



**By Carole M. Stephens**  
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

## “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments”

*God’s commandments are a manifestation of His love for us, and obedience to His commandments is an expression of our love for Him.*

When our oldest daughter, Jen, brought her third daughter home from the hospital, I went to her home to help. After getting her oldest daughter off to school, we decided that what Jen needed most was rest. So the best help I could give was to take her daughter Chloe home with me so her mom and new baby sister could have some quiet time.

I buckled Chloe into her car seat, secured my own seat belt, and drove out of their driveway. However, before we reached the end of the street, Chloe had unbuckled her seat belt and was standing up, looking over my shoulder, and talking to me! I pulled the car over to the side of the road, got out, and buckled her back into her seat.

We started again but had gone only a short distance when she was out of her seat again. I repeated the same steps, but this time before I could even get back into the car and fasten my own seat belt, Chloe was already standing up!

I found myself sitting in a car, parked on the side of the road, having a power struggle with a three-year-old. And she was winning!

I used every idea I could think of to convince her that remaining fastened in her car seat was a good idea. She was not convinced! I finally decided to try the if/then approach.

I said, “Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your car seat, then as soon as we get to Grandma’s house, we can play with play dough.”

No response.

“Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your seat, then we can make bread when we get to Grandma’s house.”

No response.

I tried again. “Chloe, if you will stay buckled in your seat, then we can stop at the market for a treat!”

After three attempts, I realized this was a futile exercise. She was determined, and no amount of if/then was enough to convince her to remain fastened in her seat.

We couldn’t spend the day sitting on the edge of the road, but I wanted to be obedient to the law, and it wasn’t safe to drive with Chloe standing up. I offered a silent prayer and heard the Spirit whisper, “Teach her.”

I turned to face her and pulled my seat belt away from my body so she could see it. I said, “Chloe, I am wearing this seat belt because it will protect me. But you aren’t wearing your seat belt, and you won’t be safe. And I will be so sad if you get hurt.”

She looked at me; I could almost see the wheels turning in her little mind



as I waited anxiously for her response. Finally, her big blue eyes brightened, and she said, “Grandma, you want me to wear my seat belt because you love me!”

The Spirit filled the car as I expressed my love for this precious little girl. I didn’t want to lose that feeling, but I knew I had an opportunity, so I got out and secured her in her car seat. Then I asked, “Chloe, will you please stay in your car seat?” And she did—all the way to the market for a treat! And she stayed buckled all the way from the market to my home, where we made bread and played with play dough because Chloe did not forget!

As I drove back onto the road that day, a scripture filled my mind: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>1</sup> We have rules to teach, guide, and protect children. Why? Because of the great love we have for them. But until Chloe understood that my desire for her to remain securely fastened in her car seat was because of my love for her, she was unwilling to submit to what she considered a restriction. She felt her seat belt limited her freedom.

Like Chloe, we can choose to see commandments as limitations. We may feel at times that God’s laws restrict our personal freedom, take from us our agency, and limit our growth. But as we seek for greater understanding, as we allow our Father to teach us, we will begin to see that His laws are a manifestation of His love for us and obedience to His laws is an expression of our love for Him.

If you find yourself figuratively parked on the side of the road, can I suggest a few principles that, if followed, will help you get safely back on “the road of faith and obedience”?<sup>2</sup>

**First, trust God.** Trust in His eternal plan for you. Each of us is



“a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.” Their love for us is apparent in commandments. Commandments are vital instructions to teach, guide, and protect us as we “gain earthly experience.”<sup>3</sup>

In the “premortals realm” we used our agency to accept God’s plan,<sup>4</sup> and we learned that obedience to God’s eternal law was vital to our success in His plan. Scriptures teach, “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.”<sup>5</sup> If we obey the law, we receive the blessings.

Even with all of the mistakes, opposition, and learning that accompany our mortal experience, God never loses sight of our eternal potential, even when we do. We can trust Him “because God wants His children back.”<sup>6</sup> And He has provided a way through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Atonement “is the core of the plan of salvation.”<sup>7</sup>

**Second, trust Jesus.** The ultimate expression of obedience and love is the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Submitting Himself to the Father’s will, He gave His life for us. He said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus also taught:

“Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”<sup>9</sup>

Each Sunday we have the opportunity to ponder and remember our Savior’s pure love as we partake of the emblems of His infinite Atonement. During the sacrament, I watch as hands and arms extend to pass the bread and the water. As I extend my arm and partake, I covenant that I am willing to take His name upon me, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. And He promises “that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>10</sup>

**Third, trust the whisperings of the Spirit.** Remember during my



experience with Chloe that the Spirit whispered a scripture to me? It is in John 14:15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” And these important verses follow:

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”<sup>11</sup>

Every worthy, confirmed member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the right to the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Fasting, prayer, scripture study, and obedience greatly enhance our ability to hear and feel the promptings of the Spirit.

When your mind is filled with doubt and confusion, the Father and the Son will send the Holy Ghost to warn you and guide you safely through the dangers of this mortal journey. He will help you remember, comfort you, and fill you “with hope and perfect love.”<sup>12</sup>

**Fourth, trust the counsel of living prophets.** Our Father has provided a way for us to hear His word and know His law through His prophets. The Lord declared, “My word

shall . . . all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>13</sup>

Recently, living prophets have counseled us to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,”<sup>14</sup> and to live the law of the fast. Obedience to this prophetic counsel provides a way for us to be obedient to God’s commandment to love Him and our neighbor as we increase our faith in Jesus Christ and extend our hand to love and care for others.<sup>15</sup>

There is safety in following the word of the Lord through His prophets. God called President Thomas S. Monson, the counselors in the First Presidency, and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. In this world of increasing fear, distraction, adversity, and anger, we can look to them to see how disciples of Jesus Christ—filled with charity—look, sound, and react to issues that could be divisive. They testify of Jesus Christ and respond with charity, the pure love of Jesus Christ, whose witnesses they are.

After my experience with Chloe, I searched the scriptures for verses that mentioned commandments and love. I found many. Each of these verses reminds us that His commandments are

a manifestation of His love for us and obedience to His commandments is an expression of our love for Him.

I testify that as we trust God, our Eternal Father; trust His Son, Jesus Christ, and exercise faith in His Atonement; trust the whisperings of the Spirit; and trust the counsel of living prophets, we will find our way off the edge of the road and continue safely—not just enduring but finding joy in our journey home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John 14:15.
2. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 14.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
5. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20.
6. Russell M. Nelson, in R. Scott Lloyd, “God Wants His Children to Return to Him, Elder Nelson Teaches,” Church News section of LDS.org, Jan. 28, 2014.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Oct. 2010, 49.
8. John 15:10.
9. Matthew 22:37–39.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
11. John 14:16–17.
12. Moroni 8:26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
14. Exodus 20:8.
15. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.1.2.