

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

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Of the Seventy

In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live by faith and not fear.



I humbly invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we discuss a vital principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I acknowledge with deep appreciation and love great examples of true faith and faithfulness in my own life. To goodly parents, family, priesthood leaders, beloved missionaries, wonderful children, and a precious eternal companion, I express my deepest love and gratitude. I acknowledge my own need and desire for greater faith as a disciple and witness of Christ. There has never been a greater need for faith in my own life than now.

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children “to

understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God” (D&C 68:25). This requires more than merely recognizing faith as a gospel principle. “To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone” (Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669). True faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. “Faith is a principle of action and of power” (Bible Dictionary, 670). It requires us to do, not merely to believe. Faith is a spiritual gift from God that comes through the Holy Ghost. It requires a correct understanding and knowledge of Jesus Christ, His divine attributes and perfect character, His teachings, Atonement, Resurrection, and priesthood power. Obedience to these principles develops complete trust in Him and His ordained servants and assurance of His promised blessings.

There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.

“Faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those who have faith”

(Bible Dictionary, 669; see also Romans 10:14–17). Do your children know that you know? Do they see and feel your conviction? “Strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, 669).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness.* It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 264). If we desire more faith, we must be more obedient. When we teach our children by example or precept to be casual or situational in obeying God’s commandments, we prevent them from receiving this vital spiritual gift. Faith requires an attitude of exact obedience, even in the small, simple things.

Desire is a particle of faith that develops within us as we experience divine truth. It is like spiritual photosynthesis. The influence of the Holy Ghost, acting on the Light of Christ within every human being, produces the spiritual equivalent of a chemical reaction—a stirring, a change of heart, or a desire to know. Hope develops as particles of faith become molecules and as simple efforts to live true principles occur.

As patterns of obedience develop, the specific blessings associated with obedience are realized and belief emerges. Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power.

There is a quality of faith which develops as we focus all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is seen and felt in the eyes of a great missionary, a valiant and virtuous young

woman, and righteous mothers, fathers, and grandparents. It can be seen in the lives of individuals young and old, in every land and culture, speaking every language, in every circumstance and station in life. It is the “eye of faith” spoken of by the prophet Alma (see Alma 5:15–26)—the ability to focus and be steadfast, continually holding fast to true

principles, nothing wavering, even when the mist of darkness confronting us is exceedingly great. This quality of faith is exceedingly powerful.

However, “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. . . . The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Therefore, man could not act for himself save it



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should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:11, 16). And so it is with faith. It can be enticing to choose doubt and disbelief over faith.

As Jesus returned from the transcendent spiritual experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, He was approached by a desperate father whose son needed help. The father pleaded, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us."

Jesus replied, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

"And straightway the father . . . cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:22–24).

Faith and fear cannot coexist. One gives way to the other. The simple fact is we all need to constantly build faith and overcome sources of destructive disbelief. The Savior's teaching comparing faith to a grain of mustard seed recognizes this reality (see Matthew 13:31–32). Consider it this way: our net usable faith is what we have left to exercise after we subtract our sources of doubt and disbelief. You might ask yourself this question: "Is my own

net faith positive or negative?" If your faith exceeds your doubt and disbelief, the answer is likely positive. If you allow doubt and disbelief to control you, the answer might be negative.

We do have a choice. We get what we focus on consistently. Because there is an opposition in all things, there are forces that erode our faith. Some are the result of Satan's direct influence. But for others, we have no one but ourselves to blame. These stem from personal tendencies, attitudes, and habits we can learn to change. I will refer to these influences as the "Six Destructive Ds." As I do, consider their influence on you or your children.

First is *doubt*. Doubt is not a principle of the gospel. It does not come from the Light of Christ or the influence of the Holy Ghost. Doubt is a negative emotion related to fear. It comes from a lack of confidence in one's self or abilities. It is inconsistent with our divine identity as children of God.

Doubt leads to *discouragement*. Discouragement comes from missed expectations. Chronic discouragement leads to lower expectations, decreased effort, weakened desire, and greater

difficulty feeling and following the Spirit (see *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 10). Discouragement and despair are the very antithesis of faith.

Discouragement leads to *distraction*, a lack of focus. Distraction eliminates the very focus the eye of faith requires. Discouragement and distraction are two of Satan's most effective tools, but they are also bad habits.

Distraction leads to a *lack of diligence*, a reduced commitment to remain true and faithful and to carry on through despite hardship and disappointment. Disappointment is an inevitable part of life, but it need not lead to doubt, discouragement, distraction, or lack of diligence.

If not reversed, this path ultimately leads to *disobedience*, which undermines the very basis of faith. So often the result is disbelief, the conscious or unconscious refusal to believe.

The scriptures describe *disbelief* as the state of having chosen to harden one's heart. It is to be past feeling.

These Six Destructive Ds—*doubt*, *discouragement*, *distraction*, *lack of diligence*, *disobedience*, and *disbelief*—all erode and destroy our faith. We can choose to avoid and overcome them.

Challenging times require greater spiritual power. Consider carefully the Savior's promise: "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

I humbly declare that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves each of us, His children. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He lives and personally leads His Church through President Monson, His anointed prophet. Because He lives, there is always hope smiling brightly before us. In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live by faith and not fear. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

