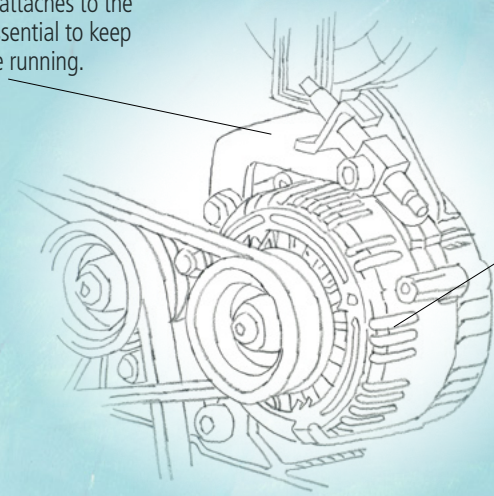


An alternator attaches to the engine. It is essential to keep an automobile running.

The alternator is a generator that converts mechanical energy into electrical energy.



Unless my alternator was repaired or replaced, I could not continue my journey.





By Elder
W. Mark Bassett
Of the Seventy

Look and Live

*When we turn toward God,
we generate a constant source
of spiritual renewal.*

As I was growing up, it was a regular event for my family to drive between Northern California and Utah, USA. It wasn't the journey through the desert we enjoyed; it was the arrival at the destination and the joy of visits with family members there.

The summer before I left for my full-time mission, I traveled once again to visit relatives in Utah. But this time my younger brother David and I traveled alone. We were 16 and 18 at the time. We had made the 10-hour journey often enough with our family that we had high confidence in our ability to travel well.

We visited our Uncle Kay, Aunt Dianne, and cousin Michelle. Then, while David extended his visit, I had to return to California on my own for a dental appointment.

Nightfall was approaching when I left Spanish Fork, Utah, to begin an overnight drive. Everything went well in the beginning. I soon left the highway that goes south and north and took the one that goes east and west. I turned on my headlights and hurried across western Utah. As the miles passed and the desert night became darker and darker, I noticed that I was having more and more difficulty seeing the road. Finally, I realized my headlights were becoming increasingly dim. They finally went out, the engine stalled, and the car rolled to a halt on the side of the interstate.

The battery was dead. The car could not go any farther. Although I had been careful to make sure I had plenty of fuel and had even noted where I would stop for gas, I was not prepared for the complete loss of electrical power.

What Is an Alternator?

I was raised by a father who prided himself in personally maintaining our family automobiles. He taught us about auto mechanics, so I knew that a good battery would not die while the car was running unless there was a problem with the alternator. An alternator is an electrical generator that converts mechanical energy into electrical energy. It uses the kinetic energy of the running engine to produce magnetic energy that is transformed into electric current that continually recharges the battery. This allows the headlights, radio, air conditioning, and other electrical devices to operate without interruption. It also keeps the engine running.

Now something was wrong with my car's alternator. It needed to be repaired or replaced before my journey could continue.

In an age before cell phones, my only choice was to begin walking. Eventually, a man picked me up and drove me to the next town. At a pay phone I called for a tow truck. I sat in the cab with the driver during the one-hour

trip back to the car. Then I sat with him again as we drove back to the small town with my car in tow. Finally, four hours after first leaving my car, I was back inside it, sleeping in front of a service station until it opened.

When the manager arrived, he laughed at the idea that his small town would have the part I needed. He could place an order, but it wouldn't arrive for two or three days. Then he took pity on me. He told me he could put my battery on a charger for about three hours. That might give me enough power to drive the car to the next town. Perhaps they would have the part I needed.

With the battery charged, I set off without turning on anything that would waste precious electricity. I made it to the next town, but they didn't have the part I needed either. This cycle continued—a three-hour charge for a two-hour drive from one town to the next. After finding kind people in towns all along the way, I finally pulled in my parents' driveway, exhausted after a 30-hour journey but safely home.

Spiritual Manna

There's a parallel between my journey and the desert journey of the Israelites in Old Testament times. For 40 years the Israelites were constantly replenished by food from heaven called *manna*. (See Exodus chapter 16 and Numbers chapter 11.)

In our day we have a similar need for food from heaven, spiritual food. Fortunately, we can create a “spiritual alternator” that will “generate” the “spiritual manna” we need. Since our spiritual needs are met through maintaining our relationship with our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, then just as the Israelites spent time each day gathering physical manna, we today must gather spiritual manna through prayer, gospel study, and striving for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

The Israelites eventually tired of gathering physical manna and “fell a lusting” for things they left behind (Numbers 11:4). If we allow ourselves to tire of gathering spiritual manna, we may find ourselves longing for things that aren't

in our best spiritual interest. Like the frustrated Israelites, we risk losing sight of our original purpose—to arrive at the promised land. We might even wish we had never left our “Egypt” (see Numbers 11:5–6). Eventually, our spiritual alternator stops generating, and we are unable to progress. We find ourselves stranded, starving, and longing for rescue.

Seeing the Miracle

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught, “Sometimes it seems we take the scriptures too much for granted because we do not fully appreciate how rare a thing it is to possess them, and how blessed we are because we do have them. We seem to have settled so comfortably into our experiences in this world and become so accustomed to hearing the gospel taught among us that it is hard for us to imagine it could ever have been otherwise.”¹

We should never take for granted our need for consistent scripture study, prayer, and obedience because they help us maintain the companionship of the Holy Ghost. If we neglect the spiritually charging activities in life, become bored with them, or merely perform them routinely, then our spiritual alternator isn't fully functioning. We can slowly become spiritually discharged, perhaps so gradually that we hardly perceive it. At such a time, the only way to recover is to turn



to Jesus Christ and repent. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and sincere repentance, all things can be restored.

Look and Live

When the Israelites complained, they lost their gratitude for the blessing of nourishment. As punishment, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died” (Numbers 21:6).

Finally, “the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Numbers 21:7–9).

Modern Serpents of Brass

The brass, or brazen, serpent is a symbol of Christ being raised up on the cross (see John 3:14–15). As we look to the counsel of modern-day prophets, we are looking toward Christ because they direct our focus back to our Father’s plan and to Jesus Christ’s central role. Like the kindhearted people who allowed me to recharge my battery, living prophets, seers, and revelators recharge us spiritually by reminding us that we are children of our Father in Heaven and that it is His “work and . . . glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). They have specifically counseled us that as we more effectively worship on the Sabbath day, we will increase our faith in Heavenly Father, in His plan of happiness, and in Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

The story of Moses and the serpent of brass is also referred to in the Book of Mormon, where we are told that “many did look and live” (Alma 33:19; see also verses 20–22). Others, however, refused to look. “The labor



which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished” (1 Nephi 17:41). Could it be said of us someday that we refused to look to prophets and their counsel because of the easiness of the way?

“If ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly[?] . . .

“ . . . Then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God” (Alma 33:21, 22).

I am grateful for the blessings that come to us as we continue along our “highway to heaven” and encourage others to do the same. I am equally grateful for the opportunity, when we stray, to repent, leave behind bad habits, and return to an appropriate path. The blessings are immeasurable.

Another passage in the Book of Mormon that talks of the Israelites’ experience concludes, “And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal” (Helaman 8:15).

Heeding the counsel of modern prophets trains our hearts in faith. It strengthens us to overcome obstacles along our journey, just as I had to press forward on that summer night in the desert. I testify that as we look to our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, we will find meaning and purpose in our journey. ■

You can find family home evening ideas for this article at lds.org/go/11811.

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 61.