of the South America Northwest Area.

Elder Uceda was educated in Peru. He enrolled at Jose Carlos Mariátegui Institute in Lima, where he studied account-ing and public relations. He also studied business administra-tion at the Centro Andino de G.E. Institute. He is a graduate of San Luis Gonzaga University, where he was awarded a bachelor’s degree in public relations.

Elder Uceda worked in the Church Educational System as area director for Peru and Bolivia. He left Peru in 2003 to move to New Jersey, USA, to assist his father with their family business.

Since joining the Church in 1972, Elder Uceda has served in numerous callings, including full-time missionary in the Lima Peru Mission, first counselor in a stake Sunday School presidency, bishop, high councilor, counselor in a stake presidency, stake president, president of the Lima Peru North Mission (1992–95), and Area Seventy.

He married Maria Isabel Bendezu in March 1979. They are the parents of five children. ■



**Elder Patrick Kearon**

*Presidency of the Seventy*

While serving as President of the Europe Area, Elder Patrick Kearon witnessed the journey of two million ref-ugees from the war-torn Middle East to safety in Europe. “After looking into their eyes and hearing their stories both of the ter-ror they had fled and of their perilous journey to find refuge, I will never be the same,” he said. “It has been inspiring to witness what Church members from around the world have generously donated to help these individuals and families who have lost so much.”

Elder Kearon, who was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 3, 2010, was called to the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1, 2017.

Elder Kearon was born in Carlisle, Cumberland, England, in July 1961, to Paddy and Patricia Kearon. With his father serv-ing in the British Royal Air Force, Elder Kearon was educated in the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

While investigating the Church, he came upon a scripture in the Book of Mormon that read, “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). “That scripture rang in my ears,” Elder Kearon says. “In those I had met, I saw how our lives can be enormously enriched by following the Savior’s counsel to be of good cheer.” He joined the Church on Christmas Eve of 1987.

He met Jennifer Carole Hulme while she was studying in England with Brigham Young University. They were married in the Oakland California Temple in 1991 and lived in England until his call in 2010. They are the parents of four children.

He has lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United States in various industries, including health care, food, transport, and automotive, and he ran his own communications consultancy. His civic and community involvement has included service on the boards of charities, a school, an enterprise agency, and a college.

Elder Kearon has served in numerous Church callings, including assistant ward clerk, ward Young Men president, counselor in a bishopric, branch president, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■

## Help in Times of Trouble

Following a hurricane and severe flooding in Houston, Texas, USA, an elderly woman saw Latter-day Saints dressed in yellow Helping Hands T-shirts on their way to assist victims of the devastation. “I knew the Mormons would come!” she said.

This event, reported in a Facebook post by the president of the Texas Houston South Mission, Aaron T. Hall, represents how the Church comes to the aid of both members and neighbors during times of trouble. “There is no challenge too great for the members of the Lord’s Church!” President Hall wrote.

When disaster strikes, the Church is often among the first to respond, and in affected areas, Church humanitarian aid often continues during both short-term and long-term recovery, with the goal of establishing self-reliance. Local leaders collaborate with Church headquarters in assessing and providing for needs and in organizing members to assist with distribution of resources, cleanup, restoration, and rebuilding.

Through LDS Charities and partnering with established relief agencies in affected areas, the Church has recently

provided aid to victims of flooding in Peru; mudslides in Sierra Leone; wildfires in Montana, USA, and Alberta, Canada; hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Caribbean islands, including Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic; and two powerful earthquakes in Mexico.

In September, the Church announced that it will provide U.S. \$11 million to support famine relief projects and feed malnourished children in eight countries in Africa and the Middle East. LDS Charities is partnering with 11 organizations on 25 projects to distribute the aid.

LDS Charities has provided nearly \$2 billion in assistance to millions of people in 189 countries since 1985, starting with relief provided to victims of famine in Ethiopia. ■

*Those who wish to donate to the Church’s Humanitarian Aid Fund can do so through [donations.lds.org](https://donations.lds.org) or with their tithing slip.*

*To learn about opportunities to serve, go to [justserve.org](https://justserve.org).*

## Three Temples Dedicated

Since the April 2017 general conference, three temples have been dedicated or rededicated. The Paris France Temple was dedicated in May, the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple (USA) in June, and the Tucson Arizona Temple (USA) in August.

The Meridian Idaho Temple (USA) will be dedicated on November 19, 2017; the Cedar City Utah Temple (USA) on December 10; and the Jordan River Utah Temple (USA) will be rededicated on May 20, 2018.

Plans have been announced, or preparation and construction continue, for 23 temples around the world. Six temples are currently closed for renovation, and five temples are scheduled to close for renovation in 2018. ■

*Find updates and information at [temples.lds.org](https://temples.lds.org).*



## Prophets, Apostles Minister Worldwide

Prophets and apostles are called as “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23). Here are some of their activities since April general conference.

President Thomas S. Monson quietly celebrated his 90th birthday in **Utah, USA**, on August 21. He reiterated a birthday wish he has expressed before, that the best gift he could receive would be for people to “find someone who is having a hard time or is ill or lonely and do something for them.”

In Hamilton, **New Zealand**, President Henry B. Eyring dedicated facilities at Temple View, formerly the campus of the Church College of New Zealand. After Hurricane Irma, he visited **Puerto Rico, Saint Thomas**, and Church volunteers assisting with cleanup efforts in **Florida, USA**.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf visited **Texas, USA**, and witnessed teams of Latter-day Saints in Houston working alongside their neighbors following Hurricane Harvey, saying that the “help-however-I-can” attitude is common to Latter-day Saints all over the world.

President Russell M. Nelson presented the governor of **Nebraska, USA**, with a volume of family history, visited leaders and missionaries in **New York, USA**, and told institute students in **Utah** that the Bible is “replete with prophecies about . . . the Restoration.”

After visiting members in **Japan** and **Korea**, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “The Lord is mindful of His children. He knows their circumstances and concerns and is gracious in His love.” In a Face to Face event in Korea, he replied to questions from youth. He met with

the minister in charge of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. And at the request of the president of **Peru**, Elder Oaks visited to receive the president’s thanks for the Church’s help during floods.

In **Utah**, Elder Ballard encouraged young single adults to observe the Sabbath as “a wonderful and glorious time” and to study fundamental principles and doctrines of the Church. He told temple workers that the temples built now will also be used during the Millennium. With Elder Ronald A. Rasband, he visited **Texas** to encourage volunteers cleaning up hurricane and flood damage.

Elder Robert D. Hales received the 2017 Pioneers of Progress President’s Award from a community organization in **Utah**. “To be able to help one another, to lift one another, to strengthen one another is the greatest attribute, I think, of being a pioneer,” he said.

In **Russia** and **Ukraine**, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught that life is meant to have trials, but the gospel provides perspective, hope, and encouragement. At the Second Windsor Conference on Religious Persecution in **England**, he said that faith helps many to rebound from refugee status and contribute to society. Following the conference, he offered counsel to Church members, mission presidents, and missionaries in **Portugal** and **Spain**.

Elder David A. Bednar visited three West African nations not previously visited by an Apostle: **Senegal**, where he offered a dedicatory prayer; **Guinea**; and **Mali**. He also met with members in **Nigeria** and **Ghana**. During a



worldwide devotional originating from **North Carolina, USA**, he encouraged young adults to be “a welding link” in their eternal family chain.

Elder Quentin L. Cook met with members and missionaries in **Taiwan, Hong Kong, India**, and **Thailand**, noting that “the members are excited about the Church, focusing on temple and missionary work.” In **New Jersey, USA**, he spoke at the Seymour Institute Seminar on Religious Freedom. “We should continue our ongoing and critical efforts to increase morality and protect families,” he said. In **California, USA**, he encouraged law society members to maintain faith and balance in their lives and to defend religious freedom.

In **Ecuador** and **Colombia**, Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught that belief in Christ’s Resurrection will comfort and sustain us. In **India**, he



*Clockwise, from top far left: President Henry B. Eyring attends the Temple View dedication in New Zealand; President Dieter F. Uchtdorf hugs a young Helping Hands volunteer after Hurricane Harvey in Texas, USA; Elder Jeffrey R. Holland speaks with Baroness Emma Nicholson at the Second Windsor Conference on Religious Persecution; Elder Ronald A. Rasband greets a sister during his visit in South Africa; Elder Christofferson greets students at Kamalabai Joshi School in Kenjal, India; Elder Quentin L. Cook visits with Church members in Taiwan.*

accepted a World Peace Prize on behalf of the Church and presented copies of the Book of Mormon in Nepali to the president and vice president of **Nepal** and to the Kathmandu Branch.

Months before the hurricanes and floods, Elder Neil L. Andersen visited **Puerto Rico, Haiti,** and the **Dominican Republic**, speaking about self-reliance, education, and preparing to receive the blessings of the temple. At LDS Family Education Night at Arizona State University in **Arizona, USA**, he encouraged Latter-day Saints to “open our doors, appreciate the beliefs of others, [and] learn more about them.” Elder Andersen created the 100th stake in the **Philippines** and dedicated the expanded missionary training center in Manila.

In **South Africa** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**,

Elder Ronald A. Rasband noted that with three temples in operation in Africa and five more that are being built or have been announced, “the Lord is preparing the African people to receive all of His blessings.”

Elder Gary E. Stevenson visited **Vanuatu, Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia,** and Brigham Young University–Hawaii in **Hawaii, USA**. “As we . . . look at our challenges through the lens of the gospel, we will find answers which bring us happiness and joy,” he said. He met with the president and prime minister of Vanuatu and the archbishop of Papeete, Tahiti.

Elder Dale G. Renlund visited five nations in June: **Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua,** and **Honduras**, organizing the first Q’eqchi’-speaking stake in Guatemala and participating in a religious liberties

conference and a youth conference. In August, he and his wife, Sister Ruth L. Renlund, participated in the first Face to Face event originating from **Accra, Ghana**, and in September he encouraged students at Brigham Young University–Idaho in **Idaho, USA**, to rely on the doctrine of Christ. ■

*Up-to-date information on the ministry of these Church leaders can be found on their respective Facebook pages and at [prophets.lds.org](http://prophets.lds.org).*

## Resources for Hearing Impaired

**T**o assist members who are hearing impaired, Church-provided technologies are available in temples and meetinghouses,” states a notice sent to leaders worldwide on September 14, 2017. “Leaders should become familiar with these technologies and ensure that all who may benefit are aware of and have access to the equipment.”

In temples, hearing-impaired members can request headsets that use an infrared system that broadcasts within the temple. In meetinghouses, members can access a radio frequency system through either (1) radio frequency (RF) assistive listening receivers, pocket devices that use the chapel or cultural hall audio system to amplify sound to an earpiece, or (2) assistive listening system (ALS) neck loops that broadcast sound directly to an individual’s T-coil-compatible hearing aid.

The notice further instructs that “wards and branches should have multiple [RF] receivers and [ALS] neck loops. As needed, additional devices may be requested through the stake physical facilities representative.” ■

*More information about assistive listening systems is available at [mhtech.lds.org](http://mhtech.lds.org). For information about hearing loss, deafness, and sign language, see [disability.lds.org](http://disability.lds.org).*

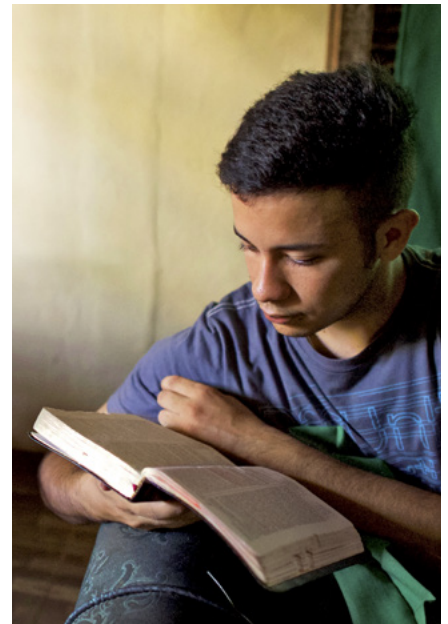
## New Scripture Translations

**N**ew scripture translation projects approved over the last several years include the Book of Mormon in Burmese, Efik, Georgian, Navajo, Pohnpeian, Sesotho, and Tshiluba and the triple combination of the scriptures in American Sign Language, Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Bislama, Greek, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hmong, Lao, Lingala, Malay, Persian, Polish, Serbian, Setswana, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Tok Pisin, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, and Yoruba.

In a letter dated October 9, 2017, the First Presidency listed these projects and introduced a new process that will allow individuals to study draft portions of translations prior to publication of final translations.

“As translations proceed, completed portions can be released in sequence from time to time,” the letter states. “These sequential portions, although not considered final until the full translation is completed, will be made available on [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) and in the Gospel Library mobile application.” The initial release for a few selected languages will begin on November 30, 2017. As translations are completed, with the necessary reviews and approvals, the earlier sequential releases will be replaced by final versions, with printed editions to follow.

Translation projects take several years as scripture texts are carefully translated. Therefore, projects are currently in various stages. The initial release of approved draft translations will include content that has been translated and reviewed by local leaders. Additional portions of translations will continue to be released periodically.



Translations that are currently nearing completion will not have drafts published.

The First Presidency asks that while translation projects are under way or pending, members and leaders “continue using the current translations of the Articles of Faith, sacrament prayers, and baptismal prayer until new translations are complete.”

LDS editions of the scriptures are translated and available in the following number of languages: the Holy Bible, 3; preferred non-LDS editions of the Holy Bible, 95; the Book of Mormon, 90; Selections from the Book of Mormon, 21; and the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, 58. ■

## Missionary Training Centers

A new missionary training center in Accra, Ghana, and an expanded missionary training center in Provo, Utah, USA, demonstrate the continuing importance of missionary service.

The recently finished Ghana MTC, next to the Accra Ghana Temple, accommodates 320 missionaries and has room to grow. The larger facility accommodates missionaries leaving from west and southeast Africa, as well as missionaries from around the world who have been called to serve in Africa. The new buildings make it easier for missionaries to learn in their native language—English or French—and learn the language and culture of the area where they have been assigned to labor.

The expansion of the Philippines MTC doubles its capacity to 280

missionaries. It includes two new buildings on a five-building campus, located adjacent to the Philippines Area offices and across the street from the Manila Philippines Temple. Since the Philippines MTC opened in 1983, it has served missionaries from, or going to, 60 nations.

The expansion at the Provo MTC includes two new six-story buildings with 200 new classrooms, more than 100 practice teaching rooms, and 13 computer labs where missionaries receive training before they are sent to their assigned areas around the world. The Provo MTC has the capacity to train as many as 3,700 young men, young women, and senior missionaries at a time.

The Church has 15 missionary training centers at various locations worldwide. ■



An instructor at the new Ghana Missionary Training Center listens as missionaries discuss how to teach the gospel.



## Sister Bingham at United Nations

Speaking during a faith-based panel discussion about refugee integration at the United Nations in New York City on April 13, 2017, Relief Society General President Jean B. Bingham expressed hope that faith-based organizations “will all work together through small and simple means to accomplish extraordinary things.”

During the annual “Focus on Faith” briefing, Sister Bingham discussed the Church’s humanitarian efforts with refugees and expressed sincere appreciation to all who are engaged in the “challenging but deeply rewarding work” of relieving suffering throughout the world.

Sister Bingham had recently returned from a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) field visit to Uganda with Sister Sharon Eubank, First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency and director of LDS Charities. Sister Eubank also attended the U.N. meeting in New York City. ■

*For more information about what you can do to help refugees, go to [IWasAStranger.lds.org](http://IWasAStranger.lds.org). Read the transcript of Sister Bingham’s address at [mormonnewsroom.org/article/sister-bingham-united-nations-transcript](http://mormonnewsroom.org/article/sister-bingham-united-nations-transcript).*

# A New Direction for Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society Sunday Meetings

*The new curriculum brings exciting changes to our Sunday meetings that build on Teaching in the Savior's Way. Our first-Sunday meeting will be a time to counsel together about our responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges as we do the work of the Lord. On other Sundays, instead of a new Teachings of Presidents of the Church manual, we will focus on teaching messages from the most recent general conference and a topic selected by our general Church leaders. But these changes aren't just the topics we will study—the new curriculum also affects how we prepare, teach, counsel and learn together, and receive and act on inspiration. Members and leaders in Mexico and in Utah, California, and Georgia in the United States participated in a test of the new materials. Here are some of their insights and experiences:*

“**W**hat will I do without a manual?” thought Nancy Feragen, a Relief Society teacher, when she first reviewed a copy of *Come, Follow Me—For Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society*. “At first, I panicked,” she admitted. “Then the thought came to me: The Lord wants us to take more responsibility for our own learning and increase our spirituality as brothers and sisters in the gospel.”

“It is a little scary to trust in the Lord and come prepared to lead a discussion without lots of material,” said Linda Harmon, a Relief Society president, “but once you do it—if you have prepared yourself through prayer, study, going to the temple, and whatever else you are inspired to do—it is amazing.”

## TEACHING IN THE SAVIOR'S WAY

“One challenge with the new curriculum is getting people not to teach ‘the

old way,’” said Bishop Boyd Roberts. “We’ve got to stop simply disseminating information, get out of the way, and let the Spirit teach.”

“It’s a new way of teaching that might be difficult for some people,” said Lisa Smith, a Relief Society president, referring to *Teaching in the Savior's Way*. “That’s why it’s important to model good teaching methods and encourage leaders to consistently attend teacher council meetings with the teachers,” she said.

## PREPARING AND TEACHING

David Mickelson, a high priest group teacher, said that the phrase “teach ye diligently” in Doctrine and Covenants 88:78 “has to do with our preparation beforehand and our ability to diligently follow the Spirit while we’re teaching. If we teach diligently, the Savior’s grace will attend us and we will be taught more perfectly. I think that’s the Lord’s perfect way of teaching. The teacher—the person leading the discussion—has to be willing to be taught by the Spirit.”

Adam Bushman, an elders quorum teacher, prepared for lessons by reviewing the selected general conference



talk, then prayerfully considering which concepts are most important for the quorum. “To help the men have more time to ponder,” he explains, “an email goes out during the week that says, ‘This is a talk we’re going to be discussing and we’d like you to consider the following questions.’”

### COUNSELING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

“Sundays in Relief Society are no longer just the responsibility of the leaders,” said Brooke Jensen, a counselor in a Relief Society presidency. “Each member takes an active role.”

Brother Bushman felt that sitting in a circle made a difference. “I love it,” he said. “It changes the nature of the conversation. It changes people’s expectations. Now there’s a lot more participation. Instead of the two or three brethren who usually answer the question, new people are commenting.”

When Rebecca Siebach, a Relief Society sister, first heard about the new focus on councils, she immediately thought of friends who had become less active. “I knew their concerns,” she said. “They had been open with me about their insecurities and struggles to come to church, and I thought, this is the perfect opportunity to reach out to them and say, ‘We need you in our council! Please come and share!’”

“When I finally spoke up during a council meeting,” said LonaMarie Cook, a counselor in a Relief Society presidency, “it was awesome to have people validate what I was thinking and to be a part of that community.”

### RECEIVING AND ACTING ON INSPIRATION

“We’re creating an environment for the Spirit to teach and for us to hear and listen,” said Bishop Roberts. “The Spirit

then becomes the teacher, showing us what we need to do in our personal lives, families, and callings. What we do as a result of those promptings is what leads to true conversion and service.”

Susan Farr, a Relief Society president, said, “This method pushes us to get up and do, not just walk away from the lesson thinking ‘that was inspiring’ but then soon forgetting it. Counseling together helps us see that the learning and actions belong to all of us—not just the teacher.”

“As we record our impressions and then act upon them, we exercise a change of heart and become better servants of the Lord,” said Susan Mitchell, a counselor in a Relief Society presidency.

“Knowing that you are going to be held accountable for something and that someone is going to ask you how you felt,” said Sister Smith, “makes you an active participant in building your testimony.”

Landen Roundy, a high priests group leader, said emailing notes of what was discussed and planned “helps members recognize experiences they’re having during the week that they might want to share the following Sunday.”

“From those notes,” Bishop Roberts added, “I’ve seen a continued spirit of sharing and learning throughout the week as the brethren discuss through email additional thoughts and feelings, strengthening their quorum.”

“The Lord wants us to turn our hearts to one another and that can be done when we meet with purpose,” concluded Sister Siebach. “This new curriculum helps us identify topics of interest, set goals, look to the right source for answers, receive personal revelation, and be edified by one another as we turn to living prophets for the answers we need in our day.” ■

## HOW CAN WE PREPARE?

The new *Come, Follow Me* resources for Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society meetings will be used throughout the Church beginning in January 2018. So what can Church units do to prepare for this change?

- Spend some time in an upcoming ward council looking over the resources together and discussing what may be different. What benefits will come?
- Invite the ward council to suggest topics for first-Sunday council meetings that will help meet the needs of the ward or branch. Priesthood and Relief Society leaders can decide when and how their organizations will address these needs.
- Introduce and discuss the new resources during an upcoming quorum, group, or Relief Society meeting. What can each member do to be prepared for these changes?
- Encourage priesthood and Relief Society teachers and leaders to attend teacher council meetings to share and discuss their experiences, challenges, and questions about the new resources.

## Glimpse into a Council Meeting

It's Sunday morning, and 45 sisters of the Bugambilias Ward in Guadalajara, Mexico, sit in council. After the opening hymn, Relief Society president Yara Ramirez invites some of them to share experiences from their lesson the week before.

After the sisters share their experiences for a few minutes, Sister Ramirez writes a single word on the board before taking her seat back in the circle.

"Unity," it says.

Under Sister Ramirez's direction, they turn to Mosiah 18:21 and read, "... having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."

"What can we as a Relief Society do to put this scripture into practice?" she asks.

The sisters think for a few moments. "Well, the youth can't go to the temple," one sister shares. "There aren't enough adult sisters to go with them."

"I had no idea," says another, looking surprised. "If you don't know there's a need," she asks, "how can you help?"

"That is why we're here," answers Sister Ramirez. "There are needs like this that I learn about during ward council that we can all help with."

"Why don't we make a calendar?" someone suggests. The group now becomes more interested. "I think the youth have a scheduled time at the temple one Thursday a month."

"I'm having trouble going to the temple myself," admits a young mother in the group. "I haven't been there in a long time, and I've been feeling a bit self-absorbed. I would love to go and serve," she says.

Several others nod in agreement. They too find it difficult to attend as often as they want.

Another young mother suggests that they trade babysitting with each other and take turns going to the temple.

Then the sisters start asking each other where they live and who lives by which youth. They discuss how they could take turns helping the youth get to their activities.

"Well, we'll need to get to know one another too," someone says. "We should have activities!"

Sisters continue to comment, offering suggestions and asking questions.

At the end of the council, Sister Ramirez asks her secretary to summarize the minutes. "How did you all feel during the council?" she asks.

They respond that they felt more aware of everyone's needs, that their

service was needed, and that they were among friends.

"Based on what we've experienced today, what specific actions do we want to focus on this month as a Relief Society?" she asks.

As a group, they decide to have a potluck meal that Sunday after church, start playing volleyball on Thursday nights, make a calendar for attending the temple, and plan how to help youth get to activities.

"We've experienced unity today," Sister Ramirez concludes, inviting each sister to think of ways she could serve during the week. "The Holy Ghost will continue to give us promptings as we act individually and as a Relief Society. I invite you to be ready to share your experiences next Sunday." ■

### SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

- Be patient and allow the Lord to teach you what it means to counsel together.
- There are principles we can keep in mind: Follow the Spirit, share your thoughts, and act on impressions.
- Keep your heart and mind open to new ideas, views, and solutions.
- Before each meeting ends, think about what the Spirit has taught you; then decide how you will act on His promptings.



*Relief Society sisters in Guadalajara, Mexico, sit in council.*



## Come, Follow Me—For Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society



Find these resources on the  
Gospel Library app and at  
[comefollowme.lds.org](https://comefollowme.lds.org).



## What Is Different?

In these latter days, God has restored the priesthood and organized priesthood quorums and the Relief Society to help accomplish His work (see Moses 1:39). So each Sunday when we gather in Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society meetings, we gather to discuss and plan how we will accomplish His work. That is why these meetings

need to be more than classes. They are also opportunities to counsel about the work of salvation, learn together from the teachings of Church leaders about that work, and organize to accomplish it. These changes to our Sunday meetings will help us fulfill these purposes.

### A Monthly Schedule

Sunday Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society meetings will follow this monthly schedule:

WEEK	PURPOSE
First Sunday	Counsel together about local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges and make plans to act.
Second and Third Sundays	Study recent general conference messages chosen by presidency or group leaders or, on occasion, by the bishop or stake president.
Fourth Sunday	Discuss a special topic chosen by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.
Fifth Sunday	Address a topic chosen by the bishopric.

### A Pattern for Our Meetings

In each of our Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society meetings, we follow a pattern to accomplish God's work.

1. *Share experiences* resulting from impressions and invitations received in previous priesthood or Relief Society meetings (led by a presidency member or group leader).
2. *Counsel together* (first Sunday, led by a presidency member or group leader) or *learn together* (second, third, and fourth Sundays, led by a called teacher).
3. *Plan to act* as a group or as individuals (led by a presidency member or group leader).



## FIRST-SUNDAY COUNCIL MEETINGS

On the first Sunday of each month, quorum, group, and Relief Society meetings *will not include a lesson taught by a teacher*. Instead, presidencies or group leaders will lead a council meeting. Each quorum, group, or Relief Society

will counsel together about local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges; learn from each other's insights and experiences; and plan ways to act on impressions received from the Spirit.

### Before the Council Meeting

- Leaders identify local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges and prayerfully choose a topic to discuss.
- Everyone seeks the guidance of the Spirit.
- Everyone prepares to share thoughts and experiences.

### During the Council Meeting

- Leaders invite members to share experiences acting on impressions they've had from previous meetings.
- Everyone counsels together about the topic, listens to each other, and seeks the guidance of the Spirit.
- Leaders summarize key points and extend invitations to act.

### After the Council Meeting

- Everyone acts on impressions and invitations, together and as individuals.
- Everyone prepares to share their experiences in future meetings.



**"REVELATION IS  
SCATTERED AMONG US."**<sup>1</sup>

Elder Neil L. Andersen

**"WE ARE HIS HANDS."**<sup>2</sup>

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### NOTES

1. Neil L. Andersen, in Adam C. Olson, "Handbook Training Emphasizes Work of Salvation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2011, 76.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Are My Hands," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 68.

### Principles of Counseling Together

Not all council meetings look alike. Let the Lord teach you. Here are some principles to get you started:

1. The purpose of a council meeting is to counsel together about local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges; learn from each other's insights and experiences; and plan ways to act on impressions received from the Spirit.
2. A council meeting should lead to action—individual and group plans, inspired by the Spirit, to act outside of the meeting to accomplish the Lord's work (see D&C 43:8–9).
3. Councils should use the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets and apostles, other General Authorities, and General Officers to guide and support the discussion. In this way, the words of inspired Church leaders can help quorums, groups, and Relief Societies address important needs.
4. Discussions should not touch on confidential or sensitive issues about individual members or families.
5. Even though the council meeting is led by a member of the presidency or group leadership, he or she does not dominate the sharing. The leader introduces an issue for discussion and invites everyone to share thoughts and experiences, as guided by the Spirit.
6. While no one should feel pressured to participate, everyone should feel safe sharing comments and ideas without fear of being criticized.
7. Where possible, sitting in a circle can help cultivate a spirit of sharing and open discussion.

### Possible Topics for First-Sunday Council Meetings

Ideas for topics to discuss in council meetings may come from the ward council, presidency meetings, the area plan,

leaders' impressions from ministering to members, and impressions from the Holy Ghost. The topics below are suggestions only. Leaders may be aware of other needs that they feel inspired to address.

- How can we better prioritize all of our different responsibilities?
- How can we come closer to God and receive more guidance from the Spirit in our lives and in our homes?
- How will we share the gospel with our friends and neighbors? (see Alma 17).
- How can we protect ourselves and our families from inappropriate media and pornography? (see D&C 42:22–23).
- What will we do to help mentor and strengthen our children and the youth in our ward?
- How do we increase unity in our quorum, group, or Relief Society? (see Mosiah 18:19–22).
- How can we be more involved in family history work and temple worship?
- How do we invite the Lord's help as we seek answers to our questions and a deeper understanding of the gospel?
- How can parents become better leaders in the home?
- How can we strengthen our testimonies of the Lord and His gospel and help our families to be spiritually self-reliant?
- What does it mean to minister? How are we ministering to those around us? (see 1 Peter 4:11).

If possible, leaders may want to let members know about the topic in advance so they can come prepared to discuss it.



## SECOND- AND THIRD-SUNDAY MEETINGS

On the second and third Sundays of each month, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies study the teachings of the living prophets, Apostles, and other Church leaders from the most recent general conference. **Any message from the most recent conference may be discussed.**

In most cases, the quorum presidency, group leadership, or Relief Society presidency will select a conference message to study based on the needs of the members, although the bishop or stake president may give input. Leaders may choose a message related to the topic discussed in the first-Sunday council meeting, or they may choose another message based on the inspiration of the Spirit. Leaders and teachers should find ways to encourage members to read the selected messages in advance and come prepared to share insights. The suggested learning activities below, which are based on principles in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, can engage members in learning from general conference messages.

### Sharon Eubank, “Turn On Your Light”

Ask members of your quorum or Relief Society to think about how their lives have been influenced for good by a righteous and faithful woman. Consider inviting a few members to share how this woman illustrates one or more of the characteristics of righteous women outlined in Sister Eubank’s message. What do we learn from Sister Eubank about how we can become “a *significant force* in both the numerical and the spiritual growth of the Church in the last days”?



### Neill F. Marriott, “Abiding in God and Repairing the Breach”

This message can help members who may feel separated from Heavenly Father or from those around them. What would help those you teach understand what a breach is? Maybe you could bring pictures of different kinds of breaches. How does Sister Marriott define *breach*? What can cause breaches in our relationships with God and others? Invite members to search Sister Marriott’s message for suggestions about what we can do to repair breaches in our lives. Give members time to write down what the Spirit prompts them to do to draw closer to God and others.

### Joy D. Jones, “Value beyond Measure”

What blessings flow into our lives when we understand our divine identity? To answer this question, members of your quorum or Relief Society could review together the stories of Mariama, Renu, and Taiana in Sister Jones’s message. What counsel does Sister Jones give to help us “remember and embrace our divine identity”? Invite members to find and discuss a scripture passage or a quotation in Sister Jones’s message that helps them understand their true worth to God. Invite them to share one of these scriptures or quotations with someone

who needs a reminder of his or her divine worth.

### Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Three Sisters”

One way to review President Uchtdorf’s message would be to divide the quorum or Relief Society into small groups. You could assign each group to read about one of the sisters in President Uchtdorf’s message. Each group could write a letter to that sister summarizing his counsel and share what they wrote with the other groups. What can we do to be more like the third sister? How can we make our quorum or Relief Society a “safe home” for those who are struggling?

### Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “A Yearning for Home”

How can you help those you teach recognize how God is using them to bless others? You could invite them to review the section of President Uchtdorf’s message titled “God Will Use You,” looking for promises made to those who strive to serve in God’s kingdom despite their weaknesses. Reading this message may also remind members of experiences they could share in which God used them to bless others—or when He used others to bless them. Give members time to ponder what they feel inspired to do because of this discussion.

**Bonnie L. Oscarson**, *“The Needs before Us”*

One way to start a discussion about Sister Oscarson’s message is to give everyone a piece of paper with “Who needs me today?” written at the top. Members of your Relief Society or quorum could take a few minutes pondering and listing answers to this question. Then they could search Sister Oscarson’s message for ideas about how they could serve the people on their list—or add names as inspired. A few could share what they have learned.

**Dallin H. Oaks**, *“The Plan and the Proclamation”*

How will the members of your quorum, group, or Relief Society act on Elder Oaks’s invitation to “teach [and] live by” the family proclamation, at home, in the community, and at church? Invite them to share ideas with each other. It might also help to search the message for some doctrinal statements from the family proclamation. How do these statements help us respond to “current challenges to the family”? Section IV of Elder Oaks’s message contains some examples of such statements.

**D. Todd Christofferson**, *“The Living Bread Which Came Down from Heaven”*

Here are some questions that Relief Society and quorum members could have in mind as they review Elder Christofferson’s message: What is holiness? How do we seek after holiness? How does partaking of the sacrament help us in our efforts? Members could share words from Elder Christofferson’s message that help answer these questions. How do we help each other as “fellow Saints” in our efforts to become more holy?

**Jeffrey R. Holland**, *“Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually”*

Some of those you teach may feel that they do not measure up when it comes to living the Savior’s teachings. What does Elder Holland teach that can comfort and encourage those who might feel this way? You could invite Relief Society or quorum members to look for something in this message that they might share with someone who is struggling to feel that they are “good enough.” Or they could find something in the message that inspires them to feel “greater love and admiration for [Christ] and a greater desire to be like Him.”

**Gary E. Stevenson**, *“Spiritual Eclipse”*

Have any of your quorum or Relief Society members experienced a solar eclipse? If so, you could invite one of them to explain the analogy that Elder Stevenson shares about a “spiritual eclipse.” What obstacles can “block out the magnitude, brightness, and warmth of the light of Jesus Christ and His gospel”? How can social media distract us from “the beauty, warmth, and heavenly light of the gospel”? How do we put on “gospel glasses” that protect us from spiritual blindness? What does Elder Stevenson’s analogy teach us about maintaining a gospel perspective?

**Quentin L. Cook**, *“The Eternal Everyday”*

Elder Cook’s message reminds us of the importance of striving to be humble in various ways. One way to discuss what he teaches is to divide members into two groups. Ask one group to look for suggestions in Elder Cook’s message that might help us develop humility, and the other group to look for ways that people manifest pride. Invite each group to share their description with the other group. Members could also share ways they can show more “everyday humility” in

their lives and consider how this humility might help them prepare to meet God.

**Ronald A. Rasband**, *“By Divine Design”*

To encourage discussion about Elder Rasband’s message, it might be helpful to invite a few members to bring a sewing pattern, a blueprint, or a recipe and talk about why these are helpful. What examples or teachings from Elder Rasband’s message inspire members to recognize God’s design for their lives? Perhaps class members could share experiences in which they saw that the Lord was directing their lives. What have they done to show God that they “treasure” His direction? Why is it important to recognize God’s “divine design”?

**Russell M. Nelson**, *“The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?”*

President Nelson invited members to think about three questions: (1) “What would your life be like *without* the Book of Mormon?” (2) “What would you *not know*?” (3) “What would you *not have*?” Invite members of your quorum, group, or Relief Society to ponder these questions and share how they would answer them. What do they find in this message that inspires them to value the Book of Mormon more than “diamonds or rubies”?

**Dale G. Renlund**, *“The Priesthood and the Savior’s Atoning Power”*

How can you help members of your quorum or Relief Society understand how the priesthood helps make the blessings of the Savior’s Atonement available to them? You might write these two headings on the board: “Why we need the Atonement of Jesus Christ” and “How the priesthood ‘delivers’ the blessings of the Atonement to us.” Then invite members to search Elder Renlund’s message, looking for phrases to write under each

heading. How do the priesthood and its ordinances help fulfill Heavenly Father's purposes for His children?

**Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Bearers of Heavenly Light"**

Invite members to search President Uchtdorf's message and identify how the presence or absence of divine light can affect our lives. You could invite members to study some of the scriptures that President Uchtdorf references and identify truths related to spiritual light. What does the metaphor about the eclipse teach us about the role of agency in seeking spiritual light? What can we do to share Jesus Christ's divine light with others, especially with our families and with "our youth, who are seeking light"?

**Henry B. Eyring, "The Lord Leads His Church"**

Invite the members of your quorum or Relief Society members to share experiences in which they needed to develop faith that their calling or another's calling came from God. How did they exercise their faith? How did they come to learn that the calling was from God? Invite members to search President Eyring's message and identify truths he learned from personal experience that can help us trust and be patient with ourselves and others whom the Lord has called.

**Jean B. Bingham, "That Your Joy Might Be Full"**

Sister Bingham's message can help members of your Relief Society or quorum understand how to find joy, despite life's difficulties, as we come unto Christ. One way to discuss her message might be to draw a path on the board leading to the word *joy*. Invite several members to write on the path a suggestion from Sister Bingham's message that leads to true joy. Encourage members to consider



ways they can act on Sister Bingham's counsel. Invite several members to share their thoughts.

**David A. Bednar, "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises"**

To help members of your Relief Society or quorum discuss Elder Bednar's message, you could put pictures on the board to represent the Sabbath, the temple, and our homes. Invite members to read the corresponding sections of Elder Bednar's message and write on the board how the Sabbath day, the temple, and our homes help us focus on God's promises to us. What things in our lives might pull our attention away from these promises? What steps can we take to make sure that we remember them?

**Henry B. Eyring, "Fear Not to Do Good"**

President Eyring's message can help those you teach find the courage and faith to do good in the world. You could invite a few members to summarize the examples of faithful people President Eyring shares. What do these examples teach us about how to serve others? What do these examples suggest about ways we can serve as a quorum or Relief Society?

Another way to discuss this message is to review the blessings that President Eyring saw from following President Thomas S. Monson's counsel to study the Book of Mormon. What blessings

have we seen from studying the Book of Mormon?

**M. Russell Ballard, "The Trek Continues!"**

To begin a discussion about Elder Ballard's message, you could invite someone to share an experience when they had a destination but discovered they were on the wrong route. How do examples like these relate to our personal "trek" back to Heavenly Father? Members could then search for counsel and warnings that Elder Ballard gives that can help us know if we are headed in the right direction in our own lives. Give members time to ponder their own paths and to discuss ways we can help and encourage others in their "trek" back to Heavenly Father.

**Neil L. Andersen, "The Voice of the Lord"**

Perhaps members of your Relief Society or quorum could share an experience in which a general conference message felt particularly meaningful to them. Why were these messages meaningful? What does Elder Andersen teach about the significance of general conference messages and the effort and process involved in preparing them? How should this knowledge affect the urgency with which we study and heed these words? Consider making a list of invitations from the most recent conference. What have we done to act on these invitations?

## FOURTH-SUNDAY MEETINGS

On the fourth Sunday of each month, quorums, groups, and Relief Societies discuss a topic selected by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. These topics will be updated with every general conference. The topic until the next general conference will be the Sabbath day. Leaders or teachers may choose from the doctrines and learning activities suggested below, combine several of them, or create their own according to the needs of members.

### **The Sabbath is a day to remember what God has done for us.**

Throughout history, God has associated certain mighty works with the Sabbath. These mighty works include the Creation (see Genesis 2:1–3), the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt (see Deuteronomy 5:15), and the Savior's Resurrection (see John 20:1–19; Acts 20:7). Invite members to review these passages and discuss how remembering each of these events can help us honor the Sabbath day. What are some of the mighty works that God has done for us? How can we remember these things on the Sabbath day? As applicable, invite members to discuss questions like these in their families.

### **Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath.**

The Sabbath is also called the Lord's day (see Revelation 1:10). Why do you think that Jesus Christ is called the Lord of the Sabbath? (see Matthew 12:8). Review together a few verses that can help inspire members to think of ways to center their Sabbath day experiences on Jesus Christ (for example, Helaman 5:12; Ether 12:41; Moroni 10:32; and D&C 6:36–37). What other verses can members share that could help them make the Sabbath more Christ-centered? What goals can we set to

help us focus on the Savior throughout the Sabbath day?

### **Jesus Christ is our example of honoring the Sabbath.**

During His mortal ministry, the Savior took opportunities to teach about the Sabbath day. Ask members to read the following accounts and make a list of things that Jesus did on the Sabbath and the principles that He taught: Luke 6:1–11; 13:11–17; John 5:1–20; 9:1–16. What other principles about the Sabbath do we learn from the following verses? Exodus 20:8–11; 31:12–18; Isaiah 58:13–14; and D&C 59:9–19. Invite members to share what they can do to follow the Savior's example.

See also Russell M. Nelson, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.

### **The Sabbath is a day to worship.**

Write the word *worship* on the board and ask class members to write other words that are related next to it. Then make three columns with the words *before*, *during*, and *after* at the top of each column. What can we do before, during, and after church to worship the Lord on His holy day? Class members could read together Mosiah 18:17–29 and Moroni 6 for ideas. Invite members to ponder how their attitudes and actions on the Sabbath day are helping them worship the Lord on that day (see Exodus 31:16–17). What can we do to help improve the worship experience our families and ward members are having during Church meetings?

### **Partaking of the sacrament allows us to have the Spirit with us always.**

Write the following question on the board: How is the sacrament affecting your life? To answer this question, invite members to work in pairs to select and

discuss one phrase from the sacrament prayers in Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79 and the counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 59:9. Give each pair time to find scriptures that help them better understand their phrase and discuss how they would answer the question on the board. You might also invite class members to choose favorite sacrament hymns and sing them together.

See also Cheryl A. Esplin, "The Sacrament—A Renewal for the Soul," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 12–14.

### **The Sabbath is a day to serve others.**

What can we learn about serving others on the Sabbath from the ways the Savior served and blessed those around Him? Encourage members to review and discuss Matthew 9:10–13; Luke 19:1–9; John 11:32–46; 13:1–5, 12–17; and 3 Nephi 17:5–10. Ask members to think about these scriptures as they consider how they can serve on the Sabbath. For example, they could serve family members, reach out to individuals and families they minister to as home and visiting teachers, work on family history, visit the sick, or share the gospel. Perhaps members could have a family council to plan ways they can serve others on the Sabbath.





*"The gospel plan each family should follow to prepare for eternal life and exaltation is outlined in the Church's 1995 proclamation, 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World.' . . .*

*" . . . It has been the basis of Church teaching and practice for the last 22 years and will continue so for the future. Consider it as such, teach it, live by it, and you will be blessed as you press forward toward eternal life.*

*"Forty years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson taught that 'every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself.' I believe our attitude toward and use of the family proclamation is one of those tests for this generation."*

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Plan and the Proclamation," 29, 30–31.

*The Dance,*  
by Kathleen Peterson



"I bear you my solemn and yet joyful witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the helm. He leads His Church and His servants," said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, during the 187th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. "I bear witness that Thomas S. Monson is the only man who holds and exercises all the keys of the holy priesthood on earth at this time. And I pray blessings on all the humble servants who serve so willingly and well in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, which He leads personally. I testify that Joseph Smith saw God the Father and Jesus Christ. They spoke to him. The keys of the priesthood were restored for the blessing of all of Heavenly Father's children. It is our mission and our trust to serve in our place in the Lord's cause."

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS