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True Disciples of the Savior

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and His gospel become the framework
around which we build our lives.*

Somewhat hidden in the Old Testament book of Haggai is a description of a group of people who could have used Elder Holland’s counsel. They got it wrong by not placing Christ at the center of their lives and their service. Haggai paints some thought-provoking word pictures as he reprimands these people for staying in their comfortable houses instead of building the Lord’s temple:

“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”

“Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.”¹

Don’t you love those descriptions of the futility of prioritizing things of no eternal consequence above the things of God?

In a recent sacrament meeting I attended, a returned missionary quoted

a father who summed up this idea perfectly when he said to his children, “What we need here is less Wi-Fi and more Nephi!”

Having lived in West Africa for five years, I saw plenty of examples of people prioritizing the gospel naturally

and unashamedly. One such example is the name of a tire repair and wheel balancing business in Ghana. The owner has named it “Thy Will Alignment.”

We can feel enduring joy² when our Savior and His gospel become the framework around which we build our lives. However, it’s so easy for that framework to become, instead, the things of the world, where the gospel sits as an optional extra or as simply attending church for two hours on Sundays. When this is the case, it is tantamount to putting our wages into “a bag with holes.”

Haggai is telling us to be committed—to be, as we say in Australia, “fair dinkum” about living the gospel. People are fair dinkum when they are what they say they are.

I learned a little about being fair dinkum and being committed by playing rugby. I learned that when I played my hardest, when I gave my all, my enjoyment of the game was greatest.



My favorite year of rugby was the year after high school. The team of which I was a member was both talented and committed. We were the champion team that year. However, one day we were to play a lowly ranked team, and after the game we all had dates to take to the big, annual college dance. I thought that because this would be an easy game, I should try to protect myself from injury so I would be able to enjoy the dance fully. In that game, we were not as committed in the hard contacts as we might have been, and we lost. To make things worse, I ended the match with a very swollen, fat lip that did not enhance my appearance for my big date. Perhaps I needed to learn something.

A very different experience occurred in a later game in which I was totally committed. At one point I ran with real intent into a contact; immediately I felt some pain in my face. Having been taught by my father that I should never let the opposition know if I was hurt, I continued to play out the game. That night, while trying to eat, I found that I couldn't bite. The next morning, I went to the hospital, where an X-ray confirmed that my jaw was broken. My mouth was wired shut for the next six weeks.

Lessons were learned from this parable of the fat lip and the broken jaw. Despite my memories of unsatisfied cravings for solid food during the six weeks when I could ingest only liquids, I feel no regrets about my broken jaw because it resulted from my giving my all. But I do have regrets about the fat lip because it symbolized my holding back.

Giving our all doesn't mean that we will be continually enveloped in blessings or always have success. But it does mean that we will have joy. Joy is not fleeting pleasure or even temporary happiness. Joy is enduring and is founded on our efforts being accepted by the Lord.³

An example of such acceptance is the story of Oliver Granger. As President Boyd K. Packer stated: "When the Saints were driven from Kirtland, . . . Oliver was left behind to sell their properties for what little he could. There was not much chance that he could succeed. And, really, he did not succeed!"⁴ He had been commissioned by the First Presidency to do a task that was difficult, if not impossible. But the Lord commended him for his apparently unsuccessful efforts in these words:

"I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him

that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord.

"Therefore, let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, . . . and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord."⁵

That may be true of all of us—it's not our successes but rather our sacrifice and efforts that matter to the Lord.

Another example of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is a dear friend of ours in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. This wonderful, faithful sister suffered terrible emotional, and even some physical, abuse from her husband over a sustained period of time, and eventually they divorced. She never wavered in her faith and goodness, but because of his cruelty to her, she was deeply hurt for a long time. In her own words, she describes what happened:

"Though I said I forgave him, I always slept with a wound; I spent my days with that wound. It was like a burn in my heart. Many times I prayed to the Lord to take it away from me, but it hurt so bad that I strongly believed I was going to spend the rest of my life with it. It hurt more than when I lost my mom at a young age; it hurt more than when I lost my dad and even my son. It seemed to expand and cover my heart, giving me the impression I was going to even die at any time.

"Some other times I asked myself what the Savior would have done in my situation, and I would rather say, 'This is too much, Lord.'

"Then one morning I looked for the pain that comes from all this in my heart and went deeper, looking for it in my soul. It was nowhere to be found. My mind quickly passed to review all



Terence M. Vinson, standing fourth from left, as a member of his post-high school rugby team



the reasons I [had] to feel hurt, but I did not feel the pain. I waited the whole day to see if I was going to feel the pain in my heart; I did not feel it. Then I knelt down and thanked God for making the atoning sacrifice of the Lord work for me.”⁶

This sister is now happily sealed to a wonderful, faithful man who loves her deeply.

So what should our attitude be if we are true disciples of Christ? And what is the gospel worth to us when we do “consider [our] ways,” as Haggai suggested?

I love the example of the correct attitude shown by King Lamoni’s father. You’ll remember his initial anger at finding his son being accompanied by Ammon, a Nephite—a people whom the Lamanites hated. He drew his sword to

contend with Ammon and soon found Ammon’s sword at his own throat.

“Now the king, fearing he should lose his life, said: If thou wilt spare me I will grant unto thee whatsoever thou wilt ask, even to half of the kingdom.”⁷

Note his offer—half his kingdom for his life.

But later, after understanding the gospel, he made another offer. “The king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”⁸

This time, he was prepared to give up *all* his kingdom, because the gospel was worth more than all he had! He was fair dinkum about the gospel.

So, the question for each of us is, are we also fair dinkum about the gospel? Because being half-hearted is not being fair dinkum! And God is not known for showering praise on the lukewarm.⁹

There is no treasure, nor any hobby, nor any status, nor any social media, nor any video games, nor any sport, nor any association with a celebrity, nor anything on earth that is more precious than eternal life. So the Lord’s counsel to every person is “consider your ways.”

My feelings are best expressed in the words of Nephi: “I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell.”¹⁰

Are we true followers of Him who gave His all for us? He who is our Redeemer and our Advocate with the Father? He who was Himself absolutely committed in His atoning sacrifice and is so now in His love, His mercy, and His desire for us to have eternal joy? I plead with all who hear and read these words: Please, please don’t put your total commitment off until you get around to it at some non-existent, future time. Get fair dinkum now and feel the joy! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Haggai 1:4–7.
2. See John 15:11; Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 8:2; Hebrews 12:2; Moses 5:10, 7:53.
3. See Enos 1:3–6, 27; Doctrine and Covenants 52:15; 97:8–9.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “The Least of These,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 86.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 117:12–13.
6. Personal correspondence.
7. Alma 20:23.
8. Alma 22:15.
9. See Revelation 3:15–16.
10. 2 Nephi 33:6.