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The Worth of Each Soul

Why are we of so much value to our Heavenly Father?

Recently I felt impressed to reconnect with a family whom my companion and I had taught and baptized when I was a young missionary nearly 40 years ago in Brussels, Belgium. It had been quite some time since I had spoken to any of them.

Through the marvel of today's technology, I looked up the mother of this family on social media. I was able to have a wonderful video chat with her. We reminisced about the sacred experiences we had shared years ago as her family learned about the restored gospel.

She was not in the best of health, and circumstances had separated her from her family. As we talked, I sensed the deep love that Heavenly Father and the Savior have for this good sister. I sensed her great eternal worth, even though she has somewhat drifted from the Church. I expressed my love for her and testified that God loved her and was mindful of her. Tears filled our eyes as we expressed our love for each other. We committed to communicate

more often. I was so grateful an all-knowing and loving God had inspired me to reach out to my dear friend that day.

The "Why" of God's Love

When Nephi was questioned by an angel concerning the condescension of God, he humbly replied, "I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). I have often wondered how Nephi came to understand this simple, beautiful truth: God loves His children. It is clear that he knew the doctrine of Christ as taught by his "goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1). But he also knew the "why" of the Savior. And what is that "why?"

Why was God willing to let His Son serve as a sacrifice? *Why* did He send us here to be proven and tried? Because, as taught in an equally beautiful truth, "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10).

Why are we of such great value to Him? Naturally, because we are His children, He loves us. But in the next several verses, He describes the great gift given to each of us because of His love for us—His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He sent His Son to suffer "death in the

flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:11–12). He tells us, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Repentance and Joy

No wonder Heavenly Father feels great joy when we repent. Our willingness to repent is evidence of our deep gratitude for the magnificent and unmatched gift of the Savior and Redeemer of the world. It is only by and through Jesus Christ that we can become worthy to stand with confidence in the presence of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:45).

President Russell M. Nelson explained: “Too many people consider repentance as punishment—something to be avoided except in the most serious circumstances. But this feeling of being penalized is engendered by Satan. He tries to block us from looking to Jesus Christ, who stands with open arms, hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us. . . .

“Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind. When coupled with faith, repentance opens our access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”¹

Invited to Assist

Many times in the latter-day revelations, the Lord invites His children-servants to assist Him and His Son with the work of salvation and exaltation (see Doctrine and Covenants 18:14). Think of that! In our imperfect state, the God of the universe

extends an invitation to us to help His children, who are of great worth, to return to Him. He knows the work is challenging. There will be many who will not accept our invitation to “hear Him.” However, He affirms that He is the God of the “one.” “And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be *one* soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15; emphasis added).

You may ask yourself, “What can I do to help someone come unto Christ, repent, and be blessed by His atoning sacrifice?”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave this counsel about participating in the work of salvation and exaltation: “Understand that it’s not your job to convert people. That is the role of the Holy Ghost. Your role is to share what is in your heart and live consistent with your beliefs.

“So, don’t be discouraged if someone does not accept the gospel message immediately. It is not a personal failure.

“That is between the individual and Heavenly Father.

“Yours is to love God and love your neighbors, His children.

“Believe, love, do.

“Follow this path, and God will work miracles through you to bless His precious children.”²

On Both Sides of the Veil

The invitation to come unto Christ through repentance is not reserved just for those who live upon this earth. “The dead who repent will be redeemed,



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through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:58). Temple and family history work are important aspects of gathering scattered Israel on both sides of the veil. We can feel great joy as we do the work for those who have gone to the spirit world knowing that in that realm, as President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) said, “there will be very few, if any, who will not accept the Gospel.”³ Undoubtedly, they will look forward to the day when the saving ordinances are performed for them in the house of the Lord.

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “When we gather our family histories and go to the temple on behalf of our ancestors, God fulfills many of these promised blessings simultaneously on both sides of the veil. Similarly, we are blessed when we help others in our wards and stakes do the same. Members who do not live close to a temple also receive these blessings by participating in family history work, collecting the names of their ancestors for temple ordinances to be performed.”⁴

It is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves each of His children. We are of great worth to Him. Each of us has a sacred responsibility to minister to His children on both sides of the veil and help them realize their great worth.

Help Them See Their Worth

I invite you to reach out to those who have been a part of your life and may have been forgotten for a time. Reach out to those who have

left the covenant path. Minister to those in need of Christlike love. Connect with those on the other side of the veil through temple and family history work, including indexing. Help others feel God’s love through you.

As promised, my dear Belgian friend and I spoke every Sunday for over four months. I invited her to download the Gospel Library app. The local branch president was made aware of her, and the full-time missionaries visited and gave a priesthood blessing. The next week, for the first time in over 30 years, she attended sacrament meeting. The last time we spoke, she was filled with joy to have reconnected with the body of the Church of Jesus Christ.

She also told me her oldest daughter was still involved in the Church. I immediately reached out to the daughter via video chat. She introduced me to each of her four beautiful children, then told me the full-time missionaries were coming to their home that night for dinner. What a blessing it was to see that she was still a faithful member of the Church!

As I visited with her, I understood, in some small measure, the message of this scripture: “And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:16).

The worth of *each* soul is great! ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 17.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 191.
4. Dale G. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 49.