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Fruit

Keep your eyes and your hearts centered on the Savior Jesus Christ and the eternal joy that comes only through Him.

I know what you are thinking! Just one more speaker and we will hear from President Nelson. Hoping to keep you alert for a few minutes as we await our beloved prophet, I have selected a very appealing topic: my subject is fruit.

With the color, texture, and sweetness of berries, bananas, watermelons, and mangoes, or of more exotic fruit like kiwano or pomegranate, fruit has long been a treasured delicacy.

During His earthly ministry, the Savior compared good fruit to things of

eternal worth. He said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.”¹ “Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.”² He encouraged us to gather “fruit unto life eternal.”³

In a vivid dream that we all know well in the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi finds himself in “a dark and dreary wilderness.” There is filthy water, a mist of darkness, strange roads, and forbidden paths, as well as a rod of iron⁴ along a strait and narrow path leading to a beautiful tree with “fruit



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[that makes] one happy.” Recounting the dream, Lehi says: “I did . . . partake of the fruit; . . . it was most sweet, above all that I [had] ever . . . tasted. . . . [And] it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy.” *This* fruit was “[more] desirable [than any] other fruit.”⁵

The Meaning of the Tree and the Fruit

What does this tree with its most precious fruit symbolize? It represents “the love of God”⁶ and proclaims our Heavenly Father’s marvelous plan of redemption. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”⁷

This precious fruit symbolizes the wondrous blessings of the Savior’s incomparable Atonement. Not only will we live again following our mortality, but through our faith in Jesus Christ, our repentance, and our keeping the commandments, we can be forgiven of our sins and one day stand clean and pure before our Father and His Son.

Partaking of the fruit of the tree also symbolizes that we embrace the ordinances and covenants of the restored gospel—being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and entering the house of the Lord to be endowed with power from on high. Through the grace of Jesus Christ and by honoring our covenants, we receive the immeasurable promise of living with our righteous family throughout eternity.⁸

No wonder the angel described the fruit as “the most joyous to the soul.”⁹ It truly is!

The Challenge of Staying True

As we have all learned, even after savoring the precious fruit of the restored gospel, staying true and

faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ is still not easily done. As has been said many times in this conference, we continue to face distractions and deceptions, confusion and commotion, enticements and temptations that attempt to pull our hearts away from the Savior and the joys and beauties we have experienced in following Him.

Because of this adversity, Lehi’s dream also includes a warning! On the other side of the river is a spacious building with people of all ages pointing their fingers, mocking, and scoffing at the righteous followers of Jesus Christ.

The people in the building are ridiculing and laughing at those keeping the commandments, hoping to discredit and deride their faith in Jesus Christ and in His gospel. And because of the verbal attacks of doubt and disdain launched at the believers, some of those who have tasted of the fruit begin to feel ashamed of the gospel they once embraced. The false allures of the world seduce them; they turn away from the tree and from the fruit and, in the

words of the scripture, “[fall] away into forbidden paths and [are] lost.”¹⁰

In our world today, the adversary’s construction crews are working overtime, hastily inflating the large and spacious building. The expansion has spread across the river, hoping to envelop our homes, while the pointers and the scoffers wail day and night on their internet megaphones.¹¹

President Nelson explained, “The adversary is quadrupling his efforts to disrupt testimonies and impede the work of the Lord.”¹² Let us remember Lehi’s words: “We heeded them not.”¹³

Although we need not fear, we are to be on guard. At times, little things can upend our spiritual balance. Please don’t allow your questions, the insults of others, faithless friends, or unfortunate mistakes and disappointments to turn you away from the sweet, pure, and soul-satisfying blessings that come from the precious fruit of the tree. Keep your eyes and your hearts centered on the Savior Jesus Christ and the eternal joy that comes only through Him.



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The Faith of Jason Hall

In June my wife, Kathy, and I attended the funeral of Jason Hall. At the time of his passing, he was 48 years old and serving as an elders quorum president.

Here are Jason’s words about an event that changed his life:

“[At age 15] I [was] in a diving accident. . . . I [broke] my neck and was paralyzed from the chest down. I lost complete control of my legs and partial control of my arms. I could no longer walk, stand, . . . or feed myself. I could barely breathe or speak.”¹⁴

“‘Dear Father [in Heaven],’ I begged, ‘if I could only have my hands, I know I could make it. Please, Father, please. . . .’

“. . . ‘Keep my legs, Father; I just [pray for] the use of my hands.’”¹⁵

Jason never received the use of his hands. Can you hear the voices from the spacious building? “Jason Hall, God does not hear your prayers! If God is a loving God, how could He leave you like this? Why have faith in Christ?” Jason Hall heard their voices, but he did not heed them. Instead he feasted upon the fruit of the tree. His faith in Jesus Christ became immovable. He graduated from the university and married Kolette Coleman in the temple, describing her as the love of his life.¹⁶ After 16 years of marriage, another miracle, their precious son, Coleman, was born.

How did they grow their faith? Kolette explained: “We trusted in God’s plan. And it gave us hope. We knew that Jason would [in a future day] be whole. . . . We knew that God provided us a Savior, whose atoning sacrifice enables us to keep looking forward when we want to give up.”¹⁷

Speaking at Jason’s funeral, 10-year-old Coleman said his dad taught him: “Heavenly Father [has] a plan for us, earth life would be awesome, and we could live in families. . . . But . . . we would have to go through hard things and we would make mistakes.”

Coleman continued: “Heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. His job was to be perfect. To heal people. To love them. And then to suffer for all of our pain, sorrows, and sins. Then He died for us.” Then Coleman added, “Because He did this, Jesus knows how I feel right now.

“Three days after Jesus died, He . . . came alive again, with His body perfect. This is important to me because I know that . . . my [dad’s] body will be perfect and we will be together as a family.”

Coleman concluded: “Every night since I was a baby, my dad said to me, ‘Dad loves you, Heavenly Father loves you, and you’re a good boy.’”¹⁸

Joy Comes Because of Jesus Christ

President Russell M. Nelson described why the Hall family feels joy and hope. He said:

“The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.



Jason, Coleman, and Kolette Hall

“When the focus of our lives is on God’s plan of salvation . . . and Jesus Christ and His gospel, we can feel joy regardless of what is happening—or not happening—in our lives. Joy comes from and because of Him. He is the source of all joy. . . .

“If we look to the world . . . , we will never know joy. . . . [Joy] is the gift that comes from intentionally trying to live a righteous life, as taught by Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

A Promise as You Return

If you have been without the fruit of the tree for some time, please know that the Savior’s arms are always outstretched to you. He lovingly beckons, “Repent and come unto me.”²⁰ His fruit is plentiful and always in season. It cannot be purchased with money, and no one who honestly desires it is denied.²¹

If you desire to return to the tree and taste the fruit once again, begin by praying to your Heavenly Father. Believe in Jesus Christ and the power of His atoning sacrifice. I promise you that as you look to the Savior “in every thought,”²² the fruit of the tree will be yours once again, delicious to your taste, joyous to your soul, “the greatest of all the gifts of God.”²³

Three weeks ago today, I saw the joy of the Savior’s fruit on full display as Kathy and I attended the Lisbon Portugal Temple dedication. The truths of the restored gospel opened to Portugal in 1975 as religious freedom became available. Many noble Saints who first tasted of the fruit when there were no congregations, no chapels, and no temple closer than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) rejoiced with us that the precious fruit of the tree is now in a house of the Lord in Lisbon, Portugal. How I honor and revere these Latter-day



Saints who have kept their hearts riveted on the Savior.

The Savior said, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”²⁴

Speaking this morning to the members of the Church across the world, President Nelson said, “My dear brothers and sisters, you are living exemplars of the fruits that come from following the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Then he added: “I thank you! I love you!”²⁵

We love you, President Nelson.

I am an eyewitness to the power of revelation that rests upon our dear President. He is the prophet of God. Like Lehi of old, President Russell M. Nelson beckons to us and all of God’s family to come and partake of the fruit of the tree. May we have the humility and strength to follow his counsel.

I humbly witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His love, His power, and His grace bring all things of lasting worth. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 7:16.
2. Matthew 7:17.
3. John 4:36.
4. In early January 2007, while preparing for a Brigham Young University devotional address as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy to be given on March 4, 2007, I asked Elder David A. Bednar what he was preparing for his February 4, 2007, address before the same audience. I was taken aback when he responded that his talk was about holding fast to the iron rod. This was the exact title I had chosen for my talk. After sharing our text with one another, we realized that our approaches were different. His talk, entitled “A Reservoir of Living Water,” emphasized the rod of iron, or the word of God, as encompassing the scriptures. In his talk he asked, “Are you and I daily reading, studying, and searching the scriptures in a way that enables us to hold fast to the rod of iron?” (speeches.byu.edu).

Then, just a week after my conversation with Elder Bednar, President Boyd K. Packer gave a BYU devotional address entitled “Lehi’s Dream and You.” President Packer emphasized the rod of iron as the personal revelation and inspiration that come to us through the Holy Ghost. He said: “If you hold to the rod, you can *feel* your way forward with the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . Grasp the iron rod, and do not let go. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, you can *feel* your way through life” (Jan. 16, 2007, speeches.byu.edu).

My subject, “Hold Fast to the Words of the Prophets,” in March 2007 was the iron rod as representing the words of the living prophets (Mar. 4, 2007, speeches.byu.edu).

The connection of these three talks was no coincidence. The hand of the Lord was at work as three talks, prepared for the same audience, identified three aspects of the iron rod, or the word of God: (1) the scriptures, or the words of ancient prophets; (2) the words of living prophets; and (3) the power of the Holy Ghost. It was an important learning experience for me.

5. See 1 Nephi 8:4–12.
6. 1 Nephi 11:25.
7. John 3:16.
8. See David A. Bednar, “Lehi’s Dream: Holding Fast to the Rod,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2011, 32–37.
9. 1 Nephi 11:23.
10. 1 Nephi 8:28.
11. See Boyd K. Packer, “Lehi’s Dream and You” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 16, 2007), speeches.byu.edu.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 68.
13. 1 Nephi 8:33.
14. Stephen Jason Hall, “The Gift of Home,” *New Era*, Dec. 1994, 12.
15. Stephen Jason Hall, “Helping Hands,” *New Era*, Oct. 1995, 46, 47.
16. Personal correspondence to Elder Andersen from Kolette Hall.
17. Personal correspondence to Elder Andersen from Kolette Hall.
18. Funeral talk by Coleman Hall, shared with Elder Andersen by Kolette Hall.
19. Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 82, 84.
20. 3 Nephi 21:6.
21. See 2 Nephi 26:25, 33.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
23. 1 Nephi 15:36.
24. John 15:5.
25. Russell M. Nelson, “The Second Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 100.