

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • NOVEMBER 2018

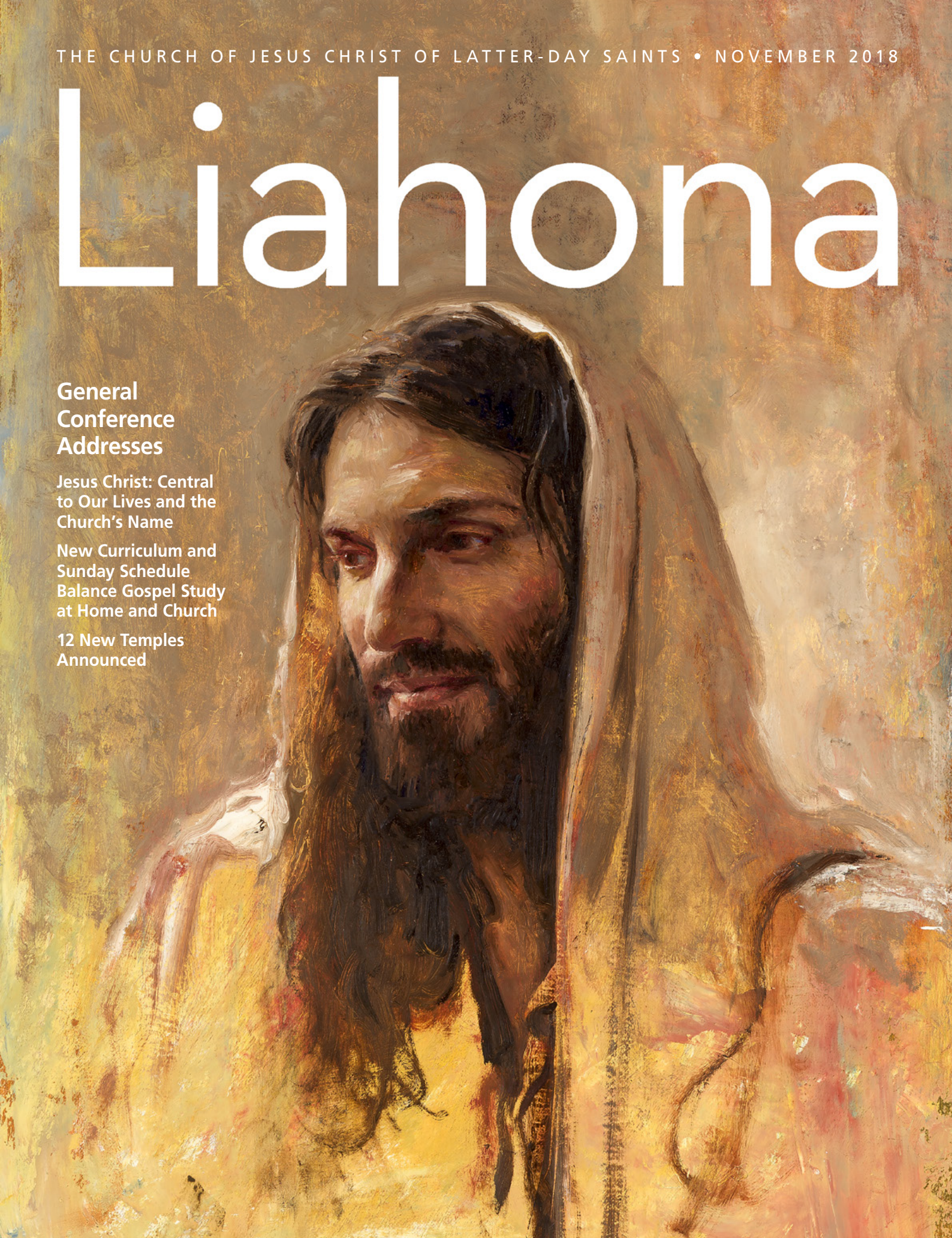
Liahona

General Conference Addresses

Jesus Christ: Central
to Our Lives and the
Church's Name

New Curriculum and
Sunday Schedule
Balance Gospel Study
at Home and Church

12 New Temples
Announced





“Tonight I urge you, with all the hope of my heart, to pray to understand your spiritual gifts—to cultivate, use, and expand them, even more than you ever have. You will change the world as you do so. . . .

“My dear sisters, we need you! We ‘need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices.’ We simply cannot gather Israel without you.

“I love you and thank you and now bless you with the ability to leave the world behind as you assist in this crucial and urgent work. Together we can do all that our Heavenly Father needs us to do to prepare the world for the Second Coming of His Beloved Son.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” 69, 70.

Coming Full Circle,
by Jenedy Paige

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The 188th Semiannual General Conference

Saturday Morning, October 6, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring
Invocation: Elder Craig A. Cardon
Benediction: Elder Adilson de Paula Parrella
Music by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Brian Mathias and Richard Elliott, organists: "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83; "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1, arr. Wilberg; "If I Listen with My Heart," DeFord, arr. Murphy; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5; "I Will Follow God's Plan," *Children's Songbook*, 164–65, arr. Hofheins; "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30, arr. Wilberg.

Saturday Afternoon, October 6, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks
Invocation: Sharon Eubank
Benediction: Elder Joni L. Koch
Music by a combined choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center; Ryan Eggett and Elmo Keck, directors; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "Hark, All Ye Nations!" *Hymns*, no. 264, arr. Schank; medley: "I Will Be Valiant," *Children's Songbook*, 162, and "The Church of Jesus Christ," *Children's Songbook*, 77, arr. Warby; "Called to Serve," *Hymns*, no. 249; "Hope of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 259, arr. Schank.

Saturday Evening, October 6, 2018, General Women's Session

Conducting: Jean B. Bingham
Invocation: Memnet Lopez
Benediction: Jennefer Free
Music by a young women choir from stakes in Pleasant Grove, Utah; Tracy Warby, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 58, arr. Warby; "This Is the Christ," Faust, Pinborough, and Moody; "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3; "We'll Bring the World His Truth," *Children's Songbook*, 172–73, arr. Warby.

Sunday Morning, October 7, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring
Invocation: Elder Allan F. Packer

Benediction: Elder Donald L. Hallstrom
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6, arr. Wilberg; "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239, arr. Wilberg; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19; "His Voice as the Sound," American folk hymn, Walker, arr. Wilberg; "It Is Well with My Soul," Spafford and Bliss, arr. Wilberg.

Sunday Afternoon, October 7, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks
Invocation: Elder Gary B. Sabin
Benediction: Elder Michael John U. Teh
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth and Brian Mathias, organists: "In Hymns of Praise," *Hymns*, no. 75, arr. Murphy; "I Believe in Christ," *Hymns*, no. 134, arr. Wilberg; "Glory to God on High," *Hymns*, no. 67; "Our Prayer to Thee," Nelson and Parry, arr. Wilberg.

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Front: *Light of the World* (2015), by Walter Rane, may not be copied.

Back: Photograph by Cody Bell.

Conference Photography

Photographs in Salt Lake City were taken by Cody Bell, Janae Bingham, Mason Coberly, Weston Colton, Brian Nicholson, Leslie Nilsson, Matt Reier, and Christina Smith.



NOVEMBER 2018 VOL. 42 NO. 11
LIAHONA 14853

International magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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Mailing address: *Liahona*, Fl. 23, 50 E. North Temple St.,
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-0023, USA.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning “compass” or
“director”) is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian,
Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (simplified), Croatian, Czech,
Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German,
Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati,
Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian,
Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan,
Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan,
Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

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For Readers in the United States and Canada: November 2018
Vol. 42 No. 11. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554)
is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA
subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable
taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days'
notice required for change of address. Include address label from a
recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and
Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address
below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders
(American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone
or at store.lds.org. (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement
#40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2).

NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to
Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake
City, UT 84126-0368, USA.



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Highlights from the 188th Semiannual General Conference

Once again, major changes were announced at general conference. While the announcements were different this time, the purposes behind them remain the same: The prophet of God feels an urgency to prepare us for the Lord's Second Coming and is inviting us to strengthen our faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here are just a few of the key invitations and promises emphasized by President Russell M. Nelson during conference.

Make Home More Holy

In his opening remarks, President Nelson introduced the need to make changes in our lives that would make our homes the center of gospel learning. "It is time for a *home-centered Church*, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings."

- Read about the suggested changes at home and the adjustments at church that support them (see page 8).
- Find additional information in "Changes Help Balance Gospel Instruction at Home and at Church" (page 117).

"Leave the World Behind"

President Nelson invited the sisters in the general women's session to participate in "*the greatest* cause . . . on earth today." He promised, "Together we can do all that our Heavenly Father needs us to do to prepare the world for the Second Coming of [Jesus Christ]."

- Read President Nelson's four invitations to the sisters (see page 68).

"Restore the Correct Name of the Lord's Church"

On Sunday morning, President Nelson called on members to call

the Savior's Church by the name the Savior gave it. "I promise you that if we will do our best to restore the correct name of the Lord's Church, He whose Church this is will pour down His power and blessings upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints, the likes of which we have never seen."

- Read President Nelson's instruction on the name of the Church (see page 87).

"Be in His Holy House"

President Nelson concluded conference with the announcement of 12 new temples and an invitation to "regularly . . . be in His holy house." He said, "I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples."

- See where the announced temples will be located (see pages 113, 116).





By President Russell M. Nelson

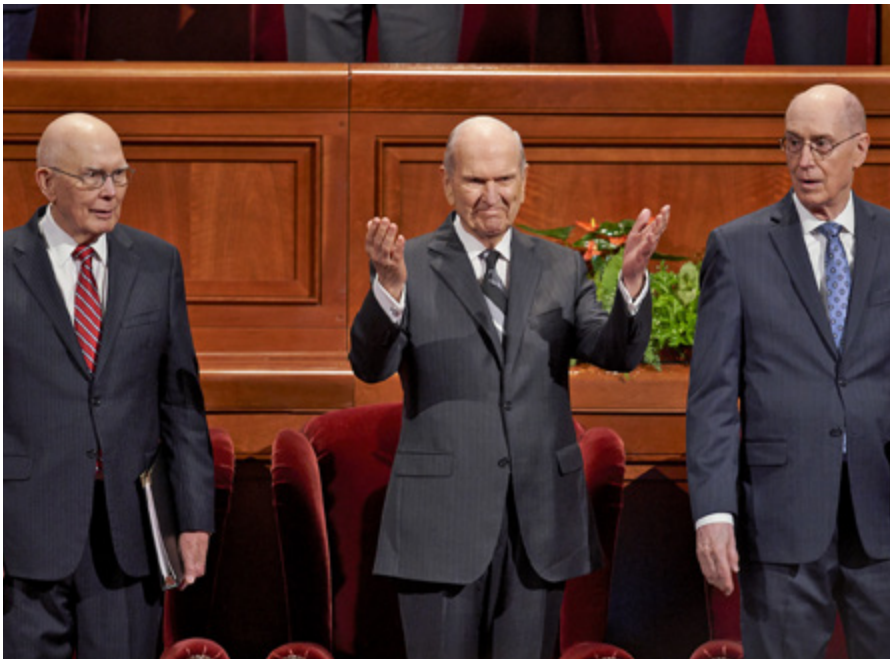
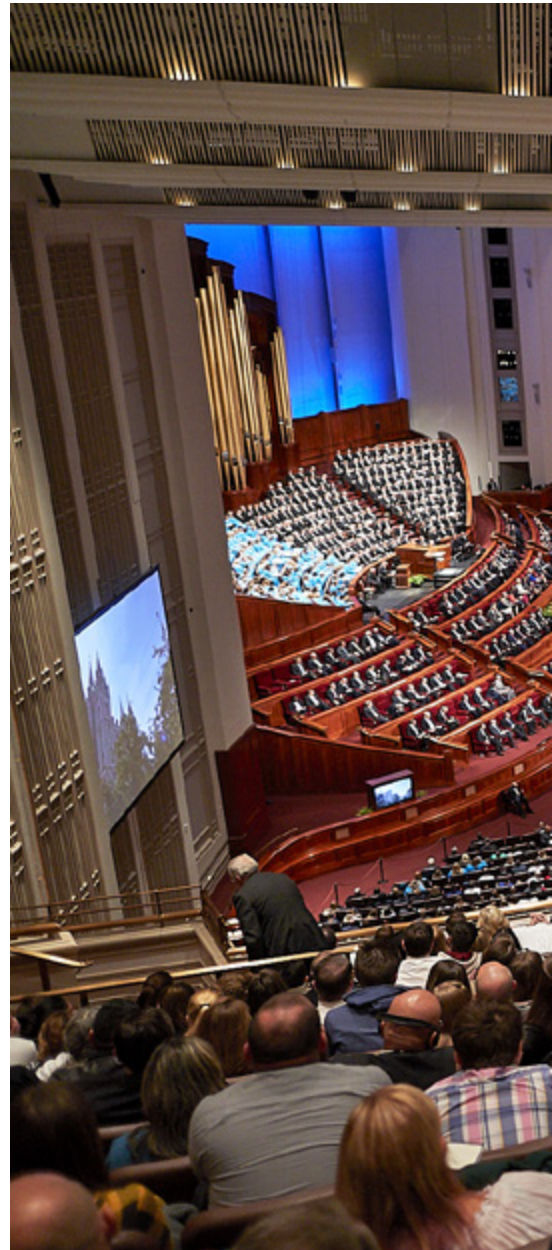
Opening Remarks

It is time for a home-centered Church, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have looked forward to gathering with you again in this October general conference of the Church. We extend our heartfelt welcome to each of you. We are deeply grateful for your sustaining prayers. We can feel their effect. Thank you!

We are grateful for your tremendous efforts to follow through with counsel given at general conference

six months ago. Stake presidencies throughout the world have sought revelation necessary to reorganize elders quorums. Men of those quorums along with our dedicated Relief Society sisters are working diligently to minister to our brothers and sisters in a higher, holier way. We are inspired by your goodness and extraordinary efforts to bring the Savior's love to your families, neighbors, and friends and



to minister to them as He would.

Since April conference, Sister Nelson and I have met with members on four continents and on islands of the sea. From Jerusalem to Harare, from Winnipeg to Bangkok, we have experienced your great faith and the strength of your testimonies.

We are overjoyed with the number of our youth who have joined the Lord's youth battalion to help gather scattered Israel.¹ We thank you! And as you continue to follow my invitations offered at our worldwide youth devotional, you are setting a standard



for the rest of us to follow. And what a difference you youth are making!

In recent years, we in the presiding councils of the Church have wrestled with a fundamental question: how can we take the gospel in its simple purity and the ordinances with their eternal efficacy to *all* of God's children?

As Latter-day Saints, we have become accustomed to thinking of "church" as something that happens in our meetinghouses, supported by what happens at home. We need an adjustment to this pattern. It is time for a *home-centered Church*, supported

by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.

As the Church continues to expand throughout the world, many members live where we have no chapels—and may not for the foreseeable future. I remember a family who, because of such circumstances, was required to meet in their home. I asked the mother how she liked going to church in her own home. She replied, "I like it! My husband uses better language at home now, knowing that he will bless the sacrament here each Sunday."

The long-standing objective of the

Church is to assist all members to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to assist them in making and keeping their covenants with God, and to strengthen and seal their families. In this complex world today, this is not easy. The adversary is increasing his attacks on faith and upon us and our families at an exponential rate. To survive spiritually, we need counterstrategies and proactive plans. Accordingly, we now want to put in place organizational adjustments that will further fortify our members and their families.



By Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

For many years, Church leaders have been working on an integrated curriculum to strengthen families and individuals through a *home-centered* and *Church-supported* plan to learn doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship. Our efforts over these recent years to hallow the Sabbath—to make it a delight and a personal sign to God of our love for Him—will be augmented by the adjustments we will now introduce.

This morning we will announce a new balance and connection between gospel instruction in the home and in the Church. We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth. And scriptures make it clear that parents have the primary responsibility to teach the doctrine to their children.² It is the responsibility of the Church to assist each member in the divinely defined goal of increasing his or her gospel knowledge.

Elder Quentin L. Cook will now explain these important adjustments. All members of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are united in endorsing this message. We gratefully acknowledge the inspiration from the Lord that has influenced the development of the plans and procedures that Elder Cook will present.

My dear brothers and sisters, I know that God lives! Jesus is the Christ! This is His Church that He directs by prophecy and revelation to His humble servants. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.lds.org.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:40; Moses 6:58–62.

Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Our purpose is to balance the Church and the home experiences in a way that will greatly increase faith and spirituality and deepen conversion.

As President Russell M. Nelson has just beautifully and eloquently set forth, Church leaders have been working for a long time on “a *home-centered* and *Church-supported* plan to learn doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship.” President Nelson then announced an adjustment to achieve “a new balance and connection between gospel instruction in the home and in the Church.”¹

To accomplish these purposes—described by and under the direction of President Russell M. Nelson and pursuant to the decision of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—the Sunday meeting schedule will be adjusted in the following ways, beginning in January 2019.

Sunday Meeting Schedule

The Sunday Church meetings will consist of a 60-minute sacrament meeting each Sunday, focused on the

Savior, the ordinance of the sacrament, and spiritual messages. After time for transition to classes, Church members will attend a 50-minute class that will alternate each Sunday:

- Sunday School will be held on the first and third Sundays of the month.
- Priesthood quorums, Relief Society, and Young Women meetings will be held on the second and fourth Sundays.
- Meetings on the fifth Sunday will be under the direction of the bishop.

Primary will be held each week during this same 50-minute period and will include singing time and classes.

With respect to the Sunday meeting schedule, the senior leaders of the Church have been aware for many years that for some of our precious members, a three-hour Sunday schedule at church can be difficult. This is particularly true



for parents with small children, Primary children, elderly members, new converts, and others.²

But there is so much more to this adjustment than just shortening the Sunday meetinghouse schedule. President Nelson has acknowledged with gratitude how much is being accomplished as a result of your faithfulness to previous invitations. He and the entire leadership of the Church desire to bring greater gospel joy—to parents, children, youth, singles, the elderly, new converts, and those people the missionaries are teaching—through a home-centered, Church-supported, balanced effort. The purposes and blessings associated with this adjustment and other recent changes include the following:

- Deepening conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthening faith in Them.
- Strengthening individuals and families through home-centered, Church-supported curriculum that contributes to joyful gospel living.
- Honoring the Sabbath day, with a focus on the ordinance of the sacrament.

- Helping all of Heavenly Father's children on both sides of the veil through missionary work and receiving ordinances and covenants and blessings of the temple.

Home-Centered, Church-Supported Gospel Learning

This Sunday schedule allows more time for a home evening and to study the gospel at home on Sunday or at other times as individuals and families may choose. A family activity night could be held on Monday or at other times. To this end, leaders should continue to keep Monday evenings free from Church meetings and activities. However, time spent in home evening, gospel study, and activities for individuals and families may be scheduled according to their individual circumstances.

Family and individual gospel study at home will be significantly enhanced by a harmonized curriculum and a new *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families that is coordinated with what is being taught in Sunday School and Primary.³ In January, the Church's youth and adult Sunday School and

Primary classes will be studying the New Testament. The new home-study *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families—also covering the New Testament—is designed to help members learn the gospel in the home. It explains: “This resource is for every individual and family in the Church. It is designed to help [us better] learn the gospel—whether on [our] own or with [our] family. . . . The outlines in this [new] resource are organized according to a weekly . . . schedule.”⁴

The new Primary *Come, Follow Me* lessons taught in church will follow the same weekly schedule. The adult and youth Sunday School classes on the first and third Sundays will be coordinated so that they will support the new *Come, Follow Me* home resource. On the second and fourth Sundays, adults in priesthood and Relief Society will continue to study the teachings of Church leaders, with emphasis on the current messages of modern prophets.⁵ Young women and Aaronic Priesthood young men will study gospel topics on those Sundays.

The new home-study resource provides “Ideas for Family Scripture Study and Family Home Evening.”⁶



The outlines for each week contain helpful study ideas and activities for individuals and families. The *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families also has many illustrations that will help enhance individual and family learning, especially for children.⁷ This new resource will be provided to each household by December of this year.

President Nelson, from his initial address to the members of the Church in January, has exhorted us to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ by walking the covenant path.⁸

World conditions increasingly require deepening individual conversion to and strengthening faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement. The Lord has prepared us, line upon line, for the perilous times that we now face. In recent years, the Lord has guided us to address related core concerns, including:

- Honoring the Sabbath day and the sacred ordinance of the sacrament has again been emphasized for the last three years.
- Under the bishop's direction, strengthened elders quorums and Relief Societies are focused on the purpose and divinely appointed responsibilities of the Church⁹ and helping members make and keep sacred covenants.
- Ministering in a higher and holier way is being joyfully adopted.

- Beginning with the end in mind, temple covenants and family history service are becoming a purposeful part of the covenant path.

The adjustment announced this morning is yet another example of guidance for the challenges of our day.

The Church's traditional curriculum has emphasized the Sunday Church experience. We know that when we have better teaching and more spiritually prepared class members, we have a better Sunday Church experience. We are blessed that often the Spirit increases and strengthens conversion in the Church setting.

The new home-centered and Church-supported curriculum needs to influence more powerfully family religious observance and behavior and personal religious observance and behavior. We know the spiritual impact and the deep and lasting conversion that can be achieved in the home setting. Years ago, a study established that for young men and women the influence of the Holy Ghost most often accompanies individual scripture study and prayer in the home. Our purpose is to balance the Church and the home experiences in a way that will greatly increase faith and spirituality and deepen conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the home-centered, Church-supported portion of this adjustment, there is flexibility for each individual and family to determine prayerfully how and when it will be implemented. For example, while this will greatly bless all families, based on local needs it would be completely appropriate for young singles, single adults, single parents, part-member families, new members,¹⁰ and others to gather in groups outside the normal Sunday worship

services to enjoy gospel sociality and be strengthened by studying together the home-centered, Church-supported resource. This would be accomplished informally by those who so desire.

In many parts of the world, people choose to stay at the meetinghouse after the normal Sunday schedule to enjoy social relationships. There is nothing in this announced adjustment that would interfere with this wonderful and rewarding practice in any way.

To help members prepare for the Sabbath, some wards already send an informative email, text, or social media message midweek. In view of this adjustment, we strongly recommend this type of communication. These invitations will remind the members of the Sunday meeting schedule for that week, including the upcoming class lesson topic, and support continuing gospel conversation at home. In addition, the adult meetings on Sunday will also provide information to connect church and home study each week.

The sacrament meeting and the class period will require prayerful consideration to make sure that spiritual priorities are emphasized over administrative functions. For example, announcements can for the most part be accomplished in the midweek invitation or on a printed program. While the sacrament meeting should have an opening and closing prayer, the second meeting need only have a closing prayer.¹¹

As was mentioned earlier, the new Sunday schedule will not commence until January 2019. There are several reasons for this. The two most important are, first, to have time to distribute the *Come, Follow Me* resource for individuals and families and, second, to allow time for stake presidents and bishops to arrange meeting schedules,

with the goal of having more wards meet earlier in the day.

As leaders have sought revelation, the guidance received over the past few years is to strengthen the sacrament meeting, honor the Sabbath day, and encourage and assist parents and individuals to make their homes a source of spiritual strength and increased faith—a place of joy and happiness.

Extraordinary Blessings

What do these adjustments mean for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? We are confident that members will be blessed in extraordinary ways. Sunday can be a day of gospel learning and teaching at church and in the home. As individuals and families engage in family councils, family history, ministering, service, personal worship, and joyful family time, the Sabbath day will truly be a delight.

One family from Brazil are members of a stake where the new home *Come, Follow Me* resource was tested. The father, Fernando, a returned missionary who, with his wife, Nancy, are the parents of four young children, reported: “When the *Come, Follow Me* program was introduced in our stake, I was so excited, and I thought ‘the way that we study the scriptures at home is going to change.’ It really happened in my home, and as a Church leader I saw that it happened in other homes. . . . It helped us to really discuss the scriptures in our home. My wife and I had a deeper understanding about the topic studied. . . . It helped us . . . amplify our gospel knowledge and enhance our faith and testimony. . . . I bear my testimony . . . that I know it was inspired by the Lord so that the consistent and effective study of the principles and doctrines contained in



the scriptures brings more faith, testimony, and light to the families . . . in an increasingly fallen world.”¹²

In pilot test stakes across the world, there was a highly favorable response to the new *Come, Follow Me* home resource. Many reported that they progressed from reading scriptures to actually studying the scriptures. It was also commonly felt the experience was faith promoting and had a wonderful impact on the ward.¹³

Deep and Lasting Conversion

The goal of these adjustments is to obtain a deep and lasting conversion of adults and the rising generation. The first page of the individual and family resource points out: “The aim of all gospel learning and teaching is to deepen our conversion and help us become more like Jesus Christ. . . . This means relying on Christ to change our hearts.”¹⁴ This is assisted by reaching “beyond a classroom into an individual’s heart and home. It requires consistent, daily efforts to understand and live the gospel. True conversion requires the influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁵

The most important goal and ultimate blessing of deep and lasting conversion is worthily receiving the

covenants and ordinances of the covenant pathway.¹⁶

We trust you to counsel together and to seek revelation for implementing these adjustments—while not looking beyond the mark or trying to regiment individuals or families. Additional information will be shared in upcoming communications, including a First Presidency letter and enclosure.

I testify to you that in the deliberations of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the temple, and after our beloved prophet petitioned the Lord for revelation to move forward with these adjustments, a powerful confirmation was received by all. Russell M. Nelson is our living President and prophet. The announcements made today will result in profound blessings for those who enthusiastically embrace the adjustments and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. We will become closer to our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, of whom I am a sure witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 8.
2. We are also aware that, in society at large, the vast majority of events for information, education, and even entertainment have been significantly shortened.

3. This curriculum will be available both digitally and in print.
4. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* (2019), vi.
5. See “Come, Follow Me—For Elders Quorum and Relief Society,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 140. Instead of the second and third Sundays, general conference messages will be discussed on the second and fourth Sundays.
6. See *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, 4. Individuals and families determine what part of the home gospel study, home evening, and family activities will be family home evening (which many already call *home evening*). Because individuals and families will make this determination, *home evening* and *family home evening* have been used interchangeably in the adjustments that have been announced.
7. See *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, 29.
8. See Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
9. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2. Divinely appointed responsibilities “include helping members live the gospel of Jesus Christ, gathering Israel through missionary work, caring for the poor and needy, and enabling the salvation of the dead by building temples and performing vicarious ordinances.” See also Doctrine and Covenants 110, which contains the account of the restoration of essential keys.
10. Pay particular attention to those children whose parents are not members or do not regularly attend church. Singles and others may also meet with a family if that is beneficial to all concerned.
11. Opening exercises normally will not be part of the second meeting.
12. Fernando and Nancy de Carvalho family, Brazil.
13. Individuals and families who were involved in the pilot test, on average, studied the gospel more frequently and had more meaningful scripture study and gospel discussions in the home. They reported having more informal gospel discussions with family and ward members and appreciated studying the same block of scriptures as their families. This was particularly true of youth.
14. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, v; see also 2 Corinthians 5:17.
15. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, v.
16. See Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” 7.



By M. Joseph Brough

Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Lift Up Your Head and Rejoice

As we face hard things in the Lord's way, may we lift up our heads and rejoice.

In 1981, my father, two close friends, and I went on an adventure in Alaska. We were to land on a remote lake and climb to some beautiful high country. In order to reduce the load we would have to personally carry, we wrapped our supplies in boxes, covered them with foam, attached large colored streamers, and threw them out the window of our bush plane at our intended destination.

After arriving, we searched and searched, but to our dismay, we could not find any of the boxes. Eventually we found one. It contained a small gas

stove, a tarp, some candy, and a couple packages of Hamburger Helper—but no hamburger. We had no way to communicate with the outside world, and our scheduled pickup was a week later.

I learned two valuable lessons from this experience: One, do not throw your food out the window. Two, sometimes we have to face hard things.

Frequently, our first reaction to hard things is “Why me?” Asking why, however, never takes away the hard thing. The Lord requires that we overcome challenges, and He has indicated “that all these things shall give



[us] experience, and shall be for [our] good.”¹

Sometimes the Lord asks us to do a hard thing, and sometimes our challenges are created by our own or others’ use of agency. Nephi experienced both of these situations. When Lehi invited his sons to return to get the plates from Laban, he said, “Behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.”² On another occasion, Nephi’s brothers used their agency to limit his: “They did lay their hands upon me, for behold, they were exceedingly wroth, and they did bind me with cords, for they sought to take away my life.”³

Joseph Smith confronted a hard thing in Liberty Jail. With no relief in sight and in despair, Joseph cried out, “O God, where art thou?”⁴ No doubt some of us have felt as Joseph did.

Everyone faces hard things: the death of a loved one, divorce, a wayward child, illness, trials of faith, a lost job, or any other difficulty.

I was forever changed upon hearing these words from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve, spoken in the midst of his struggle with leukemia. He said, “I was doing some pensive pondering and these 13 instructive and reassuring words came into my mind: ‘I have given you leukemia that you might teach my people with authenticity.’” He then went on to express how this experience had blessed him with “perspective about the great realities of eternity. . . . Such glimpses of eternity can help us to travel the next 100 yards, which may be very difficult.”⁵

To help us travel and triumph over our hard times with such glimpses of eternity, may I suggest two things. We



must face hard things, first, by forgiving others and, second, by giving ourselves to Heavenly Father.

Forgiving those who may have caused our hard thing and reconciling “[our]selves to the will of God”⁶ can be very difficult. It can hurt most when our hard thing is caused by a family member, a close friend, or even ourselves.

As a young bishop, I learned of forgiveness when my stake president, Bruce M. Cook, shared the following story. He explained:

“During the late 1970s, some associates and I started a business. Although we did nothing illegal, some poor decisions, combined with the challenging economic times, resulted in our failure.

“Some investors filed a lawsuit to recover their losses. Their attorney happened to be a counselor in my family’s bishopric. It was very difficult to sustain the man who seemed to be seeking to destroy me. I developed some real animosity toward him and considered him my enemy. After five years of legal battles, we lost everything we owned, including our home.

“In 2002, my wife and I learned that the stake presidency in which I served as a counselor was being reorganized. As we traveled on a short vacation

prior to the release, she asked me whom I would choose as my counselors if I were called as the new stake president. I did not want to speak about it, but she persisted. Eventually, one name came to my mind. She then mentioned the name of the attorney we considered to have been at the center of our difficulties 20 years earlier. As she spoke, the Spirit confirmed that he should be the other counselor. Could I forgive the man?

“When Elder David E. Sorensen extended to me the call to serve as stake president, he gave me an hour to select counselors. Through tears, I indicated that the Lord had already provided that revelation. As I spoke the name of the man I had considered my enemy, the anger, animosity, and hate I had harbored disappeared. In that moment, I learned of the peace that comes with forgiveness through the Atonement of Christ.”

In other words, my stake president did “frankly forgive” him, like Nephi of old.⁷ I knew President Cook and his counselor as two righteous priesthood leaders who loved one another. I determined to be like them.

Years before, during our misadventure in Alaska, I had quickly learned that blaming our circumstances on

others—the pilot launching the food out in fading light—was not a solution. However, as we experienced physical exhaustion, lack of food, sickness, and sleeping on the ground during a major storm with only a tarp to cover us, I learned that “with God nothing shall be impossible.”⁸

Young people, God requires hard things of you. One 14-year-old young woman participated in competitive basketball. She dreamed of playing high school basketball like her older sister. She then learned that her parents had been called to preside over a mission in Guatemala.

Upon arrival, she discovered that a couple of her classes would be in Spanish, a language she did not yet speak. There was not a single girls’ sports team at her school. She lived on the 14th floor of a building with tight security. And to top it all off, she could not go outside alone for safety reasons.

Her parents listened to her cry herself to sleep every night for months. This broke their hearts! They finally decided they would send her home to her grandmother for high school.

When my wife entered our daughter’s room to tell her our decision, she saw our daughter kneeling in prayer with the Book of Mormon open on the bed. The Spirit whispered to my wife, “She will be OK,” and my wife quietly left the room.

We never heard her cry herself to sleep again. With determination and the Lord’s help, she faced those three years valiantly.

At the conclusion of our mission, I asked my daughter if she was going to serve a full-time mission. Her answer was “No, Dad, I have already served.”

I was just fine with that! But about six months later, the Spirit awoke me in the night with this thought: “I have called



your daughter to serve a mission.”

My reaction was “Heavenly Father, she has given so much.” I was quickly corrected by the Spirit and came to understand that her missionary service was required of the Lord.

I soon took my daughter to lunch. From across the table, I said, “Ganzie, do you know why we are here?”

She said, “Yes, Dad. You know I have to serve a mission. I do not want to go, but I am going.”

Because she gave her will to Heavenly Father, she served Him with all of her heart, might, mind, and strength. She has taught her father how to do a hard thing.

In President Russell M. Nelson’s worldwide devotional for youth, he requested some hard things of the youth. President Nelson said: “My fifth invitation is for you to stand out; be different from the world. . . . The Lord needs you to look like, sound like, act like, and dress like a true disciple of Jesus Christ.”⁹ That can be a hard thing, yet I know you can do it—with joy.

Remember that “men are, that they might have joy.”¹⁰ With all that Lehi faced, he still found joy. Remember when Alma was “weighed down with sorrow”¹¹ because of the people of Ammonihah? The angel told him, “Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, . . . for

thou hast been faithful in keeping the commandments of God.”¹² Alma learned a great truth: we can always rejoice when we keep the commandments. Remember that during the wars and challenges faced during the time of Captain Moroni, “there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi.”¹³ We can and should find joy when we face hard things.

The Savior faced hard things: “The world . . . shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.”¹⁴

Because of that loving-kindness, Jesus Christ suffered the Atonement. As a result, He says to each one of us, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹⁵ Because of Christ, we too can overcome the world.

As we face hard things in the Lord’s way, may we lift up our heads and rejoice. At this sacred opportunity to testify to the world, I proclaim that our Savior lives and guides His Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
2. 1 Nephi 3:5.
3. 1 Nephi 7:16.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
5. Neal A. Maxwell, “Revelation,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 6.
6. 2 Nephi 10:24.
7. 1 Nephi 7:21.
8. Luke 1:37.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.lds.org.
10. 2 Nephi 2:25.
11. Alma 8:14.
12. Alma 8:15.
13. Alma 50:23.
14. 1 Nephi 19:9.
15. John 16:33.



By Elder Steven R. Bangerter
Of the Seventy

Laying the Foundation of a Great Work

Lessons taught through the traditions we establish in our homes, though small and simple, are increasingly important in today's world.

As parents in Zion, we have a sacred duty to awaken within our children passion and commitment to the joy, light, and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While raising our children, we establish traditions within our home and we build patterns of communication and behavior within our family relationships. In doing so, the traditions we establish should ingrain strong, unwavering characteristics of goodness in our children that will infuse them with strength to confront the challenges of life.

For many years our family has enjoyed the annual tradition of camping high in the Uintah Mountains of northeastern Utah. We travel 20 miles (32 km) over a rocky dirt road to arrive at a beautiful green valley with towering canyon walls and through which runs a river filled with cold, clear water. Each year, hoping to reaffirm the value of gospel doctrine and practices within the hearts of our children and our grandchildren, Susan and I ask each of our six sons and their families to prepare a short message on a topic they feel is an important element in the foundation of a Christ-centered home. We then gather

for a family devotional in a secluded place, and each presents their message.

This year our grandchildren wrote the topic of their message on stones and then, one by one, buried them next to one another, representing a sure foundation upon which a happy life is established. Woven among all six of their messages was the immutable, eternal truth that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of that foundation.

In the words of Isaiah, “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.”¹ Jesus Christ is that precious cornerstone in the foundation of Zion. It was He who revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”²

Lessons taught through the traditions we establish in our homes, though small and simple, are increasingly important in today's world. What are the small and simple things that, when established, will perform a great work in the lives of our children?

President Russell M. Nelson recently addressed a large congregation near Toronto, Canada, and poignantly reminded parents of the sacred responsibility we have to teach our children. Among the essential responsibilities identified, President Nelson emphasized the duties we have as parents to teach our children to understand



Messages representing the foundation of a happy life, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of that foundation.



why we partake of the sacrament, the significance of being born in the covenant, and the importance of preparing for and receiving a patriarchal blessing, and he encouraged parents to lead out in the reading of scriptures together as a family.³ By these efforts, our beloved prophet urges us to make our homes “sanctuaries of faith.”⁴

In the Book of Mormon, Enos records the profound gratitude he felt for the example of his father, who “taught [him] in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” With great emotion, Enos exclaimed, “And blessed be the name of my God for it.”⁵

I cherish the small and simple traditions we have come to observe in our home over the 35 years of our marriage. Many of our traditions are subtle yet meaningful. For example:

- During evenings when I was away from home, I always knew that under Susan’s direction, our oldest son present would take it upon himself to lead the family in scripture study and family prayer.⁶
- Another tradition—we never leave our home or end a telephone conversation without saying, “I love you.”

- Our lives have been blessed by setting aside time on a regular basis to enjoy personal interviews with each of our sons. During one interview I asked our son about his desires and preparation to serve a mission. After some discussion, there was a moment of reflective silence; then he leaned forward and thoughtfully declared, “Dad, remember when I was little and we started having father’s interviews?” I said, “Yes.” “Well,” he said, “I promised you then that I would serve a mission, and you and Mom promised me that you would serve a mission when you got old.” Then there was another pause. “Are you guys having some problem that will stop you from serving—because maybe I can help?”

Consistent, wholesome family traditions that include prayer, scripture reading, family home evening, and attendance at Church meetings, though seemingly small and simple, create a culture of love, respect, unity, and security. In the spirit that accompanies these efforts, our children become protected from the fiery darts of the adversary so embedded in the worldly culture of our day.

We are reminded of the wise counsel of Helaman to his sons: “Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”⁷

Years ago, while I was serving as a young bishop, an older gentleman asked to meet with me. He described his departure from the Church and the righteous traditions of his parents when he was in his youth. He described in detail the heartache he experienced during his life while vainly seeking lasting joy amidst the momentary happiness the world has to offer. Now, in his later years of life, he experienced the tender, sometimes nagging whispering sensations of the Spirit of God guiding him back to the lessons, practices, feelings, and spiritual safety of his youth. He expressed gratitude for the traditions of his parents, and in modern-day

words, he echoed the proclamation of Enos: “Blessed be the name of my God for it.”

In my experience, this dear man’s return to the gospel is characteristic of many and is repeated often among God’s children who leave for a time, only to return to the teachings and practices of their youth. In those moments, we witness the wisdom of the writer of the proverb, who exhorts parents, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”⁸

Every parent faces moments of frustration and varying levels of determination and strength while raising children. However, when parents exercise faith by teaching children candidly, lovingly and doing all they can to help them along the way, they receive greater hope that the seeds being sown will take root within the hearts and minds of their children.

Moses well understood the fundamental need for constant teaching. He counseled, “And thou shalt teach [these words] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”⁹

We kneel beside our children during family prayer, we care for them through our efforts to hold meaningful family scripture reading, we patiently, lovingly care for them as together we participate in family home evening, and we anguish for them on our knees in the midst of our private prayers to heaven. Oh, how we yearn for the seeds we are sowing to take root within the hearts and minds of our children.

I believe that it is less a question of whether our children are “getting it” in the midst of our teaching, such as while striving to read the scriptures



or to have family home evening or to attend Mutual and other Church meetings. It is less a question of whether in those moments they are understanding the importance of those activities and more a question of whether we, as parents, are exercising faith enough to follow the Lord’s counsel to diligently live, teach, exhort, and set forth expectations that are inspired by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is an effort driven by our faith—our belief that one day the seeds sown in their youth will take root and begin to sprout and grow.

The things we talk of, the things we preach and teach determine the things that will happen among us. As we establish wholesome traditions that teach the doctrine of Christ, the Holy

Spirit bears witness of the truthfulness of our message and nourishes the seeds of the gospel that are planted deep in the hearts of our children by our efforts all along the way. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 28:16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
3. See Neil L. Andersen’s Facebook page, post from Aug. 19, 2018, [facebook.com/lds.neil.l.andersen](https://www.facebook.com/lds.neil.l.andersen).
4. In Sarah Jane Weaver, “President Nelson Urges ‘Teach the Children,’” *Church News*, Sept. 23, 2018, 11.
5. Enos 1:1.
6. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 24–27.
7. Helaman 5:12.
8. Proverbs 22:6.
9. Deuteronomy 6:7.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Be Not Troubled

Take heart, brothers and sisters. Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear.

I add my witness to the messages of President Russell M. Nelson and Elder Quentin L. Cook given moments ago of the harmony and unanimity of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I know these revelatory announcements are the mind and the will of the Lord and will bless and strengthen individuals, families, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for generations to come.

Some years ago, one of our young married daughters and her husband asked Sister Rasband and me a very important, life-influencing question: “Is it still safe and wise to bring children into this seemingly wicked and frightening world we live in?”

Now, that was an important question for a mom and dad to consider with their dear married children. We could hear the fear in their voices and feel the fear in their hearts. Our answer to them was a firm “Yes, it’s more than OK,” as we shared fundamental gospel teachings and our own heartfelt impressions and life experiences.

Fear is not new. The disciples of Jesus Christ, out on the Sea of Galilee, feared the “wind, and the waves” in the dark of the night.¹ As His disciples

today, we too have fears. Our single adults fear making commitments such as getting married. Young marrieds, like our children, can fear bringing children into an increasingly wicked world. Missionaries fear lots of things, especially approaching strangers. Widows fear going forward alone. Teenagers fear not being accepted; grade schoolers fear the first day of school; university students fear getting back a test. We fear failure, rejection, disappointment, and the unknown. We fear hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires that ravage the land and our lives. We fear not being chosen, and on the flip side, we fear being chosen. We fear not being good enough; we fear that the Lord has no blessings for us. We fear change, and our fears can escalate to terror. Have I included just about everyone?

Since ancient times, fear has limited the perspective of God’s children. I have always loved the account of Elisha in 2 Kings. The king of Syria had sent a legion that “came by night, and compassed the city about.”² Their intent was to capture and kill the prophet Elisha. We read:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his

servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?”³

That was fear speaking.

“And [Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”⁴

But he didn’t stop there.

“Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”⁵

We may or may not have chariots of fire sent to dispel our fears and conquer our demons, but the lesson is clear. The Lord is with us, mindful of us and blessing us in ways only He can do. Prayer can call down the strength and the revelation that we need to center our thoughts on Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. The Lord knew that at times we would feel fear. I have been there and so have you, which is why the scriptures are replete with the Lord’s counsel:

“Be of good cheer, and do not fear.”⁶



“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”⁷

“Fear not, little flock.”⁸ I love the tenderness of “little flock.” In this Church we may be few in number by the way the world counts influence, but when we open our spiritual eyes, “they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”⁹ Our loving Shepherd, Jesus Christ, then continues, “Let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.”¹⁰

How is fear dispelled? For the young lad, he was standing right next to Elisha, a prophet of God. We have that same promise. When we listen to President Russell M. Nelson, when we hearken to his counsel, we are standing with a prophet of God. Remember the words of Joseph Smith: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!”¹¹ Jesus Christ lives. Our love for Him and His gospel dispels fear.

Our desire to “always have his Spirit”¹² with us will push fear aside for a more eternal view of our mortal lives. President Nelson has cautioned, “In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹³

The Lord said, regarding the scourges that would cover the land and would harden the hearts of many, “My disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.”¹⁴

And then this divine counsel: “Be not troubled, for, when all these things shall come to pass, ye may know that the promises which have been made unto you shall be fulfilled.”¹⁵

Stand in holy places—be not troubled—and promises shall be fulfilled. Let’s



look at each one of these in relation to our fears.

First, stand in holy places. When we stand in holy places—our righteous homes, our dedicated chapels, the consecrated temples—we feel the Spirit of the Lord with us. We find answers to questions that trouble us or the peace to simply set them aside. That is the Spirit in action. These sacred places in the kingdom of God on earth call for our reverence, our respect for others, our best selves in living the gospel, and our hopes to lay aside our fears and seek the healing power of Jesus Christ through His Atonement.

There is no room for fear in these holy places of God or in the hearts of His children. Why? Because of love. God loves us—always—and we love Him. Our love of God counters all fears, and His love abounds in holy places. Think about it. When we are tentative in our commitments to the Lord, when we stray from His path leading to life eternal, when we question or doubt our significance in His divine design, when we allow fear to

open the door to all its companions—discouragement, anger, frustration, disappointment—the Spirit leaves us, and we are without the Lord. If you know what that is like, you know it is not a good place to be. In contrast, when we stand in holy places, we can feel God’s love, and “perfect love casteth out all fear.”¹⁶

The next promise is “Be not troubled.”¹⁷ No matter how much wickedness and chaos fill the earth, we are promised by our daily faithfulness in Jesus Christ the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”¹⁸ And when Christ comes in all power and glory, evil, rebellion, and injustice will end.

Long ago the Apostle Paul prophesied of our times, saying to the young Timothy:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . .

“ . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”¹⁹



Remember, “they that be with us” on both sides of the veil, those who love the Lord with all their heart, might, mind, and strength, “are more than they that be with them.”²⁰ If we actively trust in the Lord and His ways, if we are engaged in His work, we will not fear the trends of the world or be troubled by them. I plead with you to set aside worldly influences and pressures and seek spirituality in your daily life. Love what the Lord loves—which includes His commandments, His holy houses, our sacred covenants with Him, the sacrament each Sabbath day, our communication through prayer—and you will not be troubled.

The last point: trust the Lord and His promises. I know that all His promises will be fulfilled. I know it as firmly as I stand here before you in this sacred meeting.

The Lord has revealed: “For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.”²¹

This is why we should not be troubled by the turmoil of today, by those in the great and spacious building, by those who scoff at honest effort and dedicated service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Optimism, courage, even charity

come from a heart not burdened by troubles or turmoil. President Nelson, who is “optimistic about the future,” has reminded us, “If we are to have any hope of sifting through the myriad of voices and the philosophies of men that attack truth, we must learn to receive revelation.”²²

To receive personal revelation, we must place priority on living the gospel and encouraging faithfulness and spirituality in others as well as ourselves.

Spencer W. Kimball was one of the prophets of my youth. These past few years, after being called as an Apostle, I have found peace in his

first message at general conference in October 1943. He was overwhelmed by his call; I know what that feels like. Elder Kimball said: “I did a great deal of thinking and praying, and fasting and praying. There were conflicting thoughts that surged through my mind—seeming voices saying: ‘You can’t do the work. You are not worthy. You have not the ability’—and always finally came the triumphant thought: ‘You must do the work assigned—you must make yourself able, worthy and qualified.’ And the battle raged on.”²³

I take heart from that purehearted testimony of this Apostle who would become the 12th President of this mighty Church. He recognized he had to put behind him his fears to “do the work assigned” and that he had to rely on the Lord for the strength to make himself “able, worthy and qualified.” We can too. The battles will rage on, but we will face them with the Spirit of the Lord. We will “be not troubled” because when we stand with the Lord and stand for His principles and His eternal plan, we are standing on holy ground.



Now, what about that daughter and son-in-law who asked the very heart-felt and probing, fear-based question years ago? They seriously considered our conversation that night; they prayed and fasted and came to their own conclusions. Happily and joyfully for them and for us, the grandparents, they have now been blessed with seven beautiful children as they go forward in faith and love.

Take heart, brothers and sisters. Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear. I bless you that as you do so, you will not be troubled by the times in which we live or the troubles that come your way. I bless you to choose to stand in holy places and be not moved. I bless you to believe in the promises of Jesus Christ, that He lives and that He is watching over us, caring for us and standing by us. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mark 4:37.
2. 2 Kings 6:14.
3. 2 Kings 6:15.
4. 2 Kings 6:16.
5. 2 Kings 6:17.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.
9. 2 Kings 6:16.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 6:34.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
13. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 45:35.
16. Moroni 8:16.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 45:35.
18. Philippians 4:7.
19. 2 Timothy 3:1–2, 4.
20. 2 Kings 6:16.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
22. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," 96.
23. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1943, 16–17.



By Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Gather Together in One All Things in Christ

The power of the Savior's gospel to transform and bless us flows from discerning and applying the interrelatedness of its doctrine, principles, and practices.

A rope is an essential tool with which all of us are familiar. Ropes are made from strands of fabric, plants, wire, or other materials that are each individually twisted or braided together. Interestingly, substances that may be quite unexceptional can be woven together and become exceptionally strong. Thus, effectively connecting and binding ordinary materials can produce an extraordinary tool.

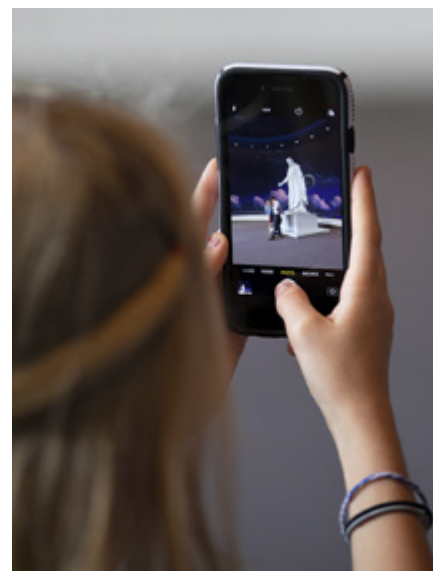
Just as a rope obtains its strength from many intertwined individual strands, so the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the greatest perspective of truth and offers the richest blessings as we heed the admonition of Paul to “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”¹ Importantly, this vital gathering of truth is centered in and focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ because He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”²

I pray that the Holy Ghost will enlighten each of us as we consider how the principle of *gathering together in one all things in Christ* applies in

practical ways to learning and living His restored gospel in our daily lives.

A Revelatory Season

We live in a remarkable and revelatory season of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. The historic adjustments announced today have only one overarching purpose: to strengthen faith in Heavenly Father and His plan





and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement. The Sunday meeting schedule was not simply shortened. Rather, we now have increased opportunities and responsibilities as individuals and families to use our time for enhancing the Sabbath as a delight at home and at church.

Last April, the organizational structure of priesthood quorums was not merely changed. Rather, emphasis and strength were given to a higher and holier way of ministering to our brothers and sisters.

Much like the braided strands of a rope produce a powerful and durable tool, all of these interrelated actions are part of a unified effort to better align the focus, resources, and work of the Savior's restored Church with its fundamental mission: to assist God in His work to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of His children. Please do not focus primarily upon the logistical aspects of what has been announced. We must not allow procedural details to obscure the overarching spiritual reasons these changes now are being made.

Our desire is that faith in the Father's plan and in the Savior's redeeming mission might increase in the earth and that God's everlasting covenant might be established.³ Our only objectives are to facilitate continuing conversion to the Lord and to love more completely and serve more effectively our brothers and sisters.

Segmenting and Separating

Sometimes as members of the Church we segment, separate, and apply the gospel in our lives by creating lengthy checklists of individual topics to study and tasks to accomplish. But such an approach potentially can constrain our understanding and vision. We must be careful because pharisaical focus upon checklists can divert us from drawing closer to the Lord.

The purpose and purification, the happiness and joy, and the continuing conversion and protection that come from "yielding [our] hearts unto God"⁴ and "[receiving] his image in [our] countenances"⁵ cannot be obtained merely by performing and checking off all the spiritual things we are supposed to do.

Rather, the power of the Savior's gospel to transform and bless us flows from discerning and applying the interrelatedness of its doctrine, principles, and practices. Only as we *gather together in one all things in Christ*, with firm focus upon Him, can gospel truths synergistically enable us to become what God desires us to become⁶ and endure valiantly to the end.⁷

Learning and Linking Gospel Truths

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a magnificent tapestry of truth "fitly framed"⁸ and woven together. As we learn and link together revealed gospel truths, we are blessed to receive precious perspective and increased spiritual capacity through eyes that can see the Lord's influence in our lives and ears that can hear His voice.⁹ And the principle of *gathering together in one—even in Him*—can assist us in changing the traditional checklists into a unified, integrated, and complete whole. Let me provide both a doctrinal and a Church example of what I am suggesting.

Example 1. The fourth article of faith is one of the greatest illustrations of gathering together in one all things in Christ: "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."¹⁰

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ—in Him as the divine and Only Begotten Son of the Father and on Him and the redemptive mission He fulfilled. "For he hath answered all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he

advocateth the cause of the children of men.”¹¹ Exercising faith in Christ is *trusting* and placing our confidence in Him as our Savior, on His name, and in His promises.

The first and natural consequence of trusting in the Savior is repenting and turning away from evil. As we exercise faith in and on the Lord, we naturally turn toward, come unto, and depend upon Him. Thus, repentance is *trusting* in and *relying* upon the Redeemer to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Each of us must “[*rely*] wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save”¹² because only “through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah”¹³

can we become new creatures in Christ¹⁴ and ultimately return to and dwell in the presence of God.

The ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins requires us to *trust* in Him, *rely* upon Him, and *follow* Him. Nephi proclaimed, “I know that if ye shall *follow the Son*, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by *following your Lord and your Savior* down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy

Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁵

The ordinance of laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost requires us to *trust* in Him, *rely* upon Him, *follow* Him, and *press forward* in Him with the assistance of His Holy Spirit. As Nephi declared, “And now . . . I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.”¹⁶

The fourth article of faith does not simply identify the fundamental principles and ordinances of the restored gospel. Rather, this inspired statement of beliefs gathers together in one all things in Christ: *trusting* in and on Him, *relying* upon Him, *following* Him, and *pressing forward* with Him—even in Him.

Example 2. I now want to describe how all Church programs and initiatives are gathered together in one in Christ. Many additional illustrations could be presented; I will use only a selected few.

In 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball instructed members of the Church to build up the strength of Zion throughout the world. He counseled the Saints to remain in their native lands and establish strong stakes by gathering the family of God and teaching them the ways of the Lord. He further indicated that more temples would be built and promised blessings for the Saints wherever they lived in the world.¹⁷

As the number of stakes increased, the need was intensified for member homes to “become [places] where family members [loved] to be, where they [could] enrich their lives and find mutual love, support, appreciation, and encouragement.”¹⁸ Consequently, in 1980, Sunday meetings were consolidated into a three-hour block to “reemphasize personal and family responsibility





for learning, living, and teaching the gospel.”¹⁹ This emphasis on family and the home again was affirmed in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” introduced by President Gordon B. Hinckley in 1995.²⁰

In April of 1998, President Hinckley announced the construction of many more small temples, thereby bringing the sacred ordinances of the Lord’s house closer to Latter-day Saint individuals and families throughout the world.²¹ And these enhanced opportunities for spiritual growth and development were complemented by related increases in temporal self-reliance through the introduction of the Perpetual Education Fund in 2001.²²

During his administration, President Thomas S. Monson repeatedly exhorted the Saints to go “to the rescue” and emphasized caring for the poor and needy as one of the Church’s divinely appointed responsibilities. Continuing the emphasis on temporal preparation, the Self-Reliance Services initiative was implemented in 2012.

Over the past several years, essential principles about making the Sabbath day a delight in the home and at church have been emphasized and reinforced,²³ thus preparing us for the Sunday meeting schedule adjustment that was announced in this session of general conference.

And six months ago, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums were strengthened

and aligned more effectively with the auxiliaries to accomplish a higher and holier approach to ministering.

I believe that the sequence and timing of these actions over many decades can help us to see one united and comprehensive work and not just a series of independent and discrete initiatives. “God has revealed a pattern of spiritual progress for individuals and families through ordinances, teaching, programs, and activities that are **home centered and Church supported**. Church organizations and programs exist to bless individuals and families and are not ends in themselves.”²⁴

I pray we can recognize the Lord’s work as one great worldwide work that is becoming ever more home centered and Church supported. I know and testify that the Lord is revealing and “will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”²⁵

Promise and Testimony

I began my message by highlighting the strength that is created as individual strands of material are twisted or braided together into a rope. In a similar way, I promise that increased perspective, purpose, and power will be evident in our learning and living of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ as we strive to gather together in one all things in Christ—even in Him.

All opportunities and blessings of eternal consequence originate in, are

possible and have purpose because of, and endure through the Lord Jesus Christ. As Alma testified: “There is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world.”²⁶

I joyfully declare my witness of the divinity and living reality of the Eternal Father and of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In our Savior we find joy. And in Him we find the assurance of “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”²⁷ I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Ephesians 1:10.
2. John 14:6.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:21–22.
4. Helaman 3:35.
5. Alma 5:14.
6. See Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:29.
8. Ephesians 2:21.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 136:32.
10. Articles of Faith 1:4.
11. Moroni 7:28.
12. 2 Nephi 31:19.
13. 2 Nephi 2:8.
14. See 2 Corinthians 5:17.
15. 2 Nephi 31:13; emphasis added.
16. 2 Nephi 31:16.
17. See Spencer W. Kimball, “The Fruit of Our Welfare Services Labors,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 76.
18. Instructions for stake presidencies and bishoprics, in “Church Consolidates Meeting Schedules,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1980, 73.
19. Instructions, in “Church Consolidates Meeting Schedules,” 73.
20. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
21. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “New Temples to Provide ‘Crowning Blessings’ of the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 87–88.
22. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 51–53; *Liahona*, July 2001, 60–62, 67.
23. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.
24. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.4; emphasis added.
25. Articles of Faith 1:9.
26. Alma 38:9.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.



By President Dallin H. Oaks
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Truth and the Plan

When we seek the truth about religion, we should use spiritual methods appropriate for that search.

Modern revelation defines truth as a “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:24). That is a perfect definition for the plan of salvation and “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”

We live in a time of greatly expanded and disseminated information. But not all of this information is true. We need to be cautious as we seek truth and choose sources for that search. We should not consider secular prominence or authority as qualified sources of truth. We should be cautious about relying on information or advice offered by entertainment stars, prominent athletes, or anonymous internet sources. Expertise in one field should not be taken as expertise on truth in other subjects.

We should also be cautious about the motivation of the one who provides information. That is why the scriptures warn us against priestcraft (see 2 Nephi 26:29). If the source is anonymous or unknown, the information may also be suspect.

Our personal decisions should be based on information from sources that are qualified on the subject and free from selfish motivations.

I.

When we seek the truth about religion, we should use spiritual methods appropriate for that search: prayer, the witness of the Holy Ghost, and study of the scriptures and the words of modern prophets. I am always sad when I hear of one who reports a loss of religious faith because of secular teachings. Those who once had spiritual vision can suffer from self-inflicted spiritual blindness. As President Henry B. Eyring said, “Their problem does not lie in

what they think they see; it lies in what they cannot yet see.”¹

The methods of science lead us to what we call scientific truth. But “scientific truth” is not the whole of life. Those who do not learn “by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118) limit their understanding of truth to what they can verify by scientific means. That puts artificial limits on their pursuit of truth.

President James E. Faust said: “Those who have been [baptized] put their eternal soul at risk by carelessly pursuing only the secular source of learning. We believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the fulness of the gospel of Christ, which gospel is the essence of truth and eternal enlightenment.”²

We find true and enduring joy by coming to know and acting upon the truth about who we are, the meaning of mortal life, and where we are going when we die. Those truths cannot be learned by scientific or secular methods.





II.

I will now speak of restored gospel truths that are fundamental to the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Please consider these truths carefully. They explain much about our doctrine and practices, perhaps including some things not yet understood.

There is a God, who is the loving Father of the spirits of all who have ever lived or will live.

Gender is eternal. Before we were born on this earth, we all lived as male or female spirits in the presence of God.

We have just heard the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square sing “I Will Follow God’s Plan.”³ That is the plan God established so that all of His spirit children could progress eternally. That plan is vital to each of us.

Under that plan, God created this earth as a place where His beloved spirit children could be born into mortality to receive a physical body and to have the opportunity for eternal progress by making righteous choices.

To be meaningful, mortal choices had to be made between contesting forces of good and evil. There had to be opposition and, therefore, an adversary, who was cast out because of rebellion and was allowed to tempt God’s children to act contrary to God’s plan.

The purpose of God’s plan was to give His children the opportunity to choose eternal life. This could be accomplished only by experience in mortality and, after death, by postmortal growth in the spirit world.

In the course of mortal life, we would all be soiled by sin as we yielded to the evil temptations of the adversary, and we would eventually die. We accepted those challenges in reliance upon the plan’s assurance that God our Father would provide a Savior, His Only Begotten Son, who would rescue us by a universal resurrection to an embodied life after death. The Savior would also provide an atonement to pay the price for all to be cleansed from sin on the conditions He prescribed. Those conditions included faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and other ordinances performed by priesthood authority.

God’s great plan of happiness provides a perfect balance between eternal justice and the mercy we can obtain through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It also enables us to be transformed into new creatures in Christ.

A loving God reaches out to each of us. We know that through His love and because of the Atonement of His Only Begotten Son, “*all* mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of [His] Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:3; emphasis added).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is properly known as a family-centered Church. But what is not well understood is that our family-centeredness is focused on more than mortal relationships. Eternal relationships are also fundamental to our theology. “The family is ordained of God.”⁴ Under the great plan of our loving Creator, the mission of His restored Church is to help the children of God achieve the supernal blessing of exaltation in the celestial kingdom, which can be attained only through an eternal marriage between a man and a woman (see Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–3). We affirm the Lord’s teachings that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” and that “marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan.”⁵

Finally, God’s love is so great that, except for the few who deliberately become sons of perdition, He has provided a destiny of glory for all of His children. “All of His children” includes all who are dead. We perform ordinances for them by proxy in our temples. The purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ is to qualify His children for the highest degree of glory, which is exaltation or eternal life. For those who do not desire or qualify for that, God has provided other, though lesser, kingdoms of glory.

Anyone who understands these eternal truths can understand why we members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints think as we do and do as we do.

III.

I will now mention some applications of these eternal truths, which can be understood only in light of God’s plan.

First, we honor individual agency. Most are aware of the restored Church's great efforts to promote religious freedom in the United States and across the world. These efforts do not promote just our own interests but, according to His plan, seek to help all of God's children enjoy freedom to choose.

Second, we are a missionary people. We are sometimes asked why we send missionaries to so many nations, even among Christian populations. We receive the same question about why we give many millions of dollars of humanitarian aid to persons who are not members of our Church and why we do not link this aid to our missionary efforts. We do this because we esteem all mortals as children of God—our brothers and sisters—and we want to share our spiritual and temporal abundance with everyone.

Third, mortal life is sacred to us. Our commitment to God's plan requires us to oppose abortion and euthanasia.

Fourth, some are troubled by some of our Church's positions on marriage and children. Our knowledge of God's revealed plan of salvation requires us to oppose current social and legal pressures to retreat from traditional marriage and to make changes that confuse or alter gender or homogenize the differences between men and women. We know that the relationships, identities, and functions of men and women are essential to accomplish God's great plan.

Fifth, we also have a distinctive perspective on children. We look on the bearing and nurturing of children as part of God's plan and a joyful and sacred duty of those given the power to participate in it. In our view, the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.



Therefore, we must teach and contend for principles and practices that provide the best conditions for the development and happiness of children—all children.

Finally, we are beloved children of a Heavenly Father, who has taught us that maleness and femaleness, marriage between a man and a woman, and the bearing and nurturing of children are all essential to His great plan of happiness. Our positions on these fundamentals frequently provoke opposition to the Church. We consider that inevitable. Opposition is part of the plan, and Satan's most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to God's plan. He seeks to destroy God's work. His prime methods are to discredit the Savior and His divine authority, to erase the effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, to discourage repentance, to counterfeit revelation, and to contradict individual accountability. He also seeks to confuse gender, to

distort marriage, and to discourage childbearing—especially by parents who will raise children in truth.

IV.

The work of the Lord is going forward despite the organized and constant opposition that confronts us as we strive to practice the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For those who falter under that opposition, I offer these suggestions.

Remember the principle of repentance made possible by the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell urged, don't be among those "who would rather try to change the Church than to change themselves."⁶

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland urged: "*Hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes. . . .*"

*" . . . In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know."*⁷



Presented by President Henry B. Eyring
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the first principle of the gospel.

Finally, seek help. Our Church leaders love you and seek spiritual guidance to help you. We provide many resources such as you will find through LDS.org and other supports for gospel study in the home. We also have ministering brothers and sisters called to give loving assistance.

Our loving Heavenly Father wants His children to have the joy that is the purpose of our creation. That joyful destiny is eternal life, which we can obtain by pressing forward along what our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, often calls “the covenant path.” Here is what he said in his first message as President of the Church: “Keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.”⁸

I solemnly testify that the things I have said are true, and they are made possible by the teachings and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, who makes it all possible under the great plan of God, our Eternal Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God: A Collection of Discourses* (1997), 143.
2. James E. Faust, “The Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 9.
3. “I Will Follow God’s Plan,” *Children’s Songbook*, 164–65.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
5. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 145.
6. Neal A. Maxwell, *If Thou Endure It Well* (1996), 101.
7. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94; emphasis in original.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

Brothers and sisters, I will now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell Marion Nelson as prophet,

seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Dallin Harris Oaks as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Henry Bennion Eyring as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.



Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Dallin H. Oaks as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and M. Russell Ballard as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Those in favor, please signify.

Any opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: M. Russell Ballard, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, Dale G. Renlund, Gerrit W. Gong, and Ulisses Soares.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Brook P. Hales, who has been called to serve as a General Authority Seventy.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may so manifest.

It is proposed that we release with appreciation for their devoted service Elders Mervyn B. Arnold, Craig A. Cardon, Larry J. Echo Hawk, C. Scott Grow, Allan F. Packer, Gregory A. Schwitzer, and Claudio D. Zivic as

General Authority Seventies and grant them emeritus status.

Those who wish to join with us in expressing gratitude to these Brethren for their remarkable service, please so manifest.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies: B. Sergio Antunes, Alan C. Batt, R. Randall Bluth, Hans T. Boom, Fernando E. Calderón, H. Marcelo Cardus, Paul R. Coward, Marion B. De Antuñano, Robert A. Dryden, Daniel F. Dunnigan, Jeffrey D. Erekson, Mervyn C. Giddey, João Roberto Grahl, Richard K. Hansen, Todd B. Hansen, Michael R. Jensen, Daniel W. Jones, Steven O. Laing, Axel H. Leimer, Tasara Makasi, Alvin F. Meredith III, Adonay S. Obando, Katsuyuki Otahara, Fred A. Parker, José C. Pineda, Gary S. Price, Miguel A. Reyes, Alfredo L. Salas, Netzahualcoyotl Salinas, Michael L. Southward, G. Lawrence Spackman, William H. Stoddard, Stephen E. Thompson, David J. Thomson, George J. Tobias, Jacques A. Van Reenen, Raul Edgardo A. Vicencio, Keith P. Walker, and Daniel Yirenya-Tawiah.

Those who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies as presently constituted.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Those who opposed any of the proposals should contact their stake president.

Brothers and sisters, we are grateful for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church. ■





By Elder D. Todd Christofferson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Firm and Steadfast in the Faith of Christ

To persevere firm and steadfast in the faith of Christ requires that the gospel of Jesus Christ penetrate one's heart and soul.

In Old Testament history, we read of successive periods when the children of Israel honored their covenant with Jehovah and worshipped Him and other times when they ignored that covenant and worshipped idols or Baalim.¹

The reign of Ahab was one of the periods of apostasy in the northern kingdom of Israel. The prophet Elijah on one occasion told King Ahab to gather the people of Israel as well as the prophets or priests of Baal at Mount Carmel. When the people had come together, Elijah said unto them, “How long halt ye between two opinions? [or in other words, “When will you decide once and for all?”] if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”² So Elijah directed that both he and Baal’s prophets cut up a young bull and place it on a bed of wood on their respective altars but “put no fire under.”³ Then, “Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.”⁴

You will recall that the priests of Baal clamored to their nonexistent god for hours to send down fire, but “there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”⁵ When it was Elijah’s turn, he repaired the broken-down altar of the Lord, laid the wood and the offering upon it, and then ordered that it all be doused with water, not once but three times. There was no doubt that neither he nor any other human power could light the fire.

“And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. . . .

“Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

“And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.”⁶

Today Elijah might say:

- Either God, our Heavenly Father, exists, or He does not, but if He exists, worship Him.
- Either Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the resurrected Redeemer of mankind, or He is not, but if He is, follow Him.
- Either the Book of Mormon is the word of God, or it is not, but if it is, then “get nearer to God by [studying and] abiding by its precepts.”⁷



- Either Joseph Smith saw and conversed with the Father and the Son that spring day of 1820, or he did not, but if he did, then follow the prophetic mantle, including the keys of sealing that I, Elijah, bestowed upon him.

In the most recent general conference, President Russell M. Nelson declared: “You don’t have to wonder about what is true [see Moroni 10:5]. You do not have to wonder whom you can safely trust. Through personal revelation, you can receive your own witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and that this is the Lord’s Church. Regardless of what others may say or do, no one can ever take away a witness borne to your heart and mind about what is true.”⁸

When James promised that God “giveth to all men liberally” who seek His wisdom,⁹ he also cautioned:

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

“For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”¹⁰

Our Savior, on the other hand, was the perfect example of stability. He said, “The Father hath not left me alone; for I do *always* those things that please him.”¹¹ Consider these descriptions from the scriptures of men and women who, like the Savior, were firm and steadfast:

They “were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.”¹²



“Their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually.”¹³

“And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth . . . are firm and steadfast in the faith, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.”¹⁴

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”¹⁵

To persevere firm and steadfast in the faith of Christ requires that the gospel of Jesus Christ penetrate one’s heart and soul, meaning that the gospel becomes not just one of many influences in a person’s life but the defining focus of his or her life and character. The Lord says:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,

and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“And . . . ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”¹⁶

This is the covenant we make by our baptism and in temple ordinances. But some have not yet fully received the gospel of Jesus Christ into their lives. Although, as Paul says, they were “buried with [Christ] by baptism,” they are still missing the part that “like as Christ was raised up from the dead . . . , even so we . . . should walk in [a] newness of life.”¹⁷ The gospel does not yet define them. They are not yet centered in Christ. They are selective about the doctrines and commandments they will follow and where and when they will serve in the Church. By contrast, it is in keeping their covenants with exactness that those “who are the elect according to the covenant”¹⁸ avoid deception and remain firm in the faith of Christ.

Most of us find ourselves at this moment on a continuum between a socially motivated participation in gospel rituals on the one hand and a



fully developed, Christlike commitment to the will of God on the other. Somewhere along that continuum, the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ enters into our heart and takes possession of our soul. It may not happen in an instant, but we should all be moving toward that blessed state.

It is challenging but vital to remain firm and steadfast when we find ourselves being refined “in the furnace of affliction,”¹⁹ something that comes soon or late to all of us in mortality. Without God, these dark experiences tend to despondency, despair, and even bitterness. With God, comfort replaces pain, peace replaces turmoil, and hope replaces sorrow. Remaining firm in the faith of Christ will bring His sustaining grace and support.²⁰ He will convert trial into blessing and, in Isaiah’s words, “give . . . beauty for ashes.”²¹

May I mention three examples of which I have personal knowledge:

There is a woman who suffers with a debilitating, chronic illness that persists despite medical attention, priesthood blessings, and fasting and prayers. Nevertheless, her faith in the

power of prayer and the reality of God’s love for her is undiminished. She presses ahead day by day (and sometimes hour by hour) serving as called in the Church and, together with her husband, looking after her young family, smiling as much as she can. Her compassion for others runs deep, refined by her own suffering, and she often loses herself in ministering to others. She continues steadfast, and people feel happy being around her.

A man who grew up in the Church, served as a full-time missionary, and married a lovely woman was surprised when some of his siblings began speaking critically of the Church and the Prophet Joseph Smith. After a time they left the Church and tried to persuade him to follow. As often happens in such cases, they bombarded him with essays, podcasts, and videos produced by critics, most of whom were themselves disaffected former members of the Church. His siblings mocked his faith, telling him he was gullible and misled. He didn’t have answers for all their assertions, and his faith began to waver under the

relentless opposition. He wondered if he should stop attending church. He talked with his wife. He talked with people he trusted. He prayed. As he meditated in this troubled state of mind, he recalled occasions when he had felt the Holy Spirit and had received a witness of truth by the Spirit. He concluded, “If I am honest with myself, I must admit that the Spirit has touched me more than once and the testimony of the Spirit is real.” He has a renewed sense of happiness and peace that is shared by his wife and children.

A husband and wife who have consistently and happily followed the counsel of the Brethren in their lives were grieved by the difficulty they experienced in having children. They expended substantial funds working with competent medical professionals, and, after a time, they were blessed with a son. Tragically, however, after only about a year, the baby was the victim of an accident that was no one’s fault but that left him semicomatose, with significant brain damage. He has received the best of care, but doctors

cannot predict how things will unfold going forward. The child this couple worked and prayed so hard to bring into the world has in a sense been taken away, and they don't know if he will be returned to them. They struggle now to care for their baby's critical needs while meeting their other responsibilities. In this supremely difficult moment, they have turned to the Lord. They rely on the "daily bread" they receive from Him. They are aided by compassionate friends and family and strengthened by priesthood blessings. They have drawn closer to one another, their union perhaps now deeper and more complete than might otherwise have been possible.

On July 23, 1837, the Lord directed a revelation to the then-President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Thomas B. Marsh. It included the following:

"And pray for thy brethren of the Twelve. Admonish them sharply for my name's sake, and let them be admonished for all their sins, and be ye faithful before me unto my name.

"And after their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and I will heal them."²²

I believe the principles expressed in these verses apply to all of us. The temptations and tribulations we experience, plus any testing that the Lord sees fit to impose, can lead to our full conversion and healing. But this happens if, and only if, we do not harden our hearts or stiffen our necks against Him. If we remain firm and steadfast, come what may, we achieve the conversion the Savior intended when He said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,"²³



a conversion so complete that it cannot be undone. The promised healing is the cleansing and sanctification of our sin-wounded souls, making us holy.

I am reminded of our mothers' counsel: "Eat your vegetables; it will do you good." Our mothers are right, and in the context of steadfastness in the faith, "eating your vegetables" is to pray constantly, to feast on the scriptures daily, to serve and worship in the Church, to worthily take the sacrament each week, to love your neighbor, and to take up your cross in obedience to God each day.²⁴

Always remember the promise of good things to come, both now and hereafter, for those who are firm and steadfast in the faith of Christ. Remember "eternal life, and the joy of the saints."²⁵ "O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever."²⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Bible Dictionary, "Baal."
2. 1 Kings 18:21.
3. 1 Kings 18:23.
4. 1 Kings 18:24.
5. 1 Kings 18:29.
6. 1 Kings 18:36, 38–39.
7. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
8. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95.

9. See James 1:5.
10. James 1:6–8.
11. John 8:29; emphasis added.
12. 3 Nephi 6:14; see also Alma 27:27.
13. Alma 57:27.
14. Helaman 15:7–8.
15. Acts 2:42.
16. Ezekiel 36:26–28; see also 2 Corinthians 3:3.
17. Romans 6:4.
18. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22–23; see also Matthew 24:24–25.
19. 1 Nephi 20:10; see also Isaiah 48:10.
20. As the Lord said to a 22-year-old Joseph Smith following the loss of part of the Book of Mormon translation: "You should not have feared man more than God. . . . He would have extended his arm and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary; and he would have been with you in every time of trouble" (Doctrine and Covenants 3:7–8). Alma testified that after his conversion, "I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me. And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory" (Alma 36:27–28).
21. Isaiah 61:3.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 112:12–13.
23. Luke 22:32.
24. See Luke 9:23. President Russell M. Nelson reminds us, "Nothing opens the heavens quite like the combination of increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon [see 2 Nephi 32:3], and regular time committed to temple and family history work" ("Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," 95).
25. Enos 1:3.
26. Jacob 3:2.



By Bishop Dean M. Davies
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice

As we solidify in our lives the practice of listening to and heeding the voice of the living prophets, we will reap eternal blessings.

In speaking of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Lord proclaimed:

“And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—

“... Yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, *having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church*” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:91–92; emphasis added).

I have been blessed to witness some of the gifts of God upon His prophets. May I share one such sacred experience with you? Prior to my current calling, I assisted in identifying and recommending future temple sites. After September 11, 2001, crossings along the U.S. borders became more controlled. As a result, it took two to three hours for many Church members to make the crossing from Vancouver, Canada, while going to the Seattle Washington Temple. President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church at that time, suggested that a temple in Vancouver would bless members of the Church. A site search

was authorized, and after we examined several Church-owned properties, other sites not owned by the Church were also investigated.

A beautiful site with religious zoning adjacent to the Trans-Canadian Highway was found. The property had excellent access, was dotted with beautiful Canadian pine trees, and enjoyed a prominent location which would



make it visible to thousands of passing motorists.

We presented the site with pictures and maps in the monthly Temple Sites Committee meeting. President Hinckley authorized that we place it under contract and complete the necessary studies. In December of that year, we reported back to the committee that the studies were complete, and we sought approval to proceed with the purchase. After hearing our report, President Hinckley said, “I feel I should see this site.”

Later that month, two days after Christmas, we left for Vancouver with President Hinckley; President Thomas S. Monson; and Bill Williams, a temple architect. We were met by Paul Christensen, the local stake president, who transported us to the site. It was a little wet and misty that day, but President Hinckley jumped out of the car and began walking all over the site.

After spending time on the site, I asked President Hinckley if he would like to see some of the other sites that had been considered. He said yes, he would like that. You see, by looking at the other sites, we were able to make a comparison of their virtues.

We did a large clockwise loop around Vancouver looking at the other properties, ultimately arriving back at the original site. President Hinckley said, “This is a beautiful site.” Then he asked, “Can we go to the Church-owned meetinghouse about one-quarter mile [0.4 km] away?”

“Of course, President,” we responded.

We got back into the cars and drove to the nearby meetinghouse. As we arrived at the chapel, President Hinckley said, “Turn left here.” We turned and followed the street as instructed. The street began to rise slightly.

Just as the car reached the crown of the rise, President Hinckley said, “Stop the car, stop the car.” He then pointed to the right at a parcel of ground and said, “What about this property? This is where the temple goes. This is where the Lord wants the temple. Can you get it? Can you get it?”

We hadn’t looked at this property. It was farther back and away from the main road, and it was not listed for sale. When we responded we didn’t know, President Hinckley pointed to the property and said again, “This is where the temple goes.” We stayed a few minutes, then left for the airport to return home.

The next day, Brother Williams and I were called to President Hinckley’s office. He had drawn out everything on a piece of paper: the roads, the chapel, turn left here, X marks the spot for the temple. He asked what we had found out. We told him he couldn’t have picked a more difficult property. It was owned by three individuals: one from Canada, one from India, and one from China! And it didn’t have the necessary religious zoning.

“Well, do your best,” he said.

Then the miracles happened. Within several months we owned the property, and later the city of Langley, British Columbia, gave permission to build the temple.

In reflecting upon this experience, I am humbled by the realization that while Brother Williams and I possessed formal education and years of experience in real estate and temple design, President Hinckley had no such formal training, but he had something far greater—the gift of prophetic seership. He was able to envision where God’s temple should stand.

When the Lord commanded the early Saints in this dispensation to construct a temple, He declared:



“But let a house be built unto my name according to the pattern which I will show unto them.

“And if my people build it not according to the pattern which I shall show . . . , I will not accept it at their hands” (Doctrine and Covenants 115:14–15).

As with the early Saints, so it is with us today: the Lord has revealed and continues to reveal to the President of the Church the patterns by which the kingdom of God is to be directed in our day. And, at a personal level, he provides guidance as to how each of us should direct our lives, such that our conduct may likewise be acceptable to the Lord.

In April 2013 I spoke about the efforts involved in preparing every temple’s foundation to ensure that it can withstand the storms and calamities to which it will be subjected. But the foundation is just the beginning. A temple is composed of many building blocks, fitted together according to predesigned patterns. If our lives are to become the temples each of us is striving to construct as taught by the

Lord (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17), we could reasonably ask ourselves, “What building blocks should we put in place in order to make our lives beautiful, majestic, and resistant to the storms of the world?”

We can find the answer to this question in the Book of Mormon. Concerning the Book of Mormon, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (introduction to the Book of Mormon). In the introduction to the Book of Mormon, we are taught that “those who gain [a] divine witness from the Holy Spirit [that the Book of Mormon is the word of God] will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is His revelator and [prophet of the Restoration], and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth.”



These then are some essential building blocks of our individual faith and testimony:

1. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.
2. The Book of Mormon is the word of God.
3. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth.
4. Joseph Smith is a prophet, and we have living prophets on the earth today.

In recent months, I have listened to every general conference address which President Nelson has given since he was first called as an Apostle. This exercise has changed my life. As I studied and pondered 34 years of President Nelson's collected wisdom, clear and consistent themes emerged from his teachings. Each of these themes relates to those building blocks just mentioned or is another key building block for our personal temples. They include faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, redemption of the dead and temple work, keeping the Sabbath day holy, beginning with the end in mind, staying on the covenant path. President

Nelson has spoken of them all with love and devotion.

The chief cornerstone and building block of the Church and for our lives is Jesus Christ. This is His Church. President Nelson is His prophet. President Nelson's teachings witness and reveal for our benefit the life and character of Jesus Christ. He speaks lovingly and knowingly of the Savior's nature and of His mission. He has also borne frequent and fervent testimony of the divine calling of the living prophets—the Presidents of the Church—under whom he has served.

Now, today, it is our privilege to sustain *him* as the Lord's living prophet on the earth. We are accustomed to sustaining Church leaders through the divine pattern of raising our arms to the square to manifest our acceptance and support. We did this just a few minutes ago. But true sustaining goes well beyond this physical token. As noted in Doctrine and Covenants 107:22, the First Presidency is to be "upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church." We come to fully and truly sustain the living prophet as we develop the pattern of confiding in his words, having the faith to act upon them, and then praying for the Lord's continued blessings upon him.

When I think of President Russell M. Nelson, I take comfort in the words of the Savior when He said, "And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place" (Doctrine and Covenants 124:45).

Listening to and hearkening to living prophets will have profound, even life-changing effects in our lives. We are strengthened. We are more assured and confident in the Lord. We hear the word of the Lord. We feel God's love. We will know how to conduct our lives with purpose.

I love and sustain President Russell M. Nelson and the others who have been called as prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that he has the gifts the Lord has bestowed upon his head, and I witness that as we solidify in our lives the practice of listening to and heeding the voice of the living prophets, our lives will be built according to the Lord's divine pattern for us, and we will reap eternal blessings. The invitation is extended to all. Come, listen to a prophet's voice; yea, come unto Christ and live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Ulisses Soares
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

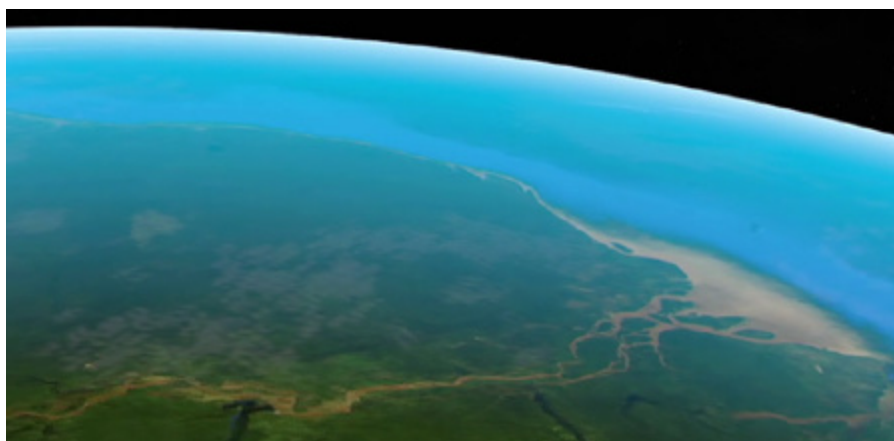
One in Christ

My beloved companions in the work of the Lord, I believe we can do much better and should do better in welcoming new friends into the Church.

Good afternoon, my dear brothers and sisters. As we say in my native Brazilian Portuguese, “Boa tarde!” I feel blessed to gather together in this wonderful general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints under the direction of our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. I marvel at the great opportunity each of us has to listen to the Lord’s voice through His servants on earth in these latter days we are living in.

My home country of Brazil is very rich in natural resources. One of them is the famous Amazon River, one of the largest and longest rivers in the world. It is formed by two separate rivers, the Solimões and Negro. Interestingly, they flow together for a number of miles before the waters blend, due to the rivers having very different origins, speeds, temperatures, and chemical compositions. After several miles, the waters finally blend together, becoming a river different than its individual parts. Only after these parts merge, the Amazon River becomes so powerful that when it reaches the Atlantic Ocean, it pushes back the seawater so that fresh water can still be found for many miles out into the ocean.

In a similar way that the Solimões and Negro Rivers flow together to make the great Amazon River, the children of God come together in the restored Church of Jesus Christ from different social backgrounds, traditions, and cultures, forming this wonderful community of Saints in Christ. Eventually, as we encourage, support, and love each other, we combine to form a mighty force for good in the world. As followers of Jesus Christ, flowing as one in this river of goodness, we will be able to provide the “fresh water” of the gospel to a thirsty world.



Like the powerful Amazon River, which pushes back the seawater when it reaches the Atlantic Ocean, followers of Jesus Christ provide the “fresh water” of the gospel to a thirsty world.

The Lord has inspired His prophets to teach us how we can support and love each other so we can become united in faith and purpose in following Jesus Christ. Paul, the New Testament Apostle, taught that those who “have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . . : for ye are all *one in Christ Jesus*.”¹

When we promise at baptism to follow the Savior, we witness before the Father that we are willing to take upon us the name of Christ.² As we strive to acquire His divine attributes in our lives, we become different than we were, through the Atonement of Christ the Lord, and our love for all people increases naturally.³ We feel a sincere concern for everyone’s welfare and happiness. We see each other as brothers and sisters, as children of God with divine origin, attributes, and potential. We desire to care for each other and bear one another’s burdens.⁴

This is what Paul described as charity.⁵ Mormon, a prophet of the Book of Mormon, described it as “the pure love of Christ,”⁶ which is the most sublime, noblest, and strongest form

of love. Our current prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, recently described a manifestation of this pure love of Christ as ministering, which is a more focused and holier approach to love and care for other individuals like the Savior did.⁷

Let us consider this principle of love and care, as the Savior did, within the context of encouraging, helping, and supporting those who are recent converts and those beginning to show interest in attending our Church services.

When these new friends come out of the world and embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, joining His Church, they become His disciples, being born again through Him.⁸ They leave behind a world they knew well and choose to follow Jesus Christ, with full purpose of heart, joining a new “river” like the mighty Amazon River—a river that is a valiant force of goodness and righteousness that flows toward the presence of God. The Apostle Peter describes it as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.”⁹ As these new friends merge into this new and unfamiliar river, they may feel a little lost at first. These new friends find themselves blending into a river with unique origins, temperatures, and chemical compositions—a river that has its own traditions, culture, and vocabulary. This new life in Christ may seem overwhelming for them. Think for a moment about how they may feel as they hear for the first time such expressions as “FHE,” “BYC,” “fast Sunday,” “baptism for the dead,” “triple combination,” and so forth.

It is easy to see why they may feel like they don’t belong. In such situations, they may ask themselves, “Is there a place for me here? Do I fit into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Does the Church need me? Will



I find new friends willing to help and support me?”

My dear friends, in such moments, those of us who are at different points in the long journey of discipleship must extend a warm hand of fellowship to our new friends, accept them where they are, and help, love, and include them in our lives. All of these new friends are precious sons and daughters of God.¹⁰ We cannot afford to lose even one of them because, like the Amazon River that depends on tributaries feeding it, we need them just as much as they need us, to become a mighty force for good in the world.

Our new friends bring God-given talents, excitement, and goodness within them. Their enthusiasm for the gospel can be contagious, thereby helping us revitalize our own testimonies. They also bring fresh perspectives to our understanding of life and the gospel.

We have long been taught how we can help our new friends to feel welcome and loved in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. They need three things so they may remain strong and faithful throughout their lives:

First, they need brothers and sisters in the Church who are sincerely interested in them, true and loyal friends to whom they can constantly turn, who will walk beside them, and who will answer their questions. As members,

we should always be attentive and look for new faces when attending Church activities and meetings, regardless of the responsibilities, assignments, or concerns we may have. We can do simple things to help these new friends feel embraced and welcome in the Church, such as giving a warm greeting, smiling sincerely at them, sitting together to sing and worship, introducing them to other members, and so forth. As we open our hearts to our new friends in some of these ways, we are acting in the spirit of ministering. When we minister to them like the Savior did, they won’t feel like “strangers within our gates.” They will feel like they can fit in and make new friends, and most importantly, they will feel the Savior’s love through our genuine care.

Second, new friends need an assignment—an opportunity to serve others. Service is one of the great geniuses of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a process by which our faith can grow stronger. Every new friend deserves that opportunity. While the bishop and ward council have direct responsibility to extend assignments soon after their baptism, nothing prevents us, as members, from inviting our new friends to help us serve others informally or through service projects.

Third, new friends must be “nourished by the good word of God.”¹¹ We can help them to love and become familiar with the scriptures as we read and discuss the teachings with them, providing context to the stories and explaining difficult words. We can also teach them how to receive personal guidance through regular scripture study. In addition, we can reach out to our new friends in their own homes and invite them to ours at times outside of our regularly scheduled Church meetings and activities, helping them

merge into the mighty river of the community of Saints.

Recognizing the adjustments and challenges our new friends make in becoming members of God's family, as our brothers and sisters, we can share how we have overcome similar challenges in our lives. This will help them know that they are not alone and that God will bless them as they exercise faith in His promises.¹²

When the Solimões and Negro Rivers blend together, the Amazon River becomes mighty and strong. In a similar fashion, when we and our new friends truly merge, the restored Church of Jesus Christ becomes even stronger and steadier. My sweetheart, Rosana, and I are so grateful for all those who helped us to blend into this new river many years ago, when we embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ in our home country of Brazil. Throughout the years, these wonderful people have truly ministered to us and have helped us to continue flowing in righteousness. We are so grateful for them.

The prophets in the Western Hemisphere knew well how to keep new friends flowing faithfully together into this new river of goodness toward eternal life. For example, having seen our day and knowing that we would face similar challenges,¹³ Moroni included some of those important steps in his writings in the Book of Mormon:

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the



author and the finisher of their faith.

"And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls."¹⁴

My beloved companions in the work of the Lord, I believe we can do much better and should do better in welcoming new friends into the Church. I invite you to consider what we can do to be more embracing, accepting, and helpful to them, starting this very next Sunday. Be careful not to let your Church assignments get in the way of welcoming new friends at Church meetings and activities. After all, these souls are precious before the eyes of God and are much more important than programs and activities. If we minister to our new friends with our hearts full of pure love as the Savior did, I promise you, in His name, that He will assist us in our efforts. When we act as faithful ministers, as the Savior did, our new friends will have the help they need to remain strong, dedicated, and faithful to the end. They will join us as we become a mighty people of God and will help us to bring fresh water to a world desperately in need of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These children of God will feel like they are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints."¹⁵ I promise you that they will recognize the presence

of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in His own Church. They will continue to flow with us as a river into the fountain of all goodness until they are received with open arms by our Lord, Jesus Christ, and they hear the Father say, "Ye *shall* have eternal life."¹⁶

I invite you to seek the Lord's help in loving others as He has loved you. Let us all follow the counsel given by Mormon: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren [and sisters], pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."¹⁷ Of these truths, I witness and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Galatians 3:27–28; emphasis added.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
3. See Mosiah 3:19.
4. See Mosiah 18:8.
5. See 1 Corinthians 13.
6. Moroni 7:47.
7. See Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering with the Power and Authority of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 68–75.
8. See Mosiah 27:25.
9. 1 Peter 2:9.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
11. Moroni 6:4; see also "How Do I Work with Stake and Ward Leaders?" *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), [lds.org/manual/missionary](https://www.lds.org/manual/missionary).
12. See 1 Nephi 7:12.
13. See Mormon 8:35.
14. Moroni 6:4–5.
15. Ephesians 2:19.
16. 2 Nephi 31:20; emphasis added.
17. Moroni 7:48.



By Elder Gerrit W. Gong
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Our Campfire of Faith

For those who seek, allow, and live for it, the dawn of faith, sometimes gradually, will come or can return.

Dear brothers and sisters, isn't it marvelous to receive continuing revelation from heaven through President Russell M. Nelson and our Church leaders that invites us to live in new and holier ways,¹ at home and at church, with all our heart, mind, and strength?

Have you ever had opportunity to do something for which you felt unprepared or inadequate but that you were blessed for trying?

I have. Here's one example.

Some years ago, Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, kindly invited,

"Gerrit, would you like to watercolor with me?"

Elder Scott said painting helped him observe and create. He has written: "Attempt to be creative, even if the results are modest. . . . Creativity can engender a spirit of gratitude for life and for what the Lord has woven into your being. . . . If you choose wisely, it doesn't have to absorb a lot of time."²

President Henry B. Eyring describes his artistic meditations as motivated by "a feeling of love," including "the love of a Creator who expects His children to become like Him—to create and to build."³ President Eyring's creative

works provide a "unique, spiritual perspective on testimony and faith."⁴

President Boyd K. Packer's artwork illustrates a fundamental gospel message: "God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all things that are in them, that all nature bears testimony of that divinely directed creation, and that there is [a] complete harmony between nature, science, and the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁵

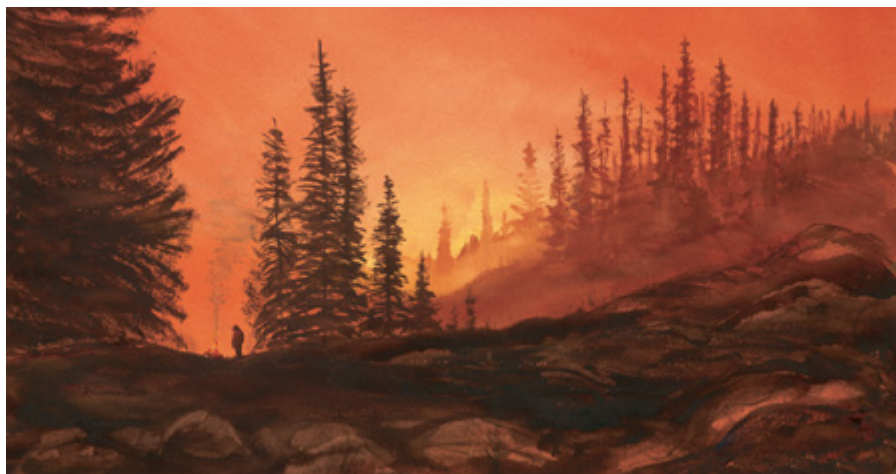
Alma testifies, "All things denote there is a God."⁶ Our Primary children sing, "Whenever I hear the song of a bird or look at the blue, blue sky, . . . I'm glad that I live in this beautiful world Heav'nly Father created for me."⁷ Author Victor Hugo celebrates the "miraculous relationships between beings and things; in this inexhaustible whole, from sun to aphid. . . . All the birds that fly hold the thread of eternity in their claws. . . . A nebula is an anthill of stars."⁸

And that brings us back to Elder Scott's invitation.

"Elder Scott," I replied, "I would like to become more observant and creative. I thrill to imagine Heavenly Father paints with billowing clouds and every hue of sky and water. But"—here was a long pause—"Elder Scott," I said, "I have no skill to watercolor. I worry it may frustrate you to try and teach me."

Elder Scott smiled and arranged for us to meet. On the appointed day, he prepared the paper, paints, and brushes. He sketched some outlines and helped wet the paper for me.

We used as a model his beautiful watercolor titled *Campfire at Sunset*. As we painted, we talked about faith—how as we face the light and warmth of a campfire, we leave the darkness and uncertainty behind us—how on sometimes long, lonely nights, our campfire of faith can give hope and



Campfire at Sunset, by Elder Richard G. Scott

assurance. And the dawn does come. Our campfire of faith—our memories, experiences, and heritage of faith in God’s goodness and tender mercies in our life—has strengthened us through the night.

My testimony is—for those who seek, allow, and live for it—the dawn of faith, sometimes gradually, will come or can return. The light will come when we desire and seek it, when we are patient and obedient to God’s commandments, when we are open to God’s grace, healing, and covenants.

As we began painting, Elder Scott encouraged, “Gerrit, even with one lesson you will paint something you will want to keep and remember.” Elder Scott was right. I treasure the watercolor of our campfire of faith Elder Scott helped me paint. My artistic ability was and remains limited, but the remembrance of our campfire of faith can encourage us in five ways.

First, our campfire of faith can encourage us to find joy in wholesome creativity.

There is joy in imagining, learning, doing worthwhile new things. This is especially true as we deepen faith and trust in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot love ourselves enough to save ourselves. But Heavenly Father loves us more and knows us better than we love or know ourselves. We can trust the Lord and lean not unto our own understanding.⁹

Have you ever been the only one not invited to someone’s birthday party?

Have you ever been chosen last, or not chosen, when teams were selected?

Have you prepared for a school test, a job interview, an opportunity you really wanted—and you felt you failed?

Have you prayed for a relationship that, for whatever reason, has not worked out?



Have you faced chronic illness, been abandoned by a spouse, agonized for family?

Our Savior knows our circumstances. As we exercise God-given agency and engage all our faculties in humility and faith, our Savior, Jesus Christ, can help us meet life’s challenges and joys. Faith includes a desire and choice to believe. Faith also comes from obeying God’s commandments, given to bless us, as we follow His covenant path.

When we have felt, or feel, uncertain, alone, frustrated, angry, let down, disappointed, or estranged from God and His restored Church, it may take an extra measure of effort and faith to enter again on His covenant path. But it is worth it! Please come, or come again, unto the Lord Jesus Christ! God’s love is stronger than the cords of death—temporal or spiritual.¹⁰ Our Savior’s Atonement is infinite and eternal. Each of us strays and falls short. We may, for a time, lose our way. God lovingly assures us, no matter where we are or what we have done, there is no point of no return. He waits ready to embrace us.¹¹

Second, our campfire of faith can encourage us to minister in new, higher, and holier Spirit-filled ways.

Such ministering brings miracles and the blessings of covenant belonging—where we feel God’s love and seek to minister to others in that spirit.

Not long ago, Sister Gong and I became acquainted with a father and family blessed by a faithful priesthood brother who came to their bishop and asked if he (the priesthood brother) could be a home teaching companion with the father. The father was not active and not interested in home teaching. But as the father’s heart changed, he and this loving priesthood brother began visiting “their” families. After one such visit, his wife—herself not then attending church—asked her husband how things had gone. The father admitted, “I may have felt something”—then he went to the kitchen to get a beer.¹²

But one thing followed another: tender experiences, ministering service, changing hearts, temple preparation class, coming to church, being sealed as a family in the holy temple. Imagine how grateful the children and grandchildren are to their father and mother and to the ministering brother who came as a friend and companion with their father to minister to and love others.

A third campfire of faith encouragement: creative gospel joy and blessings



come when we seek to love the Lord and others with all our hearts and souls.

The scriptures invite us to place all we are and are becoming on the altar of love and service. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy enjoins us to “love the Lord thy God” with all our heart, soul, and might.¹³ Joshua exhorts, “Love the Lord your God, . . . walk in all his ways, . . . keep his commandments, . . . cleave unto him, and . . . serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”¹⁴

In the New Testament, our Savior states the two great commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself.”¹⁵

In the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, King Benjamin labored “with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul” and established peace in the land.¹⁶ In the Doctrine and Covenants, as every missionary knows, the Lord asks us to serve Him with all our “heart, might, mind and strength.”¹⁷ When the Saints entered Jackson County, the Lord

commanded them to keep the Sabbath holy by loving “the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.”¹⁸

We rejoice in the invitation to devote our whole souls to seeking higher and holier ways to love God and those around us and to strengthen our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our homes and at church.

Fourth, our campfire of faith encourages us to establish regular patterns of righteous living that deepen faith and spirituality.

These holy habits, righteous routines, or prayerful patterns may include prayer; scripture study; fasting; remembering our Savior and covenants through the ordinance of the sacrament; sharing gospel blessings through missionary, temple and family history, and other service; keeping a thoughtful personal journal; and so on.

When righteous patterns and spiritual yearnings join, time and eternity come together. Spiritual light and life come when regular religious observance draws us closer to our Heavenly Father

and our Savior, Jesus Christ. When we love the spirit and letter of the law, the things of eternity can distill upon our souls like the dews from heaven.¹⁹ With daily obedience and refreshing living water, we find answers, faith, and strength to meet everyday challenges and opportunities with gospel patience, perspective, and joy.

Fifth, as we keep the best of familiar patterns while seeking new and holier ways to love God and help us and others prepare to meet Him, our campfire of faith can encourage us to remember perfection is in Christ, not in ourselves or in the perfectionism of the world.

God’s invitations are full of love and possibility because Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.”²⁰ To those who feel burdened, He invites, “Come unto me,” and to those who come to Him, He promises, “I will give you rest.”²¹ “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”²²

In this assurance “by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” is also the comfort, peace, and promise that we can continue forward with faith and confidence in the Lord even when things do not go as we hope, expect, or perhaps deserve, through no fault of our own, even after we have done our best.

In various times and ways, we all feel inadequate, uncertain, perhaps unworthy. Yet in our faithful efforts to love God and to minister to our neighbor, we may feel God’s love and needed inspiration for their and our lives in new and holier ways.

With compassion, our Savior encourages and promises we can “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.”²³

The doctrine of Christ, our Savior's Atonement, and our whole-souled following of His covenant path can help us know His truths and make us free.²⁴

I testify the fulness of His gospel and His plan of happiness are restored and taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in holy scripture, and by prophets from the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Russell M. Nelson today. I testify His covenant path leads to the greatest gift our loving Heavenly Father promises: "Ye shall have eternal life."²⁵

May His blessings and enduring joy be ours as we warm our hearts and hopes and commitment at our campfire of faith, I pray in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Ministering," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
2. Richard G. Scott, *Finding Peace, Happiness, and Joy* (2007), 162–63; quoted in *Elder Richard G. Scott Art Exhibit: A Self-Guided Tour* (pamphlet, 2010).
3. *A Visual Journal: Artwork of Henry B. Eyring* (booklet, 2017), 2.
4. *A Visual Journal*, 28.
5. Boyd K. Packer, *The Earth Shall Teach Thee: The Lifework of an Amateur Artist* (2012), ix.
6. Alma 30:44.
7. "My Heavenly Father Loves Me," *Children's Songbook*, 228–29.
8. Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Julie Rose (New York: Random House, 2008), 728.
9. See Proverbs 3:5–6.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:44.
11. See Luke 15:20.
12. Experience used by permission.
13. Deuteronomy 6:5.
14. Joshua 22:5.
15. Luke 10:27.
16. Words of Mormon 1:18.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
20. John 14:6.
21. Matthew 11:28.
22. Moroni 10:32.
23. 2 Nephi 31:20.
24. See John 8:32.
25. 2 Nephi 31:20.



By Elder Paul B. Pieper
Of the Seventy

All Must Take upon Them the Name Given of the Father

The Savior's name has singular and essential power. It is the only name by which salvation is possible.

A few weeks ago, I took part in the baptism of several eight-year-old children. They had begun to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ from their parents and teachers. The seed of their faith in Him had begun to grow. And now they wanted to follow Him into the waters of baptism to become members of His restored Church. As I watched their anticipation, I wondered how much they understood about one important aspect of their baptismal covenant:

their commitment to take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, God has declared the preeminence of the name of Jesus Christ in His plan for us. An angel taught our first father, Adam, "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."¹

The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin taught his people, "There shall be no other name given nor any



other way nor means whereby salvation can come.”²

The Lord reiterated this truth to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved.”³

In our day, President Dallin H. Oaks has taught that “those who exercise faith in the sacred name of Jesus Christ . . . and enter into his covenant . . . can lay claim on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”⁴

Our Heavenly Father wants to make it absolutely clear that the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, is not simply one name among many. The Savior’s name has singular and essential power. It is the only name by which salvation is possible. By emphasizing this truth in every dispensation, our loving Father assures all of His children that there is a way back to Him. But having a sure way available does not mean that our return is automatically assured. God tells us that our action is required: “Wherefore, all men [and women] must *take* upon them the name which is given of the Father.”⁵

In order to access the saving power that comes only through the name of Christ, we must “humble [ourselves] before God . . . and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits . . . and [be] willing to *take upon [us] the name of Jesus Christ*” and thereby qualify, like my eight-year-old friends, to “be received by baptism into his church.”⁶

All who sincerely desire to take the Savior’s name upon them must qualify for and receive the ordinance of baptism as a physical witness to God of their decision.⁷ But baptism is just the beginning.

The word *take* is not passive. It is an action word with multiple definitions.⁸ Likewise, our commitment



to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ requires action and has multiple dimensions.

For example, one meaning of the word *take* is to *partake* of or receive into one’s body, such as when we *take* a drink. By taking upon ourselves the name of Christ, we commit to *take* His teachings, His characteristics, and ultimately His love deep into our beings so that they become part of who we are. Thus the importance of President Russell M. Nelson’s invitation to the young adults to “prayerfully and vigorously [seek] to understand what each of [the Savior’s] various titles and names means *personally* for [them]”⁹ and to feast on the words of Christ in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon.¹⁰

Another meaning of the word *take* is to accept a person in a particular role or embrace the truthfulness of an idea or principle. When we take upon us the name of Christ, we accept Him as our Savior and continually embrace His teachings as the guide for our lives. In every meaningful decision we make, we can *take* His gospel to be true and obediently live it with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.

The word *take* can also mean to align oneself with a name or a cause.

Most of us have had the experience of *taking on* responsibility at work or *taking up* a cause or a movement. When we take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we take upon us the responsibilities of a true disciple, we advocate His cause, and we “stand as witnesses of [Him] at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in.”¹¹ President Nelson has called upon “*every* young woman and *every* young man . . . to enlist in the youth battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel.”¹² And all of us are grateful to take up the prophetic call to profess the name of His restored Church as revealed by the Savior Himself: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹³

In the process of taking the Savior’s name upon us, we must understand that the cause of Christ and of His Church are one and the same. They cannot be separated. Similarly, our personal discipleship to the Savior and active membership in His Church are also inseparable. If we falter in our commitment to one, our commitment to the other will be diminished, as surely as night follows day.

Some are reluctant to assume the name of Jesus Christ and His cause because they regard it to be unduly

narrow, limiting, and confining. In reality, taking upon us the name of Christ is both liberating and enlarging. It awakens the desire we felt when we accepted God's plan through faith in the Savior. With this desire alive in our hearts, we can discover the real purpose of our divinely given gifts and talents, experience His empowering love, and grow in our concern for the welfare of others. As we take upon us the Savior's name, we truly lay hold upon every good thing and become like Him.¹⁴

It is important to remember that taking the Savior's name upon us is a covenant commitment—beginning with the covenant we make at baptism. President Nelson has taught, “[Our] commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available.”¹⁵ One of the supernal privileges of taking the Savior's name upon us by baptism is the access it provides to the next ordinance on the covenant path, our confirmation. When I asked one of my eight-year-old friends what taking the name of Christ meant to her, she replied simply, “It means I can have the Holy Ghost.” She was right.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is received by confirmation after we have received the ordinance of baptism. This gift is the right and opportunity to have the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. If we listen to and obey His still, small voice, He will keep us on the covenant path we entered through baptism, warn us when we are tempted to depart from it, and encourage us to repent and adjust as necessary. Our focus after baptism is to keep the Holy Ghost always with us so that we can continue progressing along the covenant path. The Holy Ghost can be



with us only to the degree we keep our lives clean and free from sin.

For this reason, the Lord has provided a way for us to continually refresh the purifying effect of our baptism through another ordinance—the sacrament. Each week we can “witness . . . that [we] are *willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son*”¹⁶ again by reaching out and *taking* the emblems of the Lord's flesh and blood in our hands—the bread and the water—and *partaking* of them into our very souls. In return, the Savior performs His cleansing miracle yet again and qualifies us to have the continuing influence of the Holy Ghost. Is this not evidence of the infinite mercy found only in the name of Jesus Christ? Just as we take His name upon *us*, *He* takes our sins and sorrows upon *Him*, and yet His “arm of mercy is extended”¹⁷ to encircle us in the arms of His love.¹⁸

The sacrament is a weekly reminder that *taking* upon us the name of Jesus Christ is a living and continuing commitment, not a single event that happens once only on the day of our baptism.¹⁹ We can continually and repeatedly enjoy “that sacred, holy offering, by man least understood, to have our sins remitted and take his flesh and blood.”²⁰ It is little wonder then that whenever the children of God understand the powerful, spiritual blessings that can come from taking upon them the name of Christ, their feeling is always of joy and their desire is always to enter into a covenant with their God.²¹

As we follow this divinely designed covenant path, our commitment and efforts to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ will give us the strength “to retain [His] name written always in [our] hearts.”²² We will love God and our neighbors and feel a desire to minister to them. We will keep His commandments and yearn to draw nearer to Him by entering into additional covenants with Him. And when we find ourselves weak and incapable to act on our righteous desires, we will plead for the strength that comes only through His name, and He will come to our aid. As we endure in faithfulness, the day will come when we will see Him and be with Him, and we will find that we have become like Him, thus qualifying us to return to the presence of the Father.

For the Savior's promise is sure: those who “believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end”²³ will be saved in the kingdom of God. With you, I rejoice that these incomparable blessings are made possible by taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ, of whom and in whose name I testify, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Moses 5:8.
2. Mosiah 3:17.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 18:23.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 82.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 18:24; emphasis added.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; emphasis added.
7. President Dallin H. Oaks has taught: “We



By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Believe, Love, Do

We achieve the abundant life by becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ—by following in His ways and engaging in His work.

My dear brothers and sisters, it's such a wonderful occasion to be with you in this marvelous general conference session today: to listen to inspired messages; to listen to this marvelous, amazing choir of missionaries representing the many thousands of missionaries all around the world—our daughters, our sons—and especially to be united in our faith today, again sustaining our dear President and prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, the First Presidency, and the General Officers of the Church. What a joyful day to be with you today.

The ancient King Solomon was one of the most outwardly successful

human beings in history.¹ He seemed to have everything—money, power, adoration, honor. But after decades of self-indulgence and luxury, how did King Solomon sum up his life?

“All is vanity,”² he said.

This man, who had it all, ended up disillusioned, pessimistic, and unhappy, despite everything he had going for him.³

There is a word in German, *Weltschmerz*. Loosely defined, it means a sadness that comes from brooding about how the world is inferior to how we think it ought to be.

Perhaps there is a little *Weltschmerz* in all of us.

When silent sorrows creep into the corners of our lives. When sadness saturates our days and casts deep shadows over our nights. When tragedy and injustice enter the world around us, including in the lives of those we love. When we journey through our own personal and lonely path of misfortune, and pain darkens our stillness and breaches our tranquility—we might be tempted to agree with Solomon that life is vain and devoid of meaning.

The Great Hope

The good news is, there is hope. There is a solution to the emptiness,



- take upon us our Savior's name when we become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . As true believers in Christ, as Christians, we have gladly taken his name upon us” (“Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” 80).
8. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary lists 20 meanings of the transitive form of the verb *take*, which is the form in which the verb is used in the phrase “take upon us the name of Jesus Christ” (see merriam-webster.com/dictionary/take).
 9. Russell M. Nelson, “Prophets, Leadership, and Divine Law” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2017), broadcasts.lds.org.
 10. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 60–63.
 11. Mosiah 18:9.
 12. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.lds.org.
 13. “The Lord has impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He has revealed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have work before us to bring ourselves in harmony with His will” (Russell M. Nelson, in “The Name of the Church” [official statement, Aug. 16, 2018], mormonnewsroom.org).
 14. See Moroni 7:19.
 15. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
 16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; emphasis added.
 17. 3 Nephi 9:14; see also Alma 5:33–34.
 18. See 2 Nephi 1:15.
 19. “When we witness our *willingness* to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, we are signifying our commitment to do all that we can to achieve eternal life in the kingdom of our Father. We are expressing our candidacy—our determination to strive for—exaltation in the celestial kingdom. . . .
 - “ . . . What we witness is not that we *take* upon us his name but that we are *willing* to do so. In this sense, our witness relates to some future event or status whose attainment is not self-assumed, but depends on the authority or initiative of the Savior himself” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” 82, 83).
 20. “O God, the Eternal Father,” *Hymns*, no. 175.
 21. See Mosiah 5; 6; 18; 3 Nephi 19.
 22. Mosiah 5:12.
 23. Doctrine and Covenants 20:29.

vanity, and *Weltschmerz* of life. There is a solution to even the deepest hopelessness and discouragement you might feel.

This hope is found in the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the Savior's redemptive power to heal us of our soul-sickness.

"I am come," Jesus declared, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."⁴

We achieve that abundant life not by focusing on our own needs or on our own achievements but by becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ—by following in His ways and engaging in His work. We find the abundant life by forgetting ourselves and engaging in the great cause of Christ.

And what is the cause of Christ? It is to believe in Him, love as He loved, and do as He did.

Jesus "went about doing good."⁵ He walked among the poor, the outcast, the sick, and the ashamed. He ministered to the powerless, the weak, and the friendless. He spent time with them; He spoke with them. "And he healed them all."⁶

Everywhere He went, the Savior taught the "good news"⁷ of the gospel. He shared eternal truths that set people free spiritually as well as temporally.

Those who dedicate themselves to Christ's cause discover the truth of the Savior's promise: "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."⁸

Solomon was wrong, my dear brothers and sisters—life is not "vanity." To the contrary, it can be full of purpose, meaning, and peace.

The healing hands of Jesus Christ reach out to all who seek Him. I have come to know without a doubt that believing and loving God and striving to follow Christ can change our hearts,⁹ soften our pain, and fill our souls with "exceedingly great joy."¹⁰



Believe, Love, Do

Of course, we must do more than merely have an intellectual understanding of the gospel for it to have this healing influence in our lives. We must incorporate it into our lives—make it a part of who we are and what we do.

May I suggest that discipleship begins with three simple words:

Believe, love, and do.

Believing God leads to faith in Him and developing trust in His word. Faith causes our hearts to grow in our love for God and others. As that love grows, we are inspired to emulate the Savior as we continue our own great journey on the path of discipleship.

"But," you say, "that seems a bit simplistic. Life's problems, certainly my problems, are far too complex for such a simple prescription. You can't cure *Weltschmerz* with three simple words: *Believe, love, do.*"

It is not the aphorism that cures. It is the love of God that rescues, restores, and revives.

God knows you. You are His child. He loves you.

Even when you think that you are not lovable, He reaches out to you.

This very day—every day—He reaches out to you, desiring to heal you, to lift you up, and to replace the emptiness in your heart with an

abiding joy. He desires to sweep away any darkness that clouds your life and fill it with the sacred and brilliant light of His unending glory.

I have experienced this for myself.

And it is my witness as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that all who come unto God—all who truly *believe, love, and do*—can experience the same.

We Believe

The scriptures teach us that "without faith it is impossible to please [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is."¹¹

For some, the act of believing is difficult. Sometimes our pride gets in the way. Perhaps we think that because we are intelligent, educated, or experienced, we simply cannot believe in God. And we begin to look at religion as foolish tradition.¹²

In my experience, belief is not so much like a painting we look at and admire and about which we discuss and theorize. It is more like a plow that we take into the fields and, by the sweat of our brow, create furrows in the earth that accept seeds and bear fruit that shall remain.¹³

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.¹⁴ This is the promise to all who seek to believe.

We Love

The scriptures reveal that the more we love God and His children, the happier we become.¹⁵ The love Jesus spoke about, however, isn't a gift-card, throwaway, move-on-to-other-things love. It isn't a love that is spoken of and then forgotten. It is not a "let me know if there is anything I can do" sort of love.

The love God speaks of is the kind that enters our hearts when we awake in the morning, stays with us throughout the day, and swells in our hearts as we give voice to our prayers of gratitude at evening's end.

This is the inexpressible love Heavenly Father has for us.

It is this endless compassion that allows us to more clearly see others for who they are. Through the lens of pure love, we see immortal beings of infinite potential and worth and beloved sons and daughters of Almighty God.

Once we see through that lens, we cannot discount, disregard, or discriminate against anyone.

We Do

In the Savior's work, it is often by small and simple means that "great things [are] brought to pass."¹⁶

We know that it requires repetitive practice to become good at anything. Whether it's playing the clarinet, kicking a ball into a net, repairing a car, or even flying an airplane, it is through practicing that we may become better and better.¹⁷

The organization our Savior created on earth—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—helps us to do just that. It offers a place to practice living the way He taught and blessing others the way He did.

As Church members, we are given callings, responsibilities, and

opportunities to reach out in compassion and minister to others.

Recently, the Church has placed a renewed emphasis on ministering, or serving or loving others. Great thought was taken to determine what we should call this special emphasis.

One of the names considered was *shepherding*, a fitting reference to Christ's invitation: "Feed my sheep."¹⁸ However, it had at least one complication: using that term would make me a *German shepherd*. Consequently, I am quite content with the term *ministering*.

This Work Is for Everyone

Of course, this emphasis is not new. It simply provides a renewed and refined opportunity for us to practice the Savior's commandment to "love one another,"¹⁹ a refined way to implement and practice the purpose of the Church.

Just think about missionary work; the courageous, humble, and confident sharing of the gospel is a wonderful example of ministering to the spiritual

needs of others, whoever they are.

Or doing temple work—seeking out the names of our ancestors and offering them the blessings of eternity. What a divine way of ministering.

Consider the act of seeking out the poor and the needy, lifting the hands that hang down, or blessing the sick and afflicted. Aren't these the very acts of pure ministering the Lord practiced when He walked the earth?

If you are not a member of the Church, I invite you to "come and see."²⁰ Come and join with us. If you are a member of the Church but presently not participating actively, I invite you: please come back. We need you!

Come, add your strengths to ours.

Because of your unique talents, abilities, and personality, you will help us become better and happier. In return, we will help you become better and happier as well.

Come, help us build and strengthen a culture of healing, kindness, and mercy toward all of God's children. For we are



all striving to become new creatures where “old things are passed away” and “all things . . . become new.”²¹ The Savior shows us the direction to move—forward and upward. He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”²² Let us all work together to become the people God intended for us to become.

This is the kind of gospel culture we desire to cultivate throughout the Church of Jesus Christ. We seek to strengthen the Church as a place where we forgive one another. Where we resist the temptation to find fault, gossip, and bring others down. Where, instead of pointing out flaws, we lift up and help each other to become the best we can be.

Let me invite you again. Come and see. Join with us. We need you.

Imperfect People

You will find that this Church is filled with some of the finest people this world has to offer. They are welcoming, loving, kind, and sincere. They are hardworking, willing to sacrifice, and even heroic at times.

And they are also painfully imperfect.

They make mistakes.

From time to time they say things they shouldn't. They do things they wish they hadn't.

But they do have this in common—they want to improve and draw closer to the Lord, our Savior, even Jesus Christ.

They are trying to get it right.

They *believe*. They *love*. They *do*.

They want to become less selfish, more compassionate, more refined, more like Jesus.

The Blueprint for Happiness

Yes, life can be hard at times. Certainly we all have our times of

despair and discouragement.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ offers hope. And, in the Church of Jesus Christ, we join with others who seek a place where we can feel at home—a place of growth where, together, we can *believe*, *love*, and *do*.

Regardless of our differences, we seek to embrace one another as sons and daughters of our beloved Heavenly Father.

I am grateful beyond measure to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to know that God loves His children enough to give them a blueprint for happiness and meaning in this life and a way to experience eternal joy in the halls of glory in the life to come.

I am grateful that God has given us a way to heal the soul-sicknesses and the *Weltschmerz* of life.

I testify and leave you my blessing that as we *believe* in God, as we *love* Him and *love* His children with all our hearts, and as we strive to *do* as God has instructed us, we will find healing and peace, happiness and meaning.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



NOTES

1. An msn.com poll listed Solomon as the fifth richest person to ever live. “According to the Bible, King Solomon ruled from 970 BC to 931 BC, and during this time he is said to have received 25 tons of gold for each of the 39 years of his reign, which would be worth billions of dollars in 2016. Along with impossible riches amassed from taxation and trade, the biblical ruler’s personal fortune could have surpassed \$2 trillion in today’s money” (“The 20 Richest People of All Time,” Apr. 25, 2017, msn.com).
2. See Ecclesiastes 1:1–2.
3. See Ecclesiastes 2:17.
4. John 10:10.
5. Acts 10:38.
6. Matthew 12:15; see also Matthew 15:30.
7. The word *gospel* has its roots in a Greek word that literally means “good news” (see Bible Dictionary, “Gospels”).
8. Matthew 16:25.
9. See Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 24:7.
10. 1 Nephi 8:12.
11. Hebrews 11:6.
12. See 2 Nephi 9:28.
13. See John 15:16.
14. See James 4:8.
15. See 4 Nephi 1:15–16.
16. Alma 37:6.
17. Aristotle believed that “it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced” (*The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, rev. Lesley Brown [2009], 28).
18. See John 21:15–17.
19. John 15:12.
20. John 1:39.
21. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
22. John 14:15.



By Joy D. Jones
Primary General President

For Him

Knowing the who and the why in serving others helps us understand that the highest manifestation of love is devotion to God.

On this historic night, I express my love and appreciation to each of you, my dear sisters. Whatever our age, location, or circumstance, we gather tonight in unity, in strength, in purpose, and in testimony that we are loved and led by our Heavenly Father; our Savior, Jesus Christ; and our living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson.

As a young couple, my husband and I were called by our bishop to visit and minister to a family who hadn't been to church in many years. We willingly accepted the assignment and went to their home a few days later. It was immediately clear to us that they did not want visitors from the Church.

So on our next visit, we approached them with a plate of cookies, confident that chocolate chips would melt their hearts. They didn't. The couple spoke to us through the screen door, making it even clearer that we weren't welcome. But as we drove home, we were fairly certain success might have been achieved had we only offered them Rice Krispies Treats instead.

Our lack of spiritual vision made additional failed attempts frustrating. Rejection is never comfortable. Over time we began to ask ourselves, "*Why* are we doing this? What is our purpose?"

Elder Carl B. Cook made this observation: "Serving in the Church . . . can be challenging if we are asked to do something that frightens us, if we grow weary of serving, or if we are called to do something that we do not initially find appealing."¹ We were experiencing the truth of Elder Cook's words when we decided we had to seek direction from Someone with a greater perspective than our own.

So, after much sincere prayer and study, we received the answer to the *why* of our service. We had a change in our understanding, a change of heart, actually a revelatory experience.² As we sought direction from the scriptures, the Lord taught us how to make the process of serving others easier and more meaningful. Here is the verse we read that changed both our hearts and our approach: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ *thou shalt serve him*."³ Though this verse was so familiar, it seemed to speak to us in a new and important way.

We realized that we were sincerely striving to serve this family and to serve our bishop, but we had to ask ourselves if we were really serving out of love for the Lord. King Benjamin made clear this

distinction when he stated, "Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for *I have only been in the service of God*."⁴

So whom was King Benjamin really serving? Heavenly Father and the Savior. Knowing the *who* and the *why* in serving others helps us understand that the highest manifestation of love is devotion to God.

As our focus gradually changed, so did our prayers. We began looking forward to our visits with this dear family because of our love for the Lord.⁵ We were doing it for Him. He made the struggle no longer a struggle. After many months of our standing on the doorstep, the family began letting us in. Eventually, we had regular prayer and tender gospel discussions together. A long-lasting friendship developed. We were worshipping and loving Him by loving His children.

Can you think back on a time when you lovingly reached out with sincere effort to help someone in need and felt that your efforts went unnoticed or perhaps were unappreciated or even unwanted? In that moment, did you question the value of your service? If so, may the words of King Benjamin replace your doubt and even your hurt: "Ye are only in the service of your God."⁶

Rather than building resentment, we can build, through service, a more perfect relationship with our Heavenly Father. Our love for and devotion to Him preempts the need for recognition or appreciation and allows His love to flow to and through us.

Sometimes we may initially serve from a sense of duty or obligation, but even that service can lead us to draw on something higher within us, leading us to serve in "a more excellent way"⁷—as in President Nelson's



invitation to “a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others.”⁸

When we focus on all that God has done for us, our service flows from a heart of gratitude. As we become less concerned about our service magnifying us, we realize instead that the focus of our service will be on putting God first.⁹

President M. Russell Ballard taught, “It is only when we love God and Christ with all of our hearts, souls, and minds that we are able to share this love with our neighbors through acts of kindness and service.”¹⁰

The first of the Ten Commandments reiterates this divine wisdom: “I am the Lord thy God. . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”¹¹ The placement of this commandment helps us understand that *if* we place Him as our main priority, everything else will ultimately fall into place—even our service to others. When He takes the preeminent position in our lives by our deliberate choice, then He is able to bless our actions to our good and to the good of others.

The Lord counseled, “Look unto me in every thought.”¹² And each week we covenant to do just that—to “always remember him.”¹³ Can such a godly

focus apply in everything we do? Can performing even a menial task become an opportunity to demonstrate our love and devotion to Him? I believe it can and will.

We can make each item on our to-do list become a way to glorify Him. We can see each task as a privilege and opportunity to serve Him, even when we are in the midst of deadlines, duties, or dirty diapers.

As Ammon said, “Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things.”¹⁴

When serving our God becomes our main priority in life, we lose ourselves, and in due course, we find ourselves.¹⁵

The Savior taught this principle so simply and directly: “Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and *glorify your Father* who is in heaven.”¹⁶

May I share with you some words of wisdom that were found on the wall of an orphanage in Calcutta, India: “If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.

Build anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough. Give the world the best you’ve got anyway. You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God . . . anyway.”¹⁷

Sisters, it is always between us and the Lord. As President James E. Faust said: “‘What is the greatest need in the world?’ . . . ‘Is not the greatest need in all of the world for every person to have a personal, ongoing, daily, continuing relationship with the Savior?’ Having such a relationship can unchain the divinity within us, and nothing can make a greater difference in our lives as we come to know and understand our divine relationship with God.”¹⁸

Similarly, Alma explained to his son, “Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.”¹⁹

And President Russell M. Nelson has likewise taught us, “When we comprehend His voluntary Atonement, any sense of sacrifice on our part becomes

completely overshadowed by a profound sense of gratitude for the privilege of serving Him.”²⁰

Sisters, I testify that when Jesus Christ, through the power of His Atonement, works *on* us and *in* us, He begins to work *through* us to bless others. We serve them, but we do so by loving and serving Him. We become what the scripture describes: “Every man [and woman] seeking the interest of his [or her] neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.”²¹

Maybe our bishop knew that was the lesson my husband and I would learn from those early and well-intentioned, yet not perfect, efforts to minister to God’s beloved sons and daughters. I bear my personal and sure witness of the goodness and love He shares with us even as we strive to serve for Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Carl B. Cook, “Serve,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 110.
2. See Mosiah 5:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 59:5; emphasis added.
4. Mosiah 2:16; emphasis added.
5. See 1 Nephi 11:22.
6. Mosiah 2:17.
7. 1 Corinthians 12:31.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
9. See Matthew 6:1–4, 33.
10. M. Russell Ballard, “Finding Joy through Loving Service,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 47.
11. Exodus 20:2–3.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
14. Alma 26:12.
15. See Matthew 16:24–25.
16. 3 Nephi 12:16; emphasis added.
17. Often attributed to Mother Teresa; see Kent M. Keith, *The Paradoxical Commandments* (1968).
18. James E. Faust, “A Personal Relationship with the Savior,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 58.
19. Alma 37:36.
20. Russell M. Nelson, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 1996, 35.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 82:19.



By Michelle D. Craig

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Divine Discontent

Divine discontent can move us to act in faith, follow the Savior’s invitations to do good, and give our lives humbly to Him.

When I was in elementary school, we walked home on a paved trail that wound back and forth up the side of a hill. There was another trail, unpaved, called the “boys’ trail.” The boys’ trail was a path in the dirt that went straight up the hill. It was shorter but much steeper. As a young girl, I knew I could walk up any trail the boys could. More important, I knew I was living in the latter days and that I would need to do hard things, as did the pioneers—and I wanted to be prepared. So every now and then, I would lag behind my group of friends on the paved trail, remove my shoes,

and walk barefoot up the boys’ trail. I was trying to toughen up my feet.

As a young Primary girl, that is what I thought I could do to prepare. Now I know differently! Rather than walking barefoot up mountain trails, I know I can prepare my feet to walk on the covenant path by responding to the invitations of the Holy Ghost. For the Lord, through His prophet, is calling each of us to live and care in a “higher and holier way” and to “take a step higher.”¹

These prophetic calls to action, coupled with our innate sense that we can do and be more, sometimes



create within us what Elder Neal A. Maxwell called “divine discontent.”² Divine discontent comes when we compare “what we *are* [to] what we have the power to *become*.”³ Each of us, if we are honest, feels a gap between where and who we are, and where and who we want to become. We yearn for greater personal capacity. We have these feelings because we are daughters and sons of God, born with the Light of Christ yet living in a fallen world. These feelings are God given and create an urgency to act.

We should welcome feelings of divine discontent that call us to a higher way, while recognizing and avoiding Satan’s counterfeit—paralyzing discouragement. This is a precious space into which Satan is all too eager to jump. We can choose to walk the higher path that leads us to seek for God and His peace and grace, or we can listen to Satan, who bombards us with messages that we will never be enough: rich enough, smart enough, beautiful enough, anything enough. Our discontent can become divine—or destructive.

Act in Faith

One way to tell divine discontent from Satan’s counterfeit is that divine discontent will lead us to faithful action. Divine discontent is not an invitation to stay in our comfort zone, nor will it lead us to despair. I have learned that when I wallow in thoughts of everything I am *not*, I do not progress and I find it much more difficult to feel and follow the Spirit.⁴

As a young man, Joseph Smith became keenly aware of his shortcomings and worried about “the welfare of [his] immortal soul.” In his words, “My mind became exceedingly distressed, for I became convicted of my sins, and . . . felt to mourn for my own sins



and for the sins of the world.”⁵ This led him to “serious reflection and great uneasiness.”⁶ Does this sound familiar? Are you uneasy or distressed by your shortcomings?

Well, Joseph *did* something. He shared, “I often said to myself: What is to be *done*?”⁷ Joseph acted in faith. He turned to the scriptures, read the invitation in James 1:5, and turned to God for help. The resulting vision ushered in the Restoration. How grateful I am that Joseph’s divine discontent, his period of unease and confusion, spurred him to faithful action.

Follow Promptings to Do Good

The world often uses a feeling of discontent as an excuse for self-absorption, for turning our thoughts inward and backward and dwelling individually on who *I* am, who *I* am not, and what *I* want. Divine discontent motivates us to follow the example of the Savior, “who went about doing good.”⁸ As we walk the path of discipleship, we will receive spiritual nudges to reach out to others.

A story I heard years ago has helped me recognize and then act on promptings from the Holy Ghost. Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, former Relief Society General President, shared the following:

“Susan . . . was a wonderful seamstress. President [Spencer W.] Kimball lived in [her] ward. One Sunday, Susan noticed that he had a new suit. Her father had recently . . . brought her some exquisite silk fabric. Susan thought that fabric would make a handsome tie to go with President Kimball’s new suit. So on Monday she made the tie. She wrapped it in tissue paper and walked up the block to President Kimball’s home.

“On her way to the front door, she suddenly stopped and thought, ‘Who am I to make a tie for the prophet? He probably has plenty of them.’ Deciding she had made a mistake, she turned to leave.

“Just then Sister Kimball opened the front door and said, ‘Oh, Susan!’

“Stumbling all over herself, Susan said, ‘I saw President Kimball in his new suit on Sunday. Dad just brought me some silk from New York . . . and so I made him a tie.’

“Before Susan could continue, Sister Kimball stopped her, took hold of her shoulders, and said: ‘Susan, never suppress a generous thought.’”⁹

I love that! “Never suppress a generous thought.” Sometimes when I have an impression to do something for someone, I wonder if it was a prompting or just my own thoughts. But I am



reminded that “that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”¹⁰

Whether they are direct promptings or just impulses to help, a good deed is never wasted, for “charity never faileth”¹¹—and is never the wrong response.

Often the timing is inconvenient, and we seldom know the impact of our small acts of service. But every now and then, we will recognize that we have been instruments in the hands of God and we will be grateful to know that the Holy Ghost working through us is a manifestation of God’s approval.

Sisters, you and I can plead for the Holy Ghost to show us “all things what [we] should do,”¹² even when our to-do list already looks full. When prompted, we can leave dishes in the sink or an in-box full of challenges demanding attention in order to read to a child, visit with a friend, babysit a neighbor’s children, or serve in the temple. Don’t get me wrong—I am a list maker; I love checking things off. But peace comes in knowing that *being* more does not necessarily equate to *doing* more.

Responding to discontent by resolving to follow promptings changes the way I think about “my time,” and I see people not as interruptions but as the purpose of my life.

Divine Discontent Leads Us to Christ

Divine discontent leads to humility, not to self-pity or the discouragement that comes from making comparisons in which we always come up short. Covenant-keeping women come in all sizes and shapes; their families, their life experiences, and their circumstances vary.

Of course, all of us will fall short of our divine potential, and there is some truth in the realization that *alone* we are not enough. But the good news of the gospel is that with the grace of God, we *are* enough. With Christ’s help, we can do all things.¹³ The scriptures promise that we will “find grace to help in time of need.”¹⁴

The surprising truth is that our weaknesses can be a blessing when they humble us and turn us to Christ.¹⁵ Discontent becomes divine when we humbly approach Jesus Christ with our want, rather than hold back in self-pity.

In fact, Jesus’s miracles often begin with a recognition of want, need, failure,

or inadequacy. Remember the loaves and the fishes? Each of the Gospel writers tells how Jesus miraculously fed the thousands who followed Him.¹⁶ But the story begins with the disciples’ recognition of their lack; they realized they had only “five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”¹⁷ The disciples were right: they *didn’t* have enough food, but they gave what they had to Jesus, and then *He* provided the miracle.

Have you ever felt your talents and gifts were too small for the task ahead? I have. But you and I can give what we have to Christ, and He will multiply our efforts. What you have to offer is more than enough—even with your human frailties and weaknesses—if you rely on the grace of God.

The truth is that each of us is one generation away from Deity—each is a child of God.¹⁸ And just as He has done with both prophets and ordinary men and women through the ages, so Heavenly Father intends to transform us.

C. S. Lewis explained God’s transforming power this way: “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably. . . . [You see,] He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of. . . . You thought you were [being] made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”¹⁹

Because of our Savior’s atoning sacrifice, we can be made equal to the tasks that lie ahead. The prophets have taught

that as we climb the path of discipleship, we can be sanctified through the grace of Christ. Divine discontent can move us to act in faith, follow the Savior's invitations to do good, and give our lives humbly to Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, in Tad Walch, "The Lord's Message Is for Everyone": President Nelson Talks about Global Tour," *Deseret News*, Apr. 12, 2018, deseretnews.com.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, "Becoming a Disciple," *Ensign*, June 1996, 18.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, "Becoming a Disciple," 16; emphasis added.
4. "Discouragement will weaken your faith. If you lower your expectations, your effectiveness will decrease, your desire will weaken, and you will have greater difficulty following the Spirit" ("What Is My Purpose as a Missionary?" *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. [2018], lds.org/manual/missionary).
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 28.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:8.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:10; emphasis added.
8. Acts 10:38.
9. Bonnie D. Parkin, "Personal Ministry: Sacred and Precious" (Brigham Young University devotional, Feb. 13, 2007), 1, speeches.byu.edu.
10. Moroni 7:13.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
12. 2 Nephi 32:5.
13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).
14. Hebrews 4:16.
15. "And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my *grace* is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27; emphasis added).
16. See Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:31–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14.
17. John 6:9.
18. President Boyd K. Packer taught: "However many generations in your mortal ancestry, no matter what race or people you represent, the pedigree of your spirit can be written on a single line. You are a child of God!" ("To Young Women and Men," *Ensign*, May 1989, 54).
19. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1960), 160.



By Cristina B. Franco

Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

The Joy of Unselfish Service

We have promised our Father in Heaven that we will serve Him and others with love and do His will in all things.

After last general conference, many people approached me with the same question: "Are those chairs comfortable?" My answer was the same every time: "Those chairs are very comfortable if you don't have to speak." It's true, right? My chair has not been as comfortable this conference, but I am truly grateful for the blessing and the honor of speaking to you this evening.



Sometimes as we serve, we get to sit in different seats. Some are quite comfy and some other ones are not, but we have promised our Father in Heaven that we will serve Him and others with love and do His will in all things.

A few years ago, youth in the Church learned that "when you 'embark in the service of God' [Doctrine and Covenants 4:2], you're joining the greatest journey ever. You're helping God hasten His work, and it's a great, joyful, and marvelous experience."¹ It's a journey available to all—of any age—and is also a journey that takes us along what our beloved prophet has spoken of as "the covenant path."²

Unfortunately, however, we live in a selfish world where people constantly ask, "What's in it for me?" instead of asking, "Whom can I help today?" or "How can I better serve the Lord in my calling?" or "Am I giving my all to the Lord?"

A great example in my life of unselfish service is Sister Victoria Antoniotti. Victoria was one of the Primary teachers in my branch while I was growing up in Argentina. Each Tuesday afternoon, when we gathered



for Primary, she brought us a chocolate cake. Everyone loved the cake—well, everyone except me. I hated chocolate cake! And even though she would try to share the cake with me, I always turned down her offer.

One day after she had shared the chocolate cake with the rest of the children, I asked her, “Why don’t you bring a different flavor—like orange or vanilla?”

After laughing a little, she asked me, “Why don’t *you* try a little piece? This cake is made with a special ingredient, and I promise that if you try it, you will like it!”

I looked around, and to my surprise, everyone seemed to be enjoying the cake. I agreed to give it a try. Can you guess what happened? I liked it! That was the very first time I had enjoyed a chocolate cake.

It wasn’t until many years later that I found out what the secret ingredient was in Sister Antonietti’s chocolate cake. My children and I visited my mother each week. On one of these visits, Mom and I were enjoying a slice of chocolate cake, and I related to her how I came to like the cake for the very first time. Then she enlightened me with the rest of the story.

“You see, Cris,” my mom said, “Victoria and her family didn’t have a lot of resources, and each week she

had to choose between paying for the bus to take her and her four children to Primary or buying the ingredients to make the chocolate cake for her Primary class. She always chose the chocolate cake over the bus, and she and her children walked more than two miles [3 km], each way, regardless of the weather.”

That day I had a better appreciation for her chocolate cake. More important, I learned that the secret ingredient in Victoria’s cake was the love she had for those she served and her unselfish sacrifice in our behalf.

Thinking back on Victoria’s cake helps me remember an unselfish sacrifice in the timeless lessons taught by the Lord to His disciples as He walked toward the treasury of the temple. You know the story. Elder James E. Talmage taught that there were 13 chests, “and into these the people dropped their contributions for the [different] purposes indicated by [the] inscriptions on the boxes.” Jesus watched the lines of donors, made up of all different types of people. Some gave their gifts with “sincerity of purpose” while others cast in “great sums of silver and gold,” hoping to be seen, noticed, and praised for their donations.

“Among the many was a poor widow, who . . . dropped into one of the treasure-chests two small bronze

coins known as mites; her contribution amounted to less than half a cent in American money. The Lord called His disciples about Him, directed their attention to the poverty-stricken widow and her deed, and said: ‘Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living’ [Mark 12:43–44].”³

The widow did not appear to hold a noticeable position in the society of her time. She actually held something more important: her intentions were pure, and she gave all she had to give. Perhaps she gave less than others, more quietly than others, differently than others. In the eyes of some, what she gave was insignificant, but in the eyes of the Savior, the “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,”⁴ she gave her all.

Sisters, are we giving our all to the Lord without reservation? Are we sacrificing of our time and talents so the rising generation can learn to love the Lord and keep His commandments? Are we ministering both to those around us and to those we are assigned with care and with diligence—sacrificing time and energy that could be used in other ways? Are we living the two great commandments—to love God and to love His children?⁵ Often that love is manifest as service.

President Dallin H. Oaks taught: “Our Savior gave Himself in unselfish service. He taught that each of us should follow Him by denying ourselves of selfish interests in order to serve others.”

He continued:

“A familiar example of losing ourselves in the service of others . . . is the sacrifice parents make for their

children. Mothers suffer pain and loss of personal priorities and comforts to bear and rear each child. Fathers adjust their lives and priorities to support a family. . . .

“ . . . We also rejoice in those who care for disabled family members and aged parents. None of this service asks, what’s in it for me? All of it requires setting aside personal convenience for unselfish service. . . .

“[And] all of this illustrates the eternal principle that we are happier and more fulfilled when we act and serve for what we give, not for what we get.

“Our Savior teaches us to follow Him by making the sacrifices necessary to lose ourselves in unselfish service to others.”⁶

President Thomas S. Monson likewise taught that “perhaps when we



make face-to-face contact with our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold?’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’ In reality, you can never love the Lord until you serve Him by serving His people.”⁷

In other words, sisters, it will not matter if we sat in the comfy seats or if we struggled to get through the meeting on a rusty folding chair in the back row. It won’t even matter if we, of necessity,

stepped into a foyer to comfort a crying baby. What will matter is that we came with a desire to serve, that we noticed those to whom we minister and greeted them joyfully, and that we introduced ourselves to those sharing our row of folding chairs—reaching out with friendship even though we *aren’t* assigned to minister to them. And it will certainly matter that we do all that we do with the special ingredient of service coupled with love and sacrifice.

I have come to know that we don’t have to make a chocolate cake to be a successful or dedicated Primary teacher, because it was not about the cake. It was the love behind the action.

I testify that that love is made sacred through sacrifice—the sacrifice of a teacher and even more through the ultimate and eternal sacrifice of the Son of God. I bear witness that He lives! I love Him and desire to put away selfish desires in order to love and minister as He does. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Young Men General Presidency, “This Marvelous Work,” *New Era*, Jan. 2015, 17; *Liahona*, Jan. 2015, 49.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
3. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 561.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 33:1.
5. See Matthew 22:37, 39.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Unselfish Service,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 93, 96.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Great Expectations” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 11, 2009), 6, speeches.byu.edu.





By President Henry B. Eyring
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Women and Gospel Learning in the Home

The Savior is your perfect example of how you will play a major part in His move to place greater emphasis on gospel learning in the home.

My beloved sisters, it is wonderful to meet with you. This is an exciting time in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord is pouring out knowledge on His Church as He promised that He would.

You remember what He said: “How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.”¹

Part of the Lord’s current sharing of knowledge relates to accelerating His pouring out eternal truth on the heads and into the hearts of His people. He has made clear that the daughters of Heavenly Father will play a primary role in that miraculous acceleration. One evidence of the miracle is His leading His living prophet to put far greater emphasis on gospel instruction in the home and within the family.

You might ask, “How does that make faithful sisters a primary force to help the Lord pour out knowledge on His Saints?” The Lord gives the answer

in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” You remember the words, but you may see new meaning and recognize that the Lord foresaw these exciting changes, which are now occurring. In the proclamation, He gave sisters charge to be the principal gospel educators in the family in these words: “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.”² This includes the nurture of gospel truth and knowledge.

The proclamation goes on: “Fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”³ They are equal partners, equal in their potential for spiritual growth and for acquiring knowledge, and so are unified by helping each other. They are equal in their divine destiny to be exalted together. In fact, men and women cannot be exalted alone.

Why, then, does a daughter of God in a united and equal relationship receive the primary responsibility to nourish with the most important nutrient all must receive, a knowledge of truth coming from heaven? As nearly as I can see, that has been the Lord’s way since families were created in this world.

For instance, it was Eve who received the knowledge that Adam needed to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge for them to keep all of God’s commandments and to form a family. I do not know why it came to Eve first, but Adam and Eve were perfectly united when the knowledge was poured out on Adam.

Another example of the Lord’s using the nurturing gifts of women is the way





He strengthened the sons of Helaman. I get a lump in my throat when I read the account and remember my own mother's quiet words of assurance as I left home for military service.

Helaman recorded:

"They had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

"And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it."⁴

While I do not know all the Lord's reasons for giving primary responsibility for nurturing in the family to faithful sisters, I believe it has to do with your capacity to love. It takes great love to feel the needs of someone else more than your own. That is the pure love of Christ for the person you nurture. That feeling of charity comes from the person chosen to be the nurturer having qualified for the effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The motto of the Relief Society, which my own mother exemplified, seems to me inspired: "Charity Never Faileth."

As daughters of God, you have an innate and great capacity to sense the needs of others and to love. That, in turn, makes you more susceptible to the whisperings of the Spirit. The Spirit can then guide what you think, what you say, and what you do to nurture people so the Lord may pour

knowledge, truth, and courage upon them.

You sisters hearing my voice are each in a unique place in your journey through life. Some are young girls in a general women's session for the first time. Some are young women preparing to be the nurturers God would have them be. Some are newly married who have not yet had children; others are young mothers with one or more. Some are mothers of teenagers and others with children in the mission field. Some have children who have become weakened in faith and are far from home. Some live alone with no faithful companion. Some are grandmothers.

Yet, whatever your personal circumstance, you are part—a key part—of the family of God and of your own family, whether in the future, in this world, or in the spirit world. Your trust from God is to nurture as many of His and your family members as you can with your love and your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your practical challenge is to know whom to nurture, how, and when. You need the Lord's help. He knows others' hearts, and He knows when they are ready to accept your nurturing. Your prayer of faith will be your key to success. You can depend upon receiving His guidance.

He gave this encouragement: "Ask the Father in my name in faith, believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient."⁵

In addition to prayer, serious study of the scriptures will be part of your growing power to nurture. Here is the promise: "Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man."⁶

So you will take more time to pray, to ponder, and to meditate on spiritual matters. You will have knowledge of truth poured out upon you and grow in your power to nurture others in your family.

There will be times when you feel that your progress in learning how better to nurture is slow. It will take faith to endure. The Savior sent you this encouragement:

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days."⁷

Your presence tonight is evidence that you are willing to accept the Lord's



invitation to nurture others. That is true even for the youngest here tonight. You can know whom to nurture in your family. If you pray with real intent, a name or a face will come to your mind. If you pray to know what to do or what to say, you will feel an answer. Each time you obey, your power to nurture will grow. You will be preparing for the day when you will nurture your own children.

Mothers of teenagers could pray to know how to nurture a son or daughter who seems unresponsive to nurturing. You might pray to know who could have the spiritual influence your child needs and would accept. God hears and answers such heartfelt prayers of worried mothers, and He sends help.

Also, a grandmother here tonight may feel heartache caused by the strains and difficulties of her children and grandchildren. You might take courage and direction from the experiences of families in the scriptures.

From the time of Eve and Adam, through Father Israel, and on to every family in the Book of Mormon, there

is one sure lesson about what to do about the sorrows of unresponsive children: never stop loving.

We have the encouraging example of the Savior as He nourished the rebellious spirit children of His Heavenly Father. Even when they and we cause pain, the Savior's hand is still outstretched.⁸ He spoke in 3 Nephi of His spiritual sisters and brothers whom He had tried unsuccessfully to nurture: "O ye people . . . who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you."⁹

For sisters in every stage of life's journey, in every family situation, and across every culture, the Savior is your perfect example of how you will play a major part in His move to place greater emphasis on gospel learning in the home and family.

You will bring your inherent feeling of charity into changes in activities and practices in your family. That will bring greater spiritual growth. When you pray with and for family members, you will feel your and the Savior's love for

them. That will become more and more your spiritual gift as you seek it. Your family members will feel it as you pray with greater faith.

When the family gathers to read scriptures aloud, you will already have read them and prayed over them to prepare yourself. You will have found moments to pray for the Spirit to enlighten your mind. Then, when it is your turn to read, family members will feel your love for God and for His word. They will be nurtured by Him and by His Spirit.

The same outpouring can come in any family gathering if you pray and plan for it. It may take effort and time, but it will bring miracles. I remember a lesson my mother taught when I was little. I can still see in my mind the colored map she had made of the travels of the Apostle Paul. I wonder how she found the time and energy to do that. And to this day I am blessed by her love for that faithful Apostle.

You will each find ways to contribute to the outpouring of truth upon your families in the Lord's restored Church. Each of you will pray, study, and ponder to know what your unique contribution will be. But this I know: each of you, equally yoked with sons of God, will be a major part of a miracle of gospel learning and living that will hasten the gathering of Israel and will prepare God's family for the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:33.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 145.
4. Alma 56:47–48.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 18:18.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34.
8. See 2 Nephi 19:12, 21.
9. 3 Nephi 10:4.



By President Dallin H. Oaks
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Parents and Children

Our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness tells you who you are and the purpose of your life.

My dear sisters, how wonderful to have this new general conference session of women of the Church eight years and older. We have heard inspiring messages from the sister leaders and from President Henry B. Eyring. President Eyring and I love working under the direction of President Russell M. Nelson, and we look forward to his prophetic address.

I.

Children are our most precious gift from God—our eternal increase. Yet

we live in a time when many women wish to have no part in the bearing and nurturing of children. Many young adults delay marriage until temporal needs are satisfied. The average age of our Church members' marriages has increased by more than two years, and the number of births to Church members is falling. The United States and some other nations face a future of too few children maturing into adults to support the number of retiring adults.¹ Over 40 percent of births in the United States are to unwed mothers. Those

children are vulnerable. Each of these trends works against our Father's divine plan of salvation.

II.

Latter-day Saint women understand that being a mother is their highest priority, their ultimate joy. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "Women for the most part see their greatest fulfillment, their greatest happiness in home and family. God planted within women something divine that expresses itself in quiet strength, in refinement, in peace, in goodness, in virtue, in truth, in love. And all of these remarkable qualities find their truest and most satisfying expression in motherhood."

He continued: "The greatest job that any woman will ever do will be in nurturing and teaching and living and encouraging and rearing her children in righteousness and truth. There is no other thing that will compare with that, regardless of what she does."²

Mothers, beloved sisters, we love you for who you are and what you do for all of us.

In his important 2015 address titled "A Plea to My Sisters," President Russell M. Nelson said:

"The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!

"Today, . . . we need women who know how to make important things happen by their faith and who are courageous defenders of morality and families in a sin-sick world. We need women who are devoted to shepherding God's children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment;





*And delights to own and bless you,
If you strive to do what's right.⁵*

There are two teachings in that verse: First, our Heavenly Father is near us and watches over us day and night. Think of it! God loves us, He is near to us, and He watches over us. Second, He delights to bless us as we “strive to do what's right.” What comfort in the midst of our anxieties and difficulties!

Yes, young women, you are blessed and you are wonderful, but you are like all of Heavenly Father's children in your need to “strive to do what's right.”

Here I could give you counsel on many different things, but I have chosen to speak of only two.

My first counsel concerns cell phones. A recent nationwide survey found that over half of teens in the United States said they spend too much time on their cell phones. More than 40 percent said they felt anxious when they were separated from their cell phones.⁶ This was more common among girls than boys. My young sisters—and adult women too—it will bless your lives if you limit your use of and dependence on cell phones.

My second counsel is even more important. Be kind to others. Kindness is something many of our youth are doing already. Some groups of youth in some communities have shown the way for all of us. We have been inspired by our young people's acts of kindness to those in need of love and help. In many ways, you give that help and show that love to one another. We wish all would follow your example.

At the same time, we know that the adversary tempts all of us to be unkind, and there are still many examples of this, even among children and youth. Persistent unkindness is known by many names, such as bullying, ganging

women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly.”³

These inspired teachings are all based on “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” in which this restored Church reaffirms doctrine and practices central to the Creator's plan before He created the earth.

III.

Now I address the younger group of this audience. My dear young sisters, because of your knowledge of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, you are unique. Your knowledge will enable you to endure and overcome the difficulties of growing up. From a young age, you have participated in projects and programs that have developed your talents, such as writing, speaking, and planning. You have learned responsible behavior and how to resist temptations to lie, cheat, steal, or use alcohol or drugs.

Your uniqueness was recognized in a University of North Carolina study of American teens and religion. A *Charlotte Observer* article had the title “Mormon teens cope best: Study finds

they top peers at handling adolescence.” This article concluded that “Mormons fared best at avoiding risky behaviors, doing well in school and having a positive attitude about the future.” One of the researchers in the study, who interviewed most of our youth, said, “Across almost every category we looked at, there was a clear pattern: Mormons were first.”⁴

Why do you cope best with the difficulties of growing up? Young women, it is because you understand our Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. This tells you who you are and the purpose of your life. Youth with that understanding are first in problem-solving and first in choosing the right. You know you can have the Lord's help in overcoming all the difficulties of growing up.

Another reason why you are most effective is that you understand that you are children of a Heavenly Father who loves you. I am sure you are familiar with our great hymn “Dearest Children, God Is Near You.” Here is the first verse we all have sung and believed:

*Dearest children, God is near you,
Watching o'er you day and night,*



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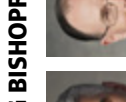
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October 2018



up on someone, or joining together to reject others. These examples deliberately inflict pain on classmates or friends. My young sisters, it is not pleasing to the Lord if we are cruel or mean to others.

Here is an example. I know of a young man, a refugee here in Utah, who was teased for being different, including sometimes speaking his native language. He was persecuted by a gang of privileged youth until he retaliated in a way that caused him to be jailed for over 70 days while being considered for deportation. I don't know what provoked this group of youth, many of them Latter-day Saints like you, but I can see the effect of their meanness, a tragic experience and expense to one of the children of God. Small actions of unkindness can have devastating consequences.

When I heard that story, I compared it with what our prophet, President Nelson, said in his recent worldwide youth devotional. In asking you and all other youth to assist in gathering Israel, he said: "Stand out; be different from the world. You and I know that you are to be a light to the world. Therefore, the Lord needs you to look like, sound like, act like, and dress like a true disciple of Jesus Christ."⁷

The youth battalion President Nelson invited you to join will not be *mean* to one another. They will follow the Savior's teaching to reach out and be loving and considerate of others, even to turn the other cheek when we feel someone has wronged us.

In a general conference address about the time many of you were born, President Gordon B. Hinckley praised "beautiful young women who are striving to live the gospel." He described them, just as I feel to describe you:



"They are generous toward one another. They seek to strengthen one another. They are a credit to their parents and the homes from which they come. They are approaching womanhood and will carry throughout their lives the ideals which presently motivate them."⁸

As a servant of the Lord, I say to you young women, our world needs your goodness and love. Be kind to one another. Jesus taught us to love one another and to treat others as we want to be treated. As we strive to be kind, we draw closer to Him and His loving influence.

My dear sisters, if you participate in any meanness or pettiness—individually or with a group—resolve now to change and encourage others to change. That is my counsel, and I give it to you as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ because His Spirit has prompted me to speak to you about this important subject. I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who taught us to

love one another as He loved us. I pray that we will do so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Sara Berg, "Nation's Latest Challenge: Too Few Children," *AMA Wire*, June 18, 2018, wire.ama-assn.org.
2. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 387, 390; see also M. Russell Ballard, "Mothers and Daughters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 18 (in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* [2011], 156).
3. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96; see also Russell M. Nelson, "Children of the Covenant," *Ensign*, May 1995, 33.
4. The study was published by the Oxford University Press as Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005).
5. "Dearest Children, God Is Near You," *Hymns*, no. 96.
6. See "In Our Opinion: You Don't Need to Be Captured by Screen Time," *Deseret News*, Aug. 31, 2018, deseretnews.com.
7. Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.lds.org.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Need for Greater Kindness," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 60–61.



By President Russell M. Nelson

Sisters' Participation in the Gathering of Israel

I'm extending a prophetic plea to you, the women of the Church, to shape the future by helping to gather scattered Israel.

It is wonderful to be with you, my dear and precious sisters. Perhaps a recent experience will give you a glimpse into how I feel about you and the supernal abilities with which you are endowed.

One day while I was speaking to a congregation in South America, I became exceedingly excited about my topic, and at a pivotal moment, I said, “As the *mother* of 10 children, I can tell you that . . .” And then I went on to complete my message.

I did not realize that I had said the word *mother*. My translator, assuming I had misspoken, changed the word *mother* to *father*, so the congregation never knew that I had referred to myself as *mother*. But my wife Wendy heard it, and she was delighted with my Freudian slip.

In that moment, the deep longing of my heart to make a difference in the world—like only a mother does—bubbled up from my heart. Through the years, whenever I have been asked why I *chose* to become a medical doctor, my answer has always been the same: “Because I could not *choose* to be a mother.”

Please note that anytime I use the word *mother*, I am not talking only about women who have given birth or adopted children in this life. I am speaking about *all* of our Heavenly Parents’ adult daughters. *Every* woman is a mother by virtue of her eternal divine destiny.

So tonight, as the *father* of 10 children—*nine daughters* and one son—and as President of the Church, I pray

that you will sense how deeply I feel about you—about who you are and all the good you can do. No one can do what a righteous woman can do. No one can duplicate the influence of a mother.

Men can and often do communicate the love of Heavenly Father and the Savior to others. But women have a special gift for it—a divine endowment. You have the capacity to sense what someone needs—and *when* he or she needs it. You can reach out, comfort, teach, and strengthen someone in his or her very moment of need.

Women see things differently than men do, and oh, how we need your perspective! Your nature leads you to think of others *first*, to consider the effect that any course of action will have on others.

As President Eyring pointed out, it was our glorious Mother Eve—with her far-reaching vision of our Heavenly Father’s plan—who initiated what we call “the Fall.” Her wise and courageous choice and Adam’s supporting decision moved God’s plan of happiness



forward. They made it possible for each of us to come to earth, receive a body, and prove that we would choose to stand up for Jesus Christ *now*, just as we did premortally.

My dear sisters, you have special spiritual gifts and propensities. Tonight I urge you, with all the hope of my heart, to pray to understand *your spiritual gifts*—to cultivate, use, and expand them, even more than you ever have. You will change the world as you do so.

As women, you inspire others and set a standard worthy of emulation. Let me give you a little background on two of the major announcements made at our last general conference. You, my dear sisters, were key to each.

First, ministering. The supreme standard for ministering is that of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Generally, women are, and always have been, closer to that standard than men. When you are truly ministering, you follow your feelings to help someone else experience more of the Savior's love. The inclination to minister is inherent in righteous women. I know women who pray every day, "Whom wouldst Thou have me help today?"

Before the April 2018 announcement about the higher and holier way of caring for others, the tendency of some men was to check off their home teaching assignment as "done" and move on to the next task.

But when *you* sensed that a sister you visit taught needed help, you responded immediately and then throughout the month. Thus, it was *how* you visit taught that inspired our upward shift to ministering.

Second, in the last general conference, we also restructured Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. When we wrestled with how to help the men of the Church be more effective in their

responsibilities, we carefully considered the example of the Relief Society.

In Relief Society, women in various ages and stages of life meet together. Each decade of life brings unique challenges, and yet, there *you* were, week after week, mingling together, growing and teaching the gospel together, and making a real difference in the world.

Now, following your example, Melchizedek Priesthood bearers are members of the elders quorum. These men range in age from 18 to 98 (maybe more), with equally wide-ranging priesthood and Church experiences. These brethren can now create stronger fraternal linkages, learn together, and bless others more effectively.

You remember that last June, Sister Nelson and I spoke to the youth of the Church. We invited them to enlist in the Lord's youth battalion to help gather Israel on both sides of the veil. This gathering is "*the greatest challenge, the greatest cause, and the greatest work on earth today*"¹

It is a cause that desperately needs women, because women shape the future. So tonight I'm extending a prophetic plea to you, the women of the Church, to shape the future by helping to gather scattered Israel.

Where can you start?

May I offer *four invitations*:

First, I invite you to participate in a 10-day fast from social media and from any other media that bring negative and impure thoughts to your mind. Pray to know which influences to remove during your fast. The effect of your 10-day fast may surprise you. What do you notice after taking a break from perspectives of the world that have been wounding your spirit? Is there a change in where you *now* want to spend your time and energy? Have any of your priorities shifted—even just a little? I urge you to record and follow through with each impression.

Second, I invite you to read the Book of Mormon between now and the end of the year. As impossible as that may seem with all you are trying to manage in your life, if you will accept this invitation with full purpose of heart, the Lord will help you find a way to achieve it. And, as you prayerfully study, I promise that the heavens will open for you. The Lord will bless you with increased inspiration and revelation.

As you read, I would encourage you to mark each verse that speaks of





or refers to the Savior. Then, be intentional about talking of Christ, rejoicing in Christ, and preaching of Christ with your families and friends.² You and they will be drawn closer to the Savior through this process. And changes, even miracles, will begin to happen.

This morning the announcement was made regarding the new Sunday schedule and home-centered, Church-supported curriculum. You, my dear sisters, are a key to the success of this new, balanced, and coordinated gospel-teaching effort. Please teach those whom you love what you are learning from the scriptures. Teach them how to turn to the Savior for His healing and cleansing power when they sin. And teach them how to draw upon His strengthening power every day of their lives.

Third, establish a pattern of regular temple attendance. This may require a little more sacrifice in your life. More regular time in the temple will allow the Lord to teach you how to draw upon His priesthood power with which you have been endowed in His temple. For those of you who don't live near a temple, I invite you to study prayerfully about temples in the scriptures and in the words of living prophets. Seek to *know* more, to *understand* more, to *feel* more about temples than you ever have before.

In our worldwide youth devotional last June, I spoke about a young man whose life changed when his parents exchanged his smartphone for a flip phone. This young man's mother is a fearless woman of faith. She saw her son drifting toward choices that could prevent him from serving a mission.

She took her pleadings to the temple to know how best to help her son. Then she followed through with every impression.

She said: "I felt the Spirit guiding me to check my son's phone at specific times to catch specific things. I don't know how to navigate these smartphones, but the Spirit guided me through all the social media that I don't even use! I know the Spirit helps parents who are seeking guidance to protect their children. [At first] my son was furious with me. . . . But after only three days, he thanked me! He could feel the difference."

Her son's behavior and attitudes changed dramatically. He became more

helpful at home, smiled more, and was more attentive at church. He loved serving for a time in a temple baptistry and preparing for his mission.

My fourth invitation, for you who are of age, is to participate fully in Relief Society. I urge you to study the current Relief Society purpose statement. It is inspiring. It may guide you in developing your own purpose statement for your own life. I also entreat you to savor the truths in the Relief Society declaration published almost 20 years ago.³ A framed copy of this declaration hangs on the wall in the office of the First Presidency. I am thrilled *every* time I read it. It describes who you are and who the Lord needs you to be at this *precise* time as you do *your* part to help gather scattered Israel.

My dear sisters, we need *you!* We "need *your* strength, *your* conversion, *your* conviction, *your* ability to lead, *your* wisdom, and *your* voices."⁴ We simply cannot gather Israel without you.

I love you and thank you and now bless you with the ability to leave the world behind as you assist in this crucial and urgent work. Together we can do all that our Heavenly Father needs us to do to prepare the world for the Second Coming of His Beloved Son.

Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.lds.org](https://www.hopeofisrael.lds.org).
2. See 2 Nephi 25:26.
3. These documents are available online. For the Relief Society purpose statement, see [lds.org/callings/relief-society](https://www.lds.org/callings/relief-society). For the Relief Society declaration, see Mary Ellen Smoot, "Rejoice, Daughters of Zion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 92–94; *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 111–14.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96; emphasis added.

The Purpose of Relief Society

Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they:

- Increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement.
- Strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants.
- Work in unity to help those in need.

Copies may be obtained at [lds.org/callings/relief-society/purposes](https://www.lds.org/callings/relief-society/purposes) or at store.lds.org.



By President M. Russell Ballard
Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead

I testify that the vision President Joseph F. Smith received is true. I bear witness that every person can come to know it is true.

My brothers and sisters, my talk was prepared some time before the passing of my dear wife, Barbara. My family and I thank you for your love and your outreach of kindness. I pray the Lord will bless me as I speak to you this morning.

In October 1918, 100 years ago, President Joseph F. Smith received a glorious vision. After almost 65 years of dedicated service to the Lord in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and just a few weeks before his death on November 19, 1918, he sat in his room pondering Christ's atoning sacrifice and reading the Apostle Peter's description of the Savior's ministry in the spirit world after His Crucifixion.

He recorded: "As I read I was greatly impressed. . . . As I pondered over these things . . . , the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead."¹ The full text of the vision is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 138.

Let me provide some background so that we may more fully appreciate Joseph F.'s lifetime of preparation to receive this remarkable revelation.

When he was President of the Church, he visited Nauvoo in 1906 and reflected on a memory he had when he was just five years old. He said: "This is the exact spot where I stood when [Joseph, my uncle, and my father, Hyrum] came riding up on their way to Carthage. Without getting off his horse father leaned over in his saddle and picked me up off the ground. He kissed me good-bye and put me down again and I saw him ride away."²

The next time Joseph F. saw them, his mother, Mary Fielding Smith, lifted him up to see the martyrs lying side by side after being brutally murdered in Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844.

Two years later, Joseph F., along with his family and faithful mother, Mary Fielding Smith, left his home in Nauvoo for Winter Quarters. Although not yet eight years old, Joseph F. was required to drive one of the oxtteams

from Montrose, Iowa, to Winter Quarters and then later on to the Salt Lake Valley, arriving when he was almost 10. I hope you boys and young men are listening and will realize the responsibility and expectation placed on Joseph F. during his boyhood.

Just four years later, in 1852, when he was 13, his beloved mother died—leaving Joseph and his siblings orphans.³

Joseph F. was called to serve a mission in the Hawaiian Islands in 1854 when he was 15 years old. This mission, which lasted more than three years, was the beginning of a life of service in the Church.

Upon his return to Utah, Joseph F. married in 1859.⁴ For the next few years, his life was filled with work, family duties, and two additional missions. On July 1, 1866, at the age of 27, Joseph F. had his life forever changed when he was ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young. In October the following year, he filled a vacancy in the Council of the Twelve.⁵ He served as a counselor to Brigham Young, John





In a glorious vision received in October 1918, President Joseph F. Smith saw his father, Hyrum, and the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow before becoming President himself in 1901.⁶

Joseph F. and his wife Julina welcomed their first child, Mercy Josephine, into the family.⁷ She was only two and a half years old when she passed away. Shortly after, Joseph F. recorded: “It is one month yesterday since my . . . darling Josephine died. O! that I could have saved her to grow up to womanhood. I miss her every day and I am lonely. . . . God forgive my weakness if it is wrong to love my little ones as I love them.”⁸

During his lifetime, President Smith lost his father, his mother, one brother, two sisters, two wives, and thirteen children. He was well acquainted with sorrow and losing loved ones.

When his son Albert Jesse died, Joseph F. wrote to his sister Martha Ann that he had pled with the Lord to save him and asked, “Why is it so? O. God why had it to be?”⁹

Despite his prayers at that time, Joseph F. received no answer on this matter.¹⁰ He told Martha Ann that “the heavens [seemed like] brass over our heads” on the subject of death and the

spirit world. Nevertheless, his faith in the Lord’s eternal promises were firm and steadfast.

In the Lord’s due time, the additional answers, comfort, and understanding about the spirit world President Smith sought came to him through the marvelous vision he received in October 1918.

That year was particularly painful for him. He grieved over the death toll in the Great World War that continued to climb to over 20 million people killed. Additionally, a flu pandemic was spreading around the world, taking the lives of as many as 100 million people.

During the year, President Smith also lost three more precious family members. Elder Hyrum Mack Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, his firstborn son and my grandfather, died suddenly of a ruptured appendix.

President Smith wrote: “I am speechless—[numb] with grief! . . . My heart is broken; and flutters for life! . . . O! I loved him! . . . I will love him forever more. And so it is and ever will be with all my sons and daughters, but he is my first born son, the first to bring me the joy and hope of an endless, honorable name among men. . . . From

the depths of my soul I thank God for him! But . . . O! I needed him! We all needed him! He was most useful to the Church. . . . And now, . . . O! what can I do! . . . O! God help me!”¹¹

The next month, President Smith’s son-in-law, Alonzo Kesler, died in a tragic accident.¹² President Smith noted in his journal, “This most terrible and heart-rending fatal accident, has again cast a pall of gloom over all my family.”¹³

Seven months later, in September 1918, President Smith’s daughter-in-law and my grandmother, Ida Bowman Smith, died after giving birth to her fifth child, my uncle Hyrum.¹⁴

And so it was on October 3, 1918, having experienced intense sorrow over the millions who had died in the world through war and disease as well as the deaths of his own family members, President Smith received the heavenly revelation known as “the vision of the redemption of the dead.”

He alluded to the revelation the following day in the opening session of the October general conference. President Smith’s health was failing, yet he spoke briefly: “I will not, I dare not, attempt to enter upon many things that are resting upon my mind this morning, and I shall postpone until some future time, the Lord be willing, my attempt to tell you some of the things that are in my mind, and that dwell in my heart. I have not lived alone these [last] five months. I have dwelt in the spirit of prayer, of supplication, of faith and of determination; and I have had my communication with the Spirit of the Lord continuously.”¹⁵

The revelation he received on October 3 comforted his heart and provided answers to many of his questions. We too can be comforted and learn more about our own future

when we and our loved ones die and go to the spirit world by studying this revelation and pondering its significance in the way we live our lives each day.

Among the many things President Smith saw was the Savior's visit to the faithful in the spirit world after His own death on the cross. From the vision I quote:

"But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men [and women];¹⁶ and thus was the gospel preached to the dead. . . .

"These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

"And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. . . .

"For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage.

"These the Lord taught, and gave them power to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father's kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life,

"And continue thenceforth their labor as had been promised by the Lord, and be partakers of all blessings which were held in reserve for them that love him."¹⁷

In the vision, President Smith saw his father, Hyrum, and the Prophet Joseph Smith. It had been 74 years since he had last seen them as a small boy in Nauvoo. We can only imagine



his joy at seeing his beloved father and uncle. He must have been inspired and comforted to know that all spirits retain the likeness of their mortal body and that they are anxiously awaiting the day of their promised resurrection. The vision revealed more fully the depth and breadth of Heavenly Father's plan for His children and Christ's redeeming love and the matchless power of His Atonement.¹⁸

On this special 100th anniversary, I invite you to thoroughly and thoughtfully read this revelation. As you do so, may the Lord bless you to more fully understand and appreciate God's love and His plan of salvation and happiness for His children.

I testify that the vision President Joseph F. Smith received is true. I bear witness that every person can read it and come to know it is true. Those who do not receive this knowledge in this life will surely come to know its truthfulness when everyone will arrive in the spirit world. There, all will love and praise God and the Lord Jesus Christ for the great plan of salvation

and the blessing of the promised Resurrection when body and spirit will once again be reunited, never to be separated again.¹⁹

How grateful I am to know where my precious Barbara is and that we will be together again, with our family, for all eternity. May the peace of the Lord sustain us now and forever is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 138:6, 11.
2. Joseph F. Smith, in Preston Nibley, *The Presidents of the Church* (1959), 228.
3. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith* (1938), 13.
4. He married Levira Clark in 1859, Julina Lambson in 1866, Sarah Richards in 1868, Edna Lambson in 1871, Alice Kimball in 1883, and Mary Schwartz in 1884.
5. Joseph F. Smith was called as an additional counselor in the First Presidency (Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells). He also served as Second Counselor in the First Presidency to three Church Presidents: Presidents John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow.
6. Joseph F. Smith served as a counselor to the First Presidency during Brigham Young's administration and served as the Second Counselor in the First Presidency during the administrations of John Taylor,



By **Bonnie H. Cordon**
Young Women General President

Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow. He was the first Church President to have served in the First Presidency before being called as the President.

7. Mercy Josephine, Joseph F.'s firstborn child, was born on August 14, 1867, and died on June 6, 1870.
8. Joseph F. Smith, journal, July 7, 1870, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
9. Joseph F. Smith to Martha Ann Smith Harris, Aug. 26, 1883, Church History Library; see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and David M. Whitchurch, *My Dear Sister: The Letters between Joseph F. Smith and His Sister Martha Ann* (2018), 290–91.
10. In many instances, the Lord directed Joseph F. Smith in his personal life and in his ministry as an Apostle and President of the Church through inspired dreams, revelations, and visions. Often these precious gifts from the Lord were recorded in his journals, sermons, reminiscences, and official records of the Church.
11. Joseph F. Smith, journal, Jan. 23, 1918, Church History Library; spelling and capitalization modernized; see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 473–74.
12. See “A. [P.] Kesler Is Killed in Fall from a Building,” *Ogden Standard*, Feb. 5, 1918, 5.
13. Joseph F. Smith, journal, Feb. 4, 1918, Church History Library.
14. See “Ida Bowman Smith,” *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*, Sept. 26, 1918, 4.
15. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1918, 2.
16. See the reference to “our glorious Mother Eve” and the “faithful daughters who . . . worshiped the true and living God” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:39).
17. Doctrine and Covenants 138:30, 33–34, 50–52.
18. The text of the vision first appeared in the November 30, 1918, edition of the *Deseret News*, 11 days after the passing of President Smith, on November 19. It was printed in the December *Improvement Era* and in January 1919 editions of the *Relief Society Magazine*, the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, the *Young Woman's Journal*, and the *Millennial Star*.
19. Although sons of perdition will be resurrected, they may not give love and praise to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as will those who receive a kingdom of glory. See Alma 11:41; Doctrine and Covenants 88:32–35.

Becoming a Shepherd

I hope those to whom you minister will see you as a friend and realize that, in you, they have a champion and a confidant.

A year ago, a Primary child I met in Chile brought a smile to my face. “Hello,” he said, “I am David. Will you talk about me in general conference?”

In quiet moments, I have pondered David's unexpected greeting. We all want to be recognized. We want to matter, to be remembered, and to feel loved.

Sisters and brothers, each of you matter. Even if you are not spoken of in general conference, the Savior knows you and loves you. If you wonder if that is true, you need only contemplate that He has “graven [you] upon the palms of [His] hands.”¹

Knowing that the Savior loves us, we might then wonder, how can we best show our love for Him?

The Savior asked Peter, “Lovest thou me . . . ?”

Peter answered, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”

When asked this question both a second and a third time, “Lovest thou me?” Peter was grieved yet confirmed his love: “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.*”²

Hadn't Peter already proven himself a loving follower of Christ? From their first encounter on the seashore,

he “straightway” left his fishing nets to follow the Savior.³ Peter became a true fisher of men. He accompanied the Savior during His personal ministry and helped teach others the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But now the resurrected Lord knew He would no longer be by Peter's side, showing him how and when he should serve. In the Savior's absence, Peter would need to seek guidance from the Spirit, receive revelation on his own, and then have the courage and faith to act. Focused on His sheep, the Savior



desired Peter to do what He would do if He were there. He asked Peter to become a shepherd.

Last April, President Russell M. Nelson extended a similar invitation to us to feed our Father's sheep in a holier way and to do so through ministering.⁴

To effectively accept this invitation, we must develop a shepherd's heart and understand the needs of the Lord's sheep. So how do we become the shepherds the Lord needs us to become?

As with all questions, we can look to our Savior, Jesus Christ—the Good Shepherd. The Savior's sheep were known and numbered, they were watched over, and they were gathered into the fold of God.

Known and Numbered

As we strive to follow the Savior's example, we must first know and number His sheep. We have been assigned specific individuals and families to tend so we are certain that all of the Lord's flock are accounted for and no one is forgotten. Numbering, however, is not really about numbers; it is about making certain *each* person feels the love of the Savior through someone who serves *for* Him. In that way, all can recognize that they are known by a loving Father in Heaven.

I recently met a young woman who has been assigned to minister to a sister almost five times her age. Together, they have discovered a common love for music. When this young woman visits, they sing songs together, and they share their favorites. They are forging a friendship that blesses both of their lives.

I hope those to whom you minister will see you as a friend and realize that, in you, they have a champion and a confidant—someone who is aware of their circumstances and supports them



in their hopes and aspirations.

Recently I received an assignment to minister to a sister neither my companion nor I knew well. As I counseled with Jess, my 16-year-old ministering companion, she wisely suggested, “We need to get to know her.”

We immediately decided that a selfie and an introductory text were in order. I held the phone, and Jess pushed the button to take the photo. Our first ministering opportunity was a companionship effort.

On our first visit, we asked our sister if there was anything we could include in our prayers on her behalf. She shared a tender personal challenge and said she would so welcome our prayers. Her honesty and confidence brought an instant bond of love. What a sweet privilege to remember her in my daily prayers.

As you pray, you will feel the love of Jesus Christ for those to whom you minister. Share that love with them. What better way is there to feed His sheep than to help them feel His love—*through you*?

Watched Over

A second way to develop the heart of a shepherd is to watch over His sheep. As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we can move, fix, repair, and rebuild just

about anything. We are quick to meet a need with a helping hand or a plate of cookies. But is there more?

Do our sheep know we are watching over them with love and we will take action to help?

In Matthew 25 we read:

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . :

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: . . .

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord when *saw* we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When *saw* we thee a stranger, and took thee in?”⁵

Brothers and sisters, the key word is *saw*. The righteous saw those in need because they were watching and noticing. We too can be a watchful eye to aid and comfort, to celebrate and even dream. As we act, we can be assured of the promise in Matthew: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me.”⁶

A friend—we will call him John—shared what can happen when we see another's less visible need: “A sister in my ward attempted suicide. After two months, I discovered no one in my quorum had approached her husband



to address this traumatic experience. Sadly, I had not acted either. Finally, I asked the husband to lunch. He was a shy man, often reserved. And yet when I said, ‘Your wife attempted suicide. That must be overwhelming for you. Do you want to talk about it?’ he openly wept. We had a tender and intimate conversation and developed a remarkable closeness and trust within minutes.”

John added, “I think our tendency is just to bring brownies rather than figure out how to walk into that moment with honesty and love.”⁷

Our sheep may be hurting, lost, or even willfully astray; as their shepherd, we can be among the first to see their need. We can listen and love without judgment and offer hope and help with the discerning guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Sisters and brothers, the world is more hope-filled and joyful because of the inspired acts of kindness you perform. As you seek the Lord’s direction on how to convey His love and see the needs of those to whom you minister, your eyes will be opened. Your sacred ministering assignment gives you the divine right to inspiration. You can seek that inspiration with confidence.

Gathered into the Fold of God

Third, we want our sheep to be gathered into the fold of God. To do so, we must consider where they are on the covenant path and be willing to walk with them on their journey of faith. Ours is a sacred privilege to come to know their hearts and point them to their Savior.

Sister Josivini in Fiji had difficulty seeing her way forward on the covenant path—literally. Her friend saw that Josivini struggled to see the scriptures well enough to read. She provided Josivini with new reading glasses and a bright yellow pencil to highlight every mention of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon. What started as a simple desire to minister and to help with scripture study has resulted in Josivini attending the temple for the first time 28 years after she was baptized.

Whether our sheep are strong or weak, rejoicing or in anguish, we can make certain that no one walks alone. We can love them wherever they are spiritually and offer support and encouragement for the next step forward. As we pray and seek to understand their hearts, I testify that Heavenly Father will direct us and His Spirit will go with

us. We have the opportunity to be the “angels round about” them as He goes before their face.⁸

The Lord invites us to feed His sheep, to tend His flocks as He would. He invites us to be shepherds to every nation, every country. (And yes, Elder Uchtdorf, we love and need German shepherds.) And He desires His young people to join in the cause.

Our youth can be some of the strongest shepherds. They are, as President Russell M. Nelson said, “among the best the Lord has *ever* sent to this world.” They are “noble spirits,” our “finest players,” who follow the Savior.⁹ Can you imagine the power such shepherds will bring as they care for His sheep? Ministering side by side with these youth, we see wonders.

Young women and young men, we need you! If you don’t have a ministering assignment, talk with your Relief Society or elders quorum president. They will rejoice in your willingness to make certain His sheep are known and numbered, watched over, and gathered into the fold of God.

When the day comes that we will kneel at the feet of our beloved Savior, having nourished His flock, I pray we can answer as did Peter: “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”¹⁰ These, Thy sheep, are *loved*, they are *safe*, and they are *home*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 21:16.
2. See John 21:15–17; emphasis added.
3. See Matthew 4:20.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
5. Matthew 25:34–35, 37–38; emphasis added.
6. Matthew 25:40.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
9. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.lds.org.
10. John 21:15.



By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Ministry of Reconciliation

I testify of the tranquility to the soul that reconciliation with God and each other will bring if we are meek and courageous enough to pursue it.

Last April, when President Russell M. Nelson introduced the concept of ministering, he stressed that it was a way to keep the great commandments to love God and love each other.¹ We, as officers of the Church, openly applaud and congratulate you on the tremendous response you have begun in that regard. We thank you for following our beloved prophet in this wonderful endeavor and suggest that you not wait for many more instructions. Just jump into the pool and swim. Head toward those in need. Don't be immobilized wondering whether you should do the backstroke or the dog paddle. If we follow the basic principles that have been taught, stay aligned with priesthood keys, and seek the Holy Spirit to guide us, we cannot fail.

This morning I wish to speak of an even more personal aspect of ministering that isn't by assignment, does not involve a calendared interview, and has no reporting line except to heaven. Let me share just one homespun example of that kind of ministering.

Grant Morrell Bowen was a hard-working, devoted husband and father who, like many who made their living

on the land, had an economic downturn when the local potato crop was poor. He and his wife, Norma, took other employment, eventually moved to another city, and started their climb back to economic stability. However, in a terribly unfortunate incident, Brother Bowen was deeply hurt when, in a temple recommend interview, the bishop was a little skeptical regarding Morrell's declaration that he was a full-tithe payer.

I don't know which of these men had the more accurate facts that day, but I do know Sister Bowen walked

out of that interview with her temple recommend renewed, while Brother Bowen walked out with an anger that would take him away from the Church for 15 years.

Regardless of who was right about the tithing, evidently both Morrell and the bishop forgot the Savior's injunction to "agree with thine adversary quickly"² and Paul's counsel to "let not the sun go down upon your wrath."³ The fact is they *didn't* agree and the sun *did* go down on Brother Bowen's wrath for days, then weeks, then years, proving the point made by one of the wisest of the ancient Romans, who said, "Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more [destructive] than the injury that provokes it."⁴ But the miracle of reconciliation is always available to us, and out of love for his family and the Church he knew to be true, Morrell Bowen came back into full Church activity. Let me tell you briefly how that happened.

Brother Bowen's son Brad is a good friend of ours and a devoted Area Seventy serving in southern Idaho. Brad was 11 years old at the time of this incident, and for 15 years he watched his father's religious devotion decline, a witness to the terrible harvest being reaped where anger and





misunderstanding had been sown. Something needed to be done. So as the Thanksgiving holiday approached in 1977, Brad, a 26-year-old student at Brigham Young University; his wife, Valerie; and new baby son, Mic, loaded into their student version of an automobile and, bad weather notwithstanding, drove to Billings, Montana. Not even a crash into a snowbank near West Yellowstone could keep this threesome from making their ministering contact with Brother Bowen Sr.

Upon arrival, Brad and his sister Pam asked for a private moment with their father. “You have been a wonderful dad,” Brad began with some emotion, “and we have always known how much you loved us. But something is wrong, and it has been for a long time. Because you were hurt once, this whole family has been hurting for years. We are broken, and you are the only one who can fix us. Please, please, after all this time, can you find it in your heart to lay aside that unfortunate incident with that bishop and again lead this family in the gospel as you once did?”

There was dead silence. Then Brother Bowen looked up at these two, his children, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,⁵ and said very quietly, “Yes. Yes, I will.”

Thrilled but stunned by the unexpected answer, Brad Bowen and his

family watched their husband and father go to his current bishop in a spirit of reconciliation to set things right in his life. In a perfect response to this courageous but totally unexpected visit, the bishop, who had extended repeated invitations to Brother Bowen to come back, threw his arms around Morrell and just held him—held him in a long, long, long embrace.

In a matter of only a few weeks—doesn’t take long—Brother Bowen was fully engaged in Church activity and had made himself worthy to return to the temple. Soon enough he accepted the call to preside over a struggling little branch of 25 and grew it into a thriving congregation of well over 100. All of this took place nearly half a century ago, but the consequence of a son and a daughter’s ministering plea to their own father and that father’s willingness to forgive and move forward in spite of the imperfections of others has brought blessings that are still coming—and will come forever—to the Bowen family.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus has asked that we “live together in love”⁶ with “no disputations among you.”⁷ “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me,” He warned the Nephites.⁸ Indeed, to a great degree, our relationship to Christ will be determined—or at least affected—by our relationship to each other.

“If ye . . . desire to come unto me,” He said, “and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—

“Go thy way unto thy brother, and *first be reconciled to [him], and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.*”⁹

Surely each of us could cite an endless array of old scars and sorrows and painful memories that this very moment still corrode the peace in someone’s heart or family or neighborhood. Whether we have caused that pain or been the recipient of the pain, those wounds need to be healed so that life can be as rewarding as God intended it to be. Like the food in your refrigerator that your grandchildren carefully check in your behalf, those old grievances have long since exceeded their expiration date. Please don’t give precious space in your soul to them any longer. As Prospero said to the regretful Alonso in *The Tempest*, “Let us not burden our remembrance with a heaviness that’s gone.”¹⁰

“Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven,”¹¹ Christ taught in New Testament times.





And in our day: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”¹² It is, however, important for some of you living in real anguish to note what He did *not* say. He did *not* say, “You are not allowed to feel true pain or real sorrow from the shattering experiences you have had at the hand of another.” *Nor* did He say, “In order to forgive fully, you have to reenter a toxic relationship or return to an abusive, destructive circumstance.” But notwithstanding even the most terrible offenses that might come to us, we can rise above our pain only when we put our feet onto the path of true healing. That path is the forgiving one walked by Jesus of Nazareth, who calls out to each of us, “Come, follow me.”¹³

In such an invitation to be His disciple and to try to do as He did, Jesus is asking us to be instruments of His grace—to be “ambassadors for Christ” in “the ministry of reconciliation,” as Paul described it to the Corinthians.¹⁴ The Healer of every wound, He who rights every wrong, asks us to labor with Him in the daunting task of peace-making in a world that won’t find it any other way.

So, as Phillips Brooks wrote: “You who are letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day;

you who are keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and [settle] them; you who are passing men sullenly upon the street, not speaking to them out of some silly spite . . . ; you who are letting . . . [someone’s] heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy, which you mean to give . . . some day, . . . go instantly and do the thing which you might never have another chance to do.”¹⁵

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify that forgiving and forsaking offenses, old or new, is central to the grandeur of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that ultimately such spiritual repair can come only from our divine Redeemer, He who rushes to our aid “with healing in his wings.”¹⁶ We thank Him, and our Heavenly Father who sent Him, that renewal and rebirth, a future free from old sorrows and past mistakes, are not only possible, but they have already been purchased, paid for, at an excruciating cost symbolized by the blood of the Lamb who shed it.

With the apostolic authority granted me by the Savior of the world, I testify of the tranquility to the soul that reconciliation with God and each other will bring if we are meek and courageous enough to pursue it. “Cease to contend

one with another,” the Savior pled.¹⁷ If you know of an old injury, repair it. Care for one another in love.

My beloved friends, in our shared ministry of reconciliation, I ask us to be peacemakers—to love peace, to seek peace, to create peace, to cherish peace. I make that appeal in the name of the Prince of Peace, who knows everything about being “wounded in the house of [His] friends”¹⁸ but who still found the strength to forgive and forget—and to heal—and be happy. For that I pray, for you and for me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Matthew 22:36–40; Luke 10:25–28.
2. Matthew 5:25.
3. Ephesians 4:26.
4. Seneca, in Tryon Edwards, *A Dictionary of Thoughts* (1891), 21.
5. See Genesis 2:23.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
7. 3 Nephi 11:22; see also 3 Nephi 11:28.
8. 3 Nephi 11:29.
9. 3 Nephi 12:23–24; emphasis added.
10. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, act 5, scene 1, lines 199–200.
11. Luke 6:37.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
13. Luke 18:22.
14. See 2 Corinthians 5:18–20.
15. Phillips Brooks, *The Purpose and Use of Comfort* (1906), 329.
16. Malachi 4:2; see also 2 Nephi 25:13; 3 Nephi 25:2.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 136:23.
18. Zechariah 13:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 45:52.



By Elder Shayne M. Bowen
Of the Seventy

The Role of the Book of Mormon in Conversion

We are gathering Israel for the last time and are doing so with the Book of Mormon, one of the most powerful tools of conversion.

Many people today wonder about the reality of God and our relationship to Him. Many know little or nothing at all about His great plan of happiness. More than 30 years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson observed that “much of the . . . world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection.”¹

In our day, questions are focused not only on our Savior but also on His Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—which He restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. These questions often focus on the history, teachings, or practices of the Savior’s Church.

The Book of Mormon Helps Us Grow in Testimony

From *Preach My Gospel*, we read: “Remember that our understanding [of Heavenly Father and His plan of happiness] comes from modern prophets—Joseph Smith and his successors—who receive direct revelation from God. Therefore, the first question someone should answer is whether

Joseph Smith was a prophet, and he or she can answer this question by reading and praying about the Book of Mormon.”²

My testimony of the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith has been strengthened by prayerfully studying the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. I have acted on Moroni’s invitation to “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ,” to know of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.³ I bear witness that I know it is true. That knowledge has come

to me, as it can come to you, “by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁴

The introduction to the Book of Mormon states: “Those who gain this divine witness [of the Book of Mormon] from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is His revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.”⁵

As a young missionary going to Chile, I learned a life-changing lesson about the conversion power of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Gonzalez served in a respected position in his church for many years. He had extensive religious training, including a degree in theology. He was quite proud of his biblical expertise. It was obvious to us that he was a religious scholar.

He was well aware of the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they went about their work in his home city of Lima, Peru. He always wanted to meet with them so that he could school them in the Bible.



One day, almost as a gift from heaven, so he thought, two missionaries stopped him in the street and asked if they could come to his home and share the scriptures with him. This was his dream come true! His prayers had been answered. Finally, he could set these misguided young boys straight. He told them that he would be delighted to have them come to his house and discuss the scriptures.

He could hardly wait for his appointment. He was ready to use the Bible to disprove their beliefs. He was confident that the Bible would clearly and articulately point out the error of their ways. The appointed night came, and the missionaries knocked on the door. He was giddy. His moment had finally arrived.

He opened the door and invited the missionaries into his home. One of the missionaries handed him a blue book and bore a sincere testimony that he knew the book contained the word of God. The second missionary added his powerful testimony of the book, testifying that it had been translated by a modern prophet of God named Joseph Smith and that it taught of Christ. The missionaries excused themselves and left his home.

Mr. Gonzalez was so disappointed. But he opened the book, and he started to leaf through its pages. He read the first page. He read page after page after page and didn't stop until late into the afternoon of the next day. He read the whole book and knew that it was true. He knew what he had to do. He called the missionaries, received the lessons, and gave up the life he had known to become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

That good man was my MTC teacher in Provo, Utah. Brother Gonzalez's



conversion story and the power of the Book of Mormon made a great impression on me.

When I arrived in Chile, my mission president, President Royden J. Glade, invited us to read the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded in the Joseph Smith—History every week. He taught us that a testimony of the First Vision would have a direct correlation to our own testimony of the gospel and our testimony of the Book of Mormon.

I took his invitation seriously. I have read the accounts of the First Vision; I have read the Book of Mormon. I have prayed as directed by Moroni and asked “God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ”⁶ if the Book of Mormon is true. I bear witness today that I know the Book of Mormon, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, is “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man [will] get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁷ The Prophet Joseph also declared: “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none.”⁸

Personal Conversion

As we better understand who we are and the purposes of the Book of

Mormon, our conversion deepens and becomes more certain. We are strengthened in our commitment to keep the covenants we have made with God.

A principal purpose of the Book of Mormon is to gather scattered Israel. This gathering gives all of God's children the opportunity to enter into the covenant path and, by honoring those covenants, return back to the presence of the Father. As we teach repentance and baptize converts, we gather scattered Israel.

The Book of Mormon has 108 references to the house of Israel. At the beginning of the Book of Mormon, Nephi taught, “For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.”⁹ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament. We are saved as we come unto Christ through living His gospel.

Later, Nephi wrote:

“Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an olive tree, whose branches should be broken off and should be scattered upon all the face of the earth. . . .



“And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.”¹⁰

Likewise, at the end of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Moroni reminds us of our covenants, saying, “That thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.”¹¹

The Covenants of the Eternal Father

What are the “covenants of the Eternal Father” referred to by Moroni? We read in the book of Abraham:

“My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above

measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations.”¹²

President Russell M. Nelson taught in a recent worldwide broadcast that “these surely *are* the latter days, and the Lord is hastening His work to gather Israel. That gathering is the most important thing taking place on earth today. Nothing else compares in magnitude, nothing else compares in importance, nothing else compares in majesty. And if you choose to, if you want to, you can be a big part of it. You can be a big part of something big, something grand, something majestic!

“When we speak of the *gathering*, we are simply saying this fundamental truth: every one of our Heavenly Father’s children, on both sides of the veil, deserves to hear the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

They decide for themselves if they want to know more.”¹³

That is what we are doing as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: we are seeking to bring the world to an understanding of—and a conversion to—the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are the “latter-day gatherers.”¹⁴ Our mission is clear. Brothers and sisters, let us be known as those who have taken Moroni’s promise to heart, prayed and received an answer to know that the Book of Mormon is true, and then shared that knowledge with others in word and, most important, in deed.

The Book of Mormon’s Role in Conversion

The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ It leads us to the covenants of the Father, which if kept will assure us of His greatest gift—eternal life.¹⁶ The Book of Mormon is the keystone to the conversion of all of Heavenly Father’s sons and daughters.

Quoting again from President Nelson: “As you . . . read daily from the Book of Mormon, you will learn the doctrine of the gathering, truths about Jesus Christ, His Atonement, and the fulness of His gospel not found in the Bible. The Book of Mormon is central to the gathering of Israel. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur.”¹⁷

Let me conclude with the words of the Savior as He taught the Nephites of the promised blessings: “Ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”¹⁸

I testify that we are sons and daughters of God, the seed of Abraham,

the house of Israel. We are gathering Israel for the last time and are doing so with the Book of Mormon—a book that, combined with the Spirit of the Lord, is the most powerful tool of conversion. We are led by the prophet of God, President Russell M. Nelson, who is directing the gathering of Israel in our day. The Book of Mormon is true. It has changed my life. I promise you, as have Moroni and many prophets through the ages, that it can change yours.¹⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 129.
2. “What Is the Role of the Book of Mormon?” *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), lds.org/manual/missionary.
3. Moroni 10:4.
4. Moroni 10:4.
5. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
6. Moroni 10:4.
7. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 196.
9. 1 Nephi 6:4.
10. 1 Nephi 10:12, 14.
11. Moroni 10:31.
12. Abraham 2:8–9.
13. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.Lds.org](https://hopeofisrael.lds.org).
14. See Jacob 5:72.
15. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: “The Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the ‘fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation” (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 131).
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel.”
18. 3 Nephi 20:25.
19. See, for example, Henry B. Eyring, “The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 8–14; *Liahona*, Feb. 2004, 12–16.



By Elder Neil L. Andersen
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Wounded

In the crucible of earthly trials, patiently move forward, and the Savior’s healing power will bring you light, understanding, peace, and hope.

On March 22, 2016, just before eight o’clock in the morning, two terrorist bombs exploded in the Brussels Airport. Elder Richard Norby, Elder Mason Wells, and Elder Joseph Empey had taken Sister Fanny Clain to the airport for a flight to her mission in Cleveland, Ohio. Thirty-two people lost their lives, and all of the missionaries were wounded.

The most seriously wounded was Elder Richard Norby, age 66, serving with his wife, Sister Pam Norby.

Elder Norby reflected on that moment:

“Instantly, I knew what had happened.

“I tried to run for safety, but I immediately fell down. . . . I could see that my left leg was badly injured. I [noticed] black, almost spiderweb-type, soot drooping from both hands. I gently pulled at it, but realized it was not soot but my skin that had been burned. My white shirt was turning red from an injury on my back.

“As the consciousness of what had just happened filled my mind, I [had] this very strong thought: . . . the Savior knew where I was, what had just transpired, and [what] I was experiencing at that moment.”¹

There were difficult days ahead for Richard Norby and for his wife, Pam. He was placed in an induced coma, followed by surgeries, infections, and great uncertainty.

Richard Norby lived, but his life would never be the same. Two and a half years later, his wounds are still healing; a brace replaces the missing part of his leg; each step is different than before that moment at the Brussels Airport.

Why would this happen to Richard and Pam Norby?² They had been true to their covenants, served a previous mission in the Ivory Coast, and raised a wonderful family. Someone could understandably say, “It isn’t fair! It just



Richard Norby recovers in the hospital.



Richard and Pam Norby.

isn't right! They were giving their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ; how could this happen?"

This Is Mortality

Although the details will differ, the tragedies, the unanticipated tests and trials, both physical and spiritual, come to each of us because this is mortality.

As I thought this morning of the speakers in just this session of conference, it occurred to me that two have lost children and three have lost grandchildren who unexpectedly returned to their heavenly home. None has been spared sickness and sadness, and as has been spoken, this very week an angel on earth whom we all love, Sister Barbara Ballard, stepped gently through the veil. President Ballard, we will never forget your testimony this morning.

We search for happiness. We long for peace. We hope for love. And the Lord showers us with an amazing abundance of blessings. But intermingled with the joy and happiness, one thing is certain: there will be moments, hours, days, sometimes years when your soul will be wounded.

The scriptures teach that we will taste the bitter and the sweet³ and that there will be "opposition in all things."⁴ Jesus said, "[Your Father] maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."⁵

Wounds of the soul are not unique to the rich or the poor, to one culture, one nation, or one generation. They come to all and are part of the learning we receive from this mortal experience.

The Righteous Are Not Immune

My message today is especially to those who are keeping the commandments of God, keeping their promises to God, and, like the Norbys and many other men, women, and children in this worldwide audience, are confronted with trials and challenges that are unexpected and painful.

Our wounds may come from a natural disaster or an unfortunate accident. They may come from an unfaithful husband or wife, turning life upside down for a righteous spouse and children. The wounds may come from the darkness and gloom of depression, from an unanticipated illness, from the suffering or premature death of someone we love, from the sadness of a family member dismissing his or her faith, from the loneliness when circumstances do not bring an eternal companion, or from a hundred other heart-wrenching, painful "[sorrows] that the eye can't see."⁶

We each understand that difficulties are part of life, but when they come to us personally, they can take our breath away. Without being alarmed, we need to be ready. The Apostle Peter said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though

some strange thing happened to you."⁷ Along with the bright colors of happiness and joy, the darker-colored threads of trial and tragedy are woven deeply into the fabric of our Father's plan. These struggles, although difficult, often become our greatest teachers.⁸

When telling the miraculous story of Helaman's 2,060 young soldiers, we love this scripture: "According to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the joy of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish."

But the sentence continues: "And neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds."⁹ Each one of the 2,060 received many wounds, and each one of us will be wounded in the battle of life, whether physically, spiritually, or both.

Jesus Christ Is Our Good Samaritan

Never give up—however deep the wounds of your soul, whatever their source, wherever or whenever they happen, and however short or long they persist, you are not meant to perish spiritually. You are meant to survive spiritually and blossom in your faith and trust in God.



God did not create our spirits to be independent of Him. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the incalculable gift of His Atonement, not only saves us from death and offers us, through repentance, forgiveness for our sins, but He also stands ready to save us from the sorrows and pains of our wounded souls.¹⁰

The Savior is our Good Samaritan,¹¹ sent “to heal the brokenhearted.”¹² He comes to us when others pass us by. With compassion, He places His healing balm on our wounds and binds them up. He carries us. He cares for us. He bids us, “Come unto me . . . and I shall heal [you].”¹³

“And [Jesus] shall . . . [suffer] pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . that . . . he [might] take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people . . . [taking upon Himself our] infirmities, [being] filled with mercy.”¹⁴

*Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts; here tell your anguish.
Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.*¹⁵

At a time of enormous suffering, the Lord told the Prophet Joseph, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”¹⁶ How can painful wounds be for our good? In the crucible of earthly trials, patiently move forward, and the Savior’s healing power will bring you light, understanding, peace, and hope.¹⁷

Don't Ever Give Up

Pray with all your heart. Strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ, in His reality, in His grace. Hold on to His words: “My grace is sufficient for thee:

for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”¹⁸

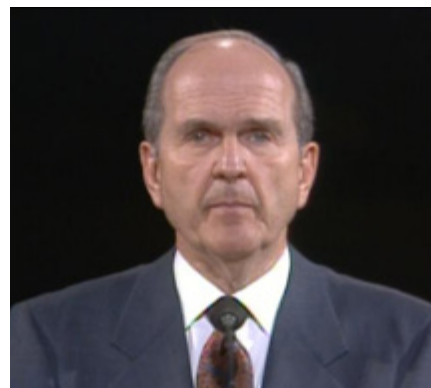
Remember, repentance is powerful spiritual medicine.¹⁹ Keep the commandments and be worthy of the Comforter, remembering that the Savior promised, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”²⁰

The peace of the temple is a soothing balm to the wounded soul. Return to the Lord’s house with your wounded heart and your family names as frequently as possible. The temple projects our brief moment in mortality onto the wide screen of eternity.²¹

Look backward, remembering that you proved your worthiness in your premortal state. You are a valiant child of God, and with His help, you can triumph in the battles of this fallen world. You have done it before, and you can do it again.

Look forward. Your troubles and sorrows are very real, but they will not last forever.²² Your dark night will pass, because “the Son . . . [did rise] with healing in his wings.”²³

The Norbys told me, “Disappointment comes to visit on occasion but is never allowed to stay.”²⁴ The Apostle Paul said, “We are troubled . . . yet not



At the April 1995 general conference, in speaking of the recent passing of his daughter Emily, President Russell M. Nelson testified that Jesus Christ holds the keys of the Resurrection.

distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”²⁵ You may be exhausted, but don’t ever give up.²⁶

Even with your own painful wounds, you will instinctively reach out to others, trusting in the Savior’s promise: “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”²⁷ The wounded who nurse the wounds of others are God’s angels on earth.

In just a few moments, we will listen to our beloved prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, a man of undaunted faith in Jesus Christ, a man of hope and peace, loved by God but not spared from the wounds of the soul.

In 1995 his daughter Emily, while expecting a child, was diagnosed with cancer. There were days of hope and happiness as her healthy baby was



“By keeping God’s commandments,” President Nelson told Saints in Puerto Rico, “we can find joy even in the midst of our worst circumstances.”



delivered. But the cancer returned, and their beloved Emily would pass from this life just two weeks after her 37th birthday, leaving her loving husband and five young children.

In general conference, shortly after her passing, President Nelson confided: “My tears of sorrow have flowed along with wishes that I could have done more for our daughter. . . . If I had the power of resurrection, I would have been tempted to bring [her] back. . . . [But] Jesus Christ holds those keys and will use them for Emily . . . and for all people in the Lord’s own time.”²⁸

Last month, while visiting the Saints in Puerto Rico and remembering last year’s devastating hurricane, President Nelson spoke with love and compassion:

“[This] is part of life. It’s why we’re here. We are here to have a body and to be tried and tested. Some of those tests are physical; some are spiritual, and your trials here have been both physical and spiritual.”²⁹

“You have not given up. We are [so] proud of you. You faithful Saints have lost much, but through it all, you have fostered your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”³⁰

“By keeping God’s commandments, we can find joy even in the midst of our worst circumstances.”³¹

All Tears Shall Be Wiped Away

My brothers and sisters, it is my promise to you that increasing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will bring you added

strength and greater hope. For you, the righteous, the Healer of our souls, in His time and His way, will heal all your wounds.³² No injustice, no persecution, no trial, no sadness, no heartache, no suffering, no wound—however deep, however wide, however painful—will be excluded from the comfort, peace, and lasting hope of Him whose open arms and whose wounded hands will welcome us back into His presence. At that day, the Apostle John testifies, the righteous “which [come] out of great tribulation”³³ will stand “arrayed in white robes . . . before the throne of God.” The Lamb will “dwell among [us] . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from [your] eyes.”³⁴ “This day will come. I so witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Personal conversation, Jan. 26, 2018.
2. In a conversation earlier this year, Richard Norby said to me, “We answer to what has been given us.” He shared this from his journal: “The tests and trials that come to each of us give the opportunity and privilege to better know the Savior and understand in deeper detail his atoning sacrifice. It is he we lean on. It is he we seek out. It is he we depend on. It is he we have confidence in. It is he that we love with all our heart, without any reservations. The Savior has covered all the physical and emotional pains that are part of mortality. He takes the pain from us. He absorbs our sorrows.”
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:39.
4. 2 Nephi 2:11.
5. Matthew 5:45.
6. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
7. 1 Peter 4:12.
8. “We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25; see also Doctrine and Covenants 101:4–5).
9. Alma 57:25.
10. A friend wrote to me: “A nearly five-year battle with emotional ‘darkness and gloom’ in varying degrees takes you to the very edge of your capacities, resolve, faith, and patience. After days of ‘suffering,’ you are tired. After weeks of ‘suffering,’ you are exhausted. After months of ‘suffering,’ you begin to lose your ground. After years of ‘suffering,’ you submit to the possibility that you’ll never get better again. Hope becomes the most precious, and elusive, of gifts. In short, I’m not sure I know how I got through this trial, save it was [the Savior]. It’s the only explanation. I can’t explain how I know this, except that I do. Because of Him, I got through this.”
11. See Luke 10:30–35.
12. Luke 4:18; see also Isaiah 61:1.
13. 3 Nephi 18:32.
14. Alma 7:11–12. “He descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6).
15. “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” *Hymns*, no. 115.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
17. “Thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain” (2 Nephi 2:2). “I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 36:3).
18. 2 Corinthians 12:9.
19. See Neil L. Andersen, “The Joy of Becoming Clean,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 50–53.
20. John 14:18.
21. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).
22. In the first verse of the Book of Mormon, Nephi explained that he had “seen many afflictions in the course of [his] days” (1 Nephi 1:1). Later, Nephi said, “Nevertheless, I did look unto my God, and I did praise him all the day long; and I did not murmur against the Lord because of mine afflictions” (1 Nephi 18:16).
23. 3 Nephi 25:2.
24. Personal conversation, Jan. 26, 2018.
25. 2 Corinthians 4:8–9.
26. President Hugh B. Brown, while visiting Israel, was asked why Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son. He responded, “Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham” (in Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* [1989], 93).
27. Matthew 16:25.
28. Russell M. Nelson, “Children of the Covenant,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 32.
29. Russell M. Nelson, in Jason Swensen, “Better Days Are Ahead for the People of Puerto Rico,” *Church News*, Sept. 9, 2018, 4.
30. Russell M. Nelson, in Swensen, “Better Days Are Ahead,” 3.
31. Russell M. Nelson, in Swensen, “Better Days Are Ahead,” 4.
32. See Russell M. Nelson, “Jesus Christ—the Master Healer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 85–88.
33. Revelation 7:14.
34. See Revelation 7:13, 15, 17.



By President Russell M. Nelson

The Correct Name of the Church

Jesus Christ directed us to call the Church by His name because it is His Church, filled with His power.

My beloved brothers and sisters, on this beautiful Sabbath day we rejoice together in our many blessings from the Lord. We are very grateful for your testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, for the sacrifices you've made to stay on or return to His covenant path, and for your consecrated service in His Church.

Today I feel compelled to discuss with you a matter of great importance. Some weeks ago, I released a statement regarding a course correction for the name of the Church.¹ I did this because the Lord impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He decreed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.²

As you would expect, responses to this statement and to the revised style guide³ have been mixed. Many members immediately corrected the name of the Church on their blogs and social media pages. Others wondered why, with all that's going on in the world, it was necessary to emphasize something so "inconsequential." And some said it couldn't be done, so why even try? Let me explain why we care so deeply

about this issue. But first let me state what this effort is *not*:

- It is not a name change.
- It is not rebranding.
- It is not cosmetic.
- It is not a whim.
- And it is not inconsequential.

Instead, it *is* a correction. It *is* the command of the Lord. Joseph Smith did not name the Church restored

through him; neither did Mormon. It was the Savior Himself who said, "For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."⁴

Even earlier, in AD 34, our resurrected Lord gave similar instruction to members of His Church when He visited them in the Americas. At that time He said:

"Ye shall call the church in my name. . . .

"And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church."⁵

Thus, the name of the Church is not negotiable. When the Savior clearly states what the name of His Church should be and even precedes His declaration with, "Thus shall my church be called," He is serious. And if we allow nicknames to be used or adopt or even sponsor those nicknames ourselves, He is offended.

What's in a name or, in this case, a nickname? When it comes to nicknames





of the Church, such as the “LDS Church,” the “Mormon Church,” or the “Church of the Latter-day Saints,” the most important thing *in* those names is the *absence* of the Savior’s name. To remove the Lord’s name from the Lord’s Church is a major victory for Satan. When we *discard* the Savior’s name, we are subtly *disregarding* all that Jesus Christ did for us—even His Atonement.

Consider this from His perspective: Premortally, He was Jehovah, God of the Old Testament. Under the direction of His Father, He was the Creator of this and other worlds.⁶ He chose to submit to the will of His Father and do something for all of God’s children that no one else could do! Condescending to come to earth as the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, He was brutally reviled, mocked, spit upon, and scourged. In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior took upon Himself *every* pain, *every* sin, and *all* of the anguish and suffering *ever* experienced by you and me and by everyone who has ever lived or will ever live. Under the weight of that excruciating burden, He bled from every pore.⁷ All of this suffering was intensified as He was cruelly crucified on Calvary’s cross.

Through these excruciating experiences and His subsequent Resurrection—His infinite Atonement—He granted immortality to all and ransomed each

one of us from the effects of sin on condition of our repentance.

Following the Savior’s Resurrection and the death of His Apostles, the world plunged into centuries of darkness. Then in the year 1820, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith to initiate the Restoration of the Lord’s Church.

After all He had endured—and after all He had done for humankind—I realize with profound regret that we have unwittingly acquiesced in the Lord’s restored Church being called by other names, each of which expunges the sacred name of Jesus Christ!

Every Sunday as we worthily partake of the sacrament, we make anew our sacred promise to our Heavenly Father that we are willing to take upon us the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.⁸ We promise to follow Him, repent, keep His commandments, and *always* remember Him.

When we omit His name from His Church, we are inadvertently removing *Him* as the central focus of our lives.

Taking the Savior’s name upon us includes declaring and witnessing to others—through our actions and our words—that Jesus is the Christ. Have we been so afraid to *offend* someone who called us “Mormons” that we have failed to *defend* the Savior Himself, to

stand up for Him even in the name by which His Church is called?

If we as a people and as individuals are to have access to the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ—to cleanse and heal us, to strengthen and magnify us, and ultimately to exalt us—we must clearly acknowledge Him as the source of that power. We can begin by calling His Church by the name He decreed.

For much of the world, the Lord’s Church is presently disguised as the “Mormon Church.” But we as members of the Lord’s Church know who stands at its head: Jesus Christ Himself. Unfortunately, many who hear the term *Mormon* may think that we worship Mormon. Not so! We honor and respect that great ancient American prophet.⁹ But we are *not* Mormon’s disciples. We are the Lord’s disciples.

In the early days of the restored Church, terms such as *Mormon Church* and *Mormons*¹⁰ were often used as epithets—as cruel terms, abusive terms—designed to obliterate God’s hand in restoring the Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days.¹¹

Brothers and sisters, there are many worldly arguments against restoring the correct name of the Church. Because of the digital world in which we live and with search engine optimization that helps all of us find information we need almost instantly—including information about the Lord’s Church—critics say that a correction at this point is unwise. Others feel that because we are known so widely as “Mormons” and as the “Mormon Church,” we should make the best of it.

If this were a discussion about branding a man-made organization, those arguments might prevail. But in this crucial matter, we look to Him whose Church this is and acknowledge

that the Lord's ways are not, and never will be, man's ways. If we will be patient and if we will do our part well, the Lord will lead us through this important task. After all, we know that the Lord helps those who seek to do His will, just as He helped Nephi accomplish the task of building a ship to cross the sea.¹²

We will want to be courteous and patient in our efforts to correct these errors. Responsible media will be sympathetic in responding to our request.

In a previous general conference, Elder Benjamín De Hoyos spoke of such an event. He said:

"Some years ago while serving in the office of public affairs of the Church in Mexico, [a companion and I] were invited to participate in a radio talk show. . . . [One of the program directors] asked [us], 'Why does the Church have such a long name? . . .'

"My companion and I smiled at such a magnificent question and then proceeded to explain that the name of the Church was not chosen by man. It was given by the Savior. . . . The program director immediately and respectfully

responded, 'We will thus repeat it with great pleasure.'"¹³

That report provides a pattern. One by one, our best efforts as individuals will be required to correct errors that have crept in through the years.¹⁴ The rest of the world may or may not follow our lead in calling us by the correct name. But it is disingenuous for us to be frustrated if most of the world calls the Church and its members by the wrong names if we do the same.

Our revised style guide is helpful. It states: "In the first reference, the full name of the Church is preferred: 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' When a shortened [second] reference is needed, the terms 'the Church' or the 'Church of Jesus Christ' are encouraged. The 'restored Church of Jesus Christ' is also accurate and encouraged."¹⁵

If someone should ask, "Are you a Mormon?" you could reply, "If you are asking if I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yes, I am!"

If someone asks, "Are you a Latter-day Saint?"¹⁶ you might respond, "Yes,

I am. I believe in Jesus Christ and am a member of His restored Church."

My dear brothers and sisters, I promise you that if we will do our best to restore the correct name of the Lord's Church, He whose Church this is will pour down His power and blessings upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints,¹⁷ the likes of which we have never seen. We will have the knowledge and power of God to help us take the blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people and to prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.

So, what's in a name? When it comes to the name of the Lord's Church, the answer is "Everything!" Jesus Christ directed us to call the Church by His name because it is His Church, filled with His power.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. He leads His Church today. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "The Lord has impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He has revealed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have work before us to bring ourselves in harmony with His will. In recent weeks, various Church leaders and departments have initiated the necessary steps to do so. Additional information about this important matter will be made available in the coming months" (Russell M. Nelson, in "The Name of the Church" [official statement, Aug. 16, 2018], mormonnewsroom.org).
2. Preceding Presidents of the Church have made similar requests. For example, President George Albert Smith said: "Don't let the Lord down by calling this the Mormon Church. He didn't call it the Mormon Church" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1948, 160).
3. See "Style Guide—The Name of the Church," mormonnewsroom.org.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.
5. 3 Nephi 27:7–8.
6. See Moses 1:33.





By President Henry B. Eyring
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Try, Try, Try

The Savior is putting His name in your hearts. And you are feeling the pure love of Christ for others and for yourself.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you. This conference has been uplifting and edifying for me. The music sung and the words spoken have been carried to our hearts by the Holy Ghost. I pray that what I say will be conveyed to you by that same Spirit.

Many years ago, I was first counselor to a district president in the eastern United States. More than once, as we were driving to our little branches, he said to me, “Hal, when you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right

more than half the time.” Not only was he right, but I have learned over the years that he was too low in his estimate. Today I wish to encourage you in the troubles you face.

Our mortal life is designed by a loving God to be a test and source of growth for each of us. You remember God’s words regarding His children at the Creation of the world: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”¹

Since the beginning, the tests have not been easy. We face trials that come from having mortal bodies. All of us live in a world where Satan’s war against truth and against our personal happiness is becoming more intense. The world and your life can seem to you to be in increasing commotion.

My reassurance is this: the loving God who allowed these tests for you also designed a sure way to pass through them. Heavenly Father so loved the world that He sent His Beloved Son to help us.² His Son, Jesus Christ, gave His life for us. Jesus Christ bore in Gethsemane and on the cross the weight of all our sins. He experienced all the sorrows, the pains, and the effects of our sins so that He could comfort and strengthen us through every test in life.³



7. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
8. See Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77.
9. Mormon was one of the four major writers of the Book of Mormon, the others being Nephi, Jacob, and Moroni. All were eyewitnesses of the Lord, as was its inspired translator, the Prophet Joseph Smith.
10. Even the word *Mormonites* was among terms of derision that were employed (see *History of the Church*, 2:62–63, 126).
11. Other epithets seem to have occurred in New Testament times. During the Apostle Paul’s trial before Felix, Paul was said to be “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). Regarding the use of the phrase “of the Nazarenes,” one commentator wrote: “This was the name usually given to Christians by way of contempt. They were so called because Jesus was of Nazareth” (Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Acts of the Apostles* [1937], 313). Similarly, another commentary states: “As our Lord was contemptuously called ‘The Nazarene’ (Matt. xxvi. 71), so the Jews designated his disciples ‘Nazarenes.’ They would not admit that they were Christians, i.e. disciples of the Messiah” (*The Pulpit Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell [1884], 2:231). In a related vein, Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed: “Throughout scriptural history, we see recurring efforts to demean prophets in order to dismiss them—to label them in order to diminish them. Mostly, however, they are simply ignored by their contemporaries and by secular history. After all, early Christians were merely called ‘the sect of the Nazarenes.’ (Acts 24:5.)” (“Out of Obscurity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 10).
12. See 1 Nephi 18:1–2.
13. Benjamín De Hoyos, “Called to Be Saints,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 106.
14. While we have no control over what other people may call us, we are in complete control over how we refer to ourselves. How can we expect others to honor the correct name of the Church if we as its members fail to do so?
15. “Style Guide—The Name of the Church,” mormonnewsroom.org.
16. The term *saint* is used often in the Holy Bible. In Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, for example, he used the word *saint* at least once in every chapter. A saint is a person who believes in Jesus Christ and strives to follow Him.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:33.



You remember that the Lord said to His servants:

“The Father and I are one. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and inasmuch as ye have received me, ye are in me and I in you.

“Wherefore, I am in your midst, and I am the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel. He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.”⁴

Our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has also given that same assurance. Moreover, he described a way we might build upon that rock and put the Lord’s name upon our hearts to guide us through our trials.

He said: “You who may be momentarily disheartened, remember, life is not meant to be easy. Trials must be borne and grief endured along the way. As you remember that ‘with God nothing shall be impossible’ (Luke 1:37), know that He is your Father. You are a son or daughter created in His image, entitled through your worthiness to receive revelation to help with your righteous endeavors. You may take upon you the holy name of the Lord. You can qualify to speak in the sacred name of God (see D&C 1:20).”⁵

President Nelson’s words remind us of the promise found in the sacramental prayer, a promise our Heavenly

Father fulfills as we do what we in turn promise.

Listen to the words: “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.”⁶

Each time we say the word *amen* when that prayer is offered on our behalf, we pledge that by partaking of the bread, we are willing to take upon us the holy name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. In turn, we are promised that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. Because of these promises, the Savior is the rock upon which we can stand safely and without fear in every storm we face.

As I have pondered the covenant words and corresponding blessings promised, I have wondered what it means to be willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.

President Dallin H. Oaks explains:

“It is significant that when we partake of the sacrament we do not witness that we *take upon us* the name of Jesus Christ. We witness that we are *willing* to do so. (See D&C 20:77.) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the most important sense.”⁷

The statement that we are “willing to take upon [us]” His name tells us that while we first took the Savior’s name when we were baptized, taking His name is not finished at baptism. We must work continually to take His name throughout our lives, including when we renew covenants at the sacrament table and make covenants in the Lord’s holy temples.

So two crucial questions for each of us become “What must I be doing to take His name upon me?” and “How will I know when I am making progress?”

The statement of President Nelson suggests one helpful answer. He said that we could take the name of the Savior upon us and that we could speak for Him. When we speak for Him, we serve Him. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”⁸



Speaking for Him requires a prayer of faith. It takes a fervent prayer to Heavenly Father to learn what words we could speak to help the Savior in His work. We must qualify for the promise: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”⁹

Yet it takes more than speaking for Him to take His name upon us. There are feelings in our hearts we must have to qualify as His servants.

The prophet Mormon described the feelings that qualify us and enable us to take His name upon us. These feelings include faith, hope, and charity, which is the pure love of Christ.

Mormon explained:

“For I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.

“And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

“And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

“And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

“If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.”

After describing charity, Mormon goes on to say:

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.”¹⁰

My testimony is that the Savior is putting His name in your hearts. For many of you, your faith in Him is increasing. You are feeling more hope and optimism. And you are feeling the pure love of Christ for others and for yourself.

I see it in missionaries serving all over the world. I see it in members who are speaking to their friends and family members about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Men, women, young people, and even children are ministering out of love for the Savior and for their neighbors.

At the first report of disasters across the world, members make plans to go to the rescue, sometimes across oceans, without being asked. They sometimes find it hard to wait until the devastated areas can receive them.

I realize that some of you listening today may feel that your faith and hope are being overcome by your troubles. And you may yearn to feel love.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has opportunities near you to feel and to share His love. You can pray with confidence for the Lord to lead you to love someone for Him. He answers the prayers of meek volunteers like you. You will feel the love of God for you and for the person you serve for Him. As you help children of God in their troubles, your own troubles will seem lighter. Your faith and your hope will be strengthened.

I am an eyewitness of that truth. Over a lifetime, my wife has spoken for the Lord and served people for Him. As I've mentioned before, one of our bishops once said to me: “I'm amazed. Every time I hear of a person in the ward who is in trouble, I hurry to help. Yet by the time I arrive, it seems that your wife has always already been there.” That has been true in all the places we have lived for 56 years.

Now she can speak only a few words a day. She is visited by people she loved for the Lord. Every night and morning I sing hymns with her and we pray. I have to be voice in the prayers and in the songs. Sometimes I can

see her mouthing the words of the hymns. She prefers children's songs. The sentiment she seems to like best is summarized in the song "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."¹¹

The other day, after singing the words of the chorus: "Love one another as Jesus loves you. Try to show kindness in all that you do," she said softly, but clearly, "Try, try, try." I think that she will find, when she sees Him, that our Savior has put His name into her heart and that she has become like Him. He is carrying her through her troubles now, as He will carry you through yours.

I bear you my witness that the Savior knows and loves you. He knows your name as you know His. He knows your troubles. He has experienced them. By His Atonement, He has overcome the world. By your being willing to take His name upon you, you will lift the burdens of countless others. And you will find in time that you know the Savior better and that you love Him more. His name will be in your heart and fixed in your memory. It is the name by which you will be called. I so witness, with gratitude for His loving-kindness to me, to my loved ones, and to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Abraham 3:25.
2. See John 3:16–17.
3. See Alma 7:11–12.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 50:43–44.
5. Russell M. Nelson, "With God Nothing Shall Be Impossible," *Ensign*, May 1988, 35.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, "Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 1985, 81.
8. Mosiah 5:13.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
10. Moroni 7:39–44, 47–48.
11. See "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79.



By Brian K. Ashton

Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

The Father

Each of us has the potential to become like the Father. To do so, we must worship the Father in the name of the Son.

For her entire life, my wife, Melinda, has tried with all her heart to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Yet, beginning in her youth, she felt unworthy of Heavenly Father's love and blessings because she misunderstood His nature. Fortunately, Melinda continued to keep the commandments in spite of the sadness she felt. A few years ago, she had a series of experiences that helped her better understand God's nature, including His love for His children and His gratitude for our even-imperfect efforts to do His work.

She explains how this has influenced her: "I now feel sure that the Father's plan works, that He is

personally invested in our success, and that He provides us with the lessons and experiences we need to return to His presence. I see myself and others more as God sees us. I am able to parent, teach, and serve with more love and less fear. I feel peace and confidence rather than anxiety and insecurity. Instead of feeling judged, I feel supported. My faith is more certain. I feel my Father's love more often and more deeply."¹

Having "a *correct* idea of [Heavenly Father's] character, perfections, and attributes" is essential to exercising faith sufficient to obtain exaltation.² A correct understanding of Heavenly



Father's character can change how we see ourselves and others and help us to understand God's tremendous love for His children and His great desire to help us become like Him. An incorrect view of His nature can leave us feeling as if we are incapable of ever making it back to His presence.

My objective today is to teach key doctrinal points about the Father that will allow each of us, but especially those who wonder if God loves them, to better understand His true character and to exercise greater faith in Him, His Son, and His plan for us.

The Premortal Life

In the premortal world, we were born as spirits to Heavenly Parents and lived with Them as a family.³ They knew us, taught us, and loved us.⁴ We wanted very much to be like our Heavenly Father. However, to do so, we recognized that we would have to:

1. Obtain glorified, immortal, physical bodies;⁵
2. Be married and form families by the sealing power of the priesthood;⁶ and

3. Acquire all knowledge, power, and divine attributes.⁷

Consequently, the Father created a plan that would allow us, upon certain conditions,⁸ to obtain physical bodies that would become immortal and glorified in the Resurrection; marry and form families in mortality or, for the faithful who did not have this opportunity, after mortality;⁹ progress toward perfection; and ultimately return to our Heavenly Parents and live with Them and our families in a state of exaltation and eternal happiness.¹⁰

The scriptures call this the plan of salvation.¹¹ We were so grateful for this plan that when it was presented to us, we shouted for joy.¹² Each of us accepted the conditions of the plan, including the experiences and challenges of mortality that would help us develop divine attributes.¹³

Mortal Life

During mortality, Heavenly Father provides us with the conditions we need to progress within His plan. The Father begot Jesus Christ in the flesh¹⁴

and provided Him with divine help to fulfill His mortal mission. Heavenly Father will likewise help each of us if we will strive to keep His commandments.¹⁵ The Father gives us agency.¹⁶ Our lives are in His hands, and our "days are known" and "shall not be numbered less."¹⁷ And He ensures that eventually all things work for the good of those who love Him.¹⁸

It is Heavenly Father who gives us our daily bread,¹⁹ which includes both the food we eat and the strength we need to keep His commandments.²⁰ The Father gives good gifts.²¹ He hears and answers our prayers.²² Heavenly Father delivers us from evil when we let Him.²³ He weeps for us when we suffer.²⁴ Ultimately, all of our blessings come from the Father.²⁵

Heavenly Father guides us and gives us the experiences we need based on our strengths, weaknesses, and choices so that we might bear good fruit.²⁶ The Father chastens us when necessary because He loves us.²⁷ He is a "Man of Counsel,"²⁸ who will counsel with us if we ask.²⁹

It is Heavenly Father who sends both the influence and the gift of the Holy Ghost into our lives.³⁰ Through the gift of the Holy Ghost, the glory—or intelligence, light, and power—of the Father can dwell in us.³¹ If we will strive to increase in light and truth until our eyes become single to God's glory, Heavenly Father will send the Holy Spirit of Promise to seal us up unto eternal life and reveal His face unto us—either in this life or the next.³²

Postmortal Life

In the postmortal spirit world, Heavenly Father continues to shed forth the Holy Ghost and send missionaries to those who need the gospel. He answers prayers and helps those who lack them



receive vicarious saving ordinances.³³

The Father raised up Jesus Christ and gave Him power to bring to pass the Resurrection,³⁴ which is the means by which we obtain immortal bodies. The Savior's Redemption and Resurrection bring us back into the presence of the Father, where we will be judged by Jesus Christ.³⁵

Those who rely upon "the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah"³⁶ will receive glorified bodies like the Father³⁷ and dwell with Him "in a state of never-ending happiness."³⁸ There, the Father will wipe away all our tears³⁹ and help us continue on our journey to become like Him.

As you can see, Heavenly Father is always there for us.⁴⁰

The Character of the Father

To become like the Father, we must develop His character traits. Heavenly Father's perfections and attributes include the following:

- The Father is "Endless and Eternal."⁴¹
- He is perfectly just, merciful, kind, long-suffering, and wants only what is best for us.⁴²
- Heavenly Father is love.⁴³
- He keeps His covenants.⁴⁴
- He does not change.⁴⁵
- He cannot lie.⁴⁶
- The Father is no respecter of persons.⁴⁷
- He knows all things—past, present, and future—from the beginning.⁴⁸
- Heavenly Father is more intelligent⁴⁹ than us all.⁵⁰
- The Father has all power⁵¹ and does all that He takes into His heart to do.⁵²

Brothers and sisters, we can trust in and rely upon the Father. Because He



has an eternal perspective, Heavenly Father can see things we cannot. His joy, work, and glory are to bring to pass our immortality and exaltation.⁵³ Everything He does is for our benefit. He "wants [our] eternal happiness even more than [we] do."⁵⁴ And He "would not require [us] to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for [our] benefit or for that of those [we] love."⁵⁵ As a result, He focuses on helping us to progress, not on judging and condemning us.⁵⁶

Becoming Like Our Father

As spirit sons and daughters of God, each of us has the potential to become like the Father. To do so, we must worship the Father in the name of the Son.⁵⁷ We do this by striving to be obedient to the will of the Father, as the Savior was,⁵⁸ and by continually repenting.⁵⁹ As we do these things, we "receive grace for grace" until we receive of the Father's fulness⁶⁰ and are endowed with "his character, perfections, and attributes."⁶¹

Given the distance between what we are as mortals and what Heavenly Father has become, it is not surprising that some feel that becoming like the Father is unattainable. Nevertheless, the scriptures are clear. If we will cleave in faith to Christ, repent, and seek God's grace through obedience, eventually we will become like the Father. I take great comfort in the fact that those who strive to be obedient will "receive grace

for grace" and ultimately "receive of his fulness."⁶² In other words, we won't become like the Father on our own.⁶³ Rather, it will come through gifts of grace, some big but mostly small, that build upon one another until we have a fulness. But, brothers and sisters, it will come!

I invite you to trust that Heavenly Father knows how to exalt you; seek His daily, sustaining help; and press forward with faith in Christ even when you cannot feel God's love.

There is much we do not understand about becoming like the Father.⁶⁴ But I can testify with certainty that striving to become like the Father is worth every sacrifice.⁶⁵ The sacrifices we make here in mortality, no matter how great, are simply incomparable to the immeasurable joy, happiness, and love we will feel in God's presence.⁶⁶ If you are struggling to believe it is worth the sacrifices you are asked to make, the Savior calls to you, saying, "Ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath . . . prepared for you; . . . ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along."⁶⁷

I testify that your Heavenly Father loves *you* and wants *you* to live with Him again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Notes in possession of the author; see also D. Melinda Ashton, "The Holy Ghost: Direction, Correction, and Warning" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference, Apr. 28, 2016), byutv.org.
2. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.
3. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145; "Mother in Heaven," Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.
4. The Apostle Paul indicated that we knew the Father so well that our souls still yearn to call him *Abba*, which means "Daddy," a term reserved for fathers with whom we are exceedingly familiar (see Romans 8:15).

5. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
7. See Matthew 5:48; see also 2 Peter 1:3–8.
8. These conditions included keeping our first estate (see Abraham 3:26) and then in mortality exercising faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repenting, being baptized by immersion by someone holding the priesthood authority of God, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end (see 3 Nephi 27:16–20).
9. President Dallin H. Oaks has taught: “Some who are listening to this message are probably saying, ‘But what about me?’ We know that many worthy and wonderful Latter-day Saints currently lack the ideal opportunities and essential requirements for their progress. Singleness, childlessness, death, and divorce frustrate ideals and postpone the fulfillment of promised blessings. . . . But these frustrations are only temporary. The Lord has promised that in the eternities no blessing will be denied his sons and daughters who keep the commandments, are true to their covenants, and desire what is right” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).
10. See Mosiah 2:41.
11. See Alma 42:5; it is also called the plan of redemption (see, for example, Jacob 6:8) and the plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16).
12. See Job 38:4–7.
13. See, for example, Hebrews 5:8; 12:11; Ether 12:27. At least at first, some of the challenges we face in mortality may seem with our limited understanding that they would preclude us from obtaining some of our most hoped-for promised blessings. In spite of these seeming contradictions, God will give us every promised blessing if we remain faithful.
14. See Luke 1:31–35; John 1:14; 1 Nephi 11:18–21; Guide to the Scriptures, “Jesus Christ,” scriptures.lds.org.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:4–5, 16–17, 19–20.
16. See Moses 7:32.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9.
18. See Romans 8:28.
19. See Matthew 6:11.
20. See N. Eldon Tanner, “The Importance of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 50–53.
21. See Luke 11:10–13; James 1:17.
22. See Luke 11:5–10; Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 11:5–6 (in Luke 11:5, footnote a); 3 Nephi 13:6.
23. See Matthew 6:13.
24. See Moses 7:31–40.
25. See James 1:17.
26. See John 15:1–2; Doctrine and Covenants 122:6–7.



27. See Hebrews 12:5–11; Doctrine and Covenants 95:1.
28. Moses 7:35.
29. See Alma 37:12, 37.
30. See John 14:26; 2 Nephi 31:12.
31. See John 17:21–23, 26; Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
32. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53; 88:67–68.
33. See 1 Peter 4:6. Elder Melvin J. Ballard, speaking of why a man he baptized had joined the Church, said, “It was made known to me that his ancestors in the spirit world had accepted the Gospel years ago and had been praying that some one of their family on earth would open the door for them, and that their prayers had availed and the Lord had directed the missionaries to this man’s door” (in Melvin R. Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard, Crusader for Righteousness* [1966], 250).
34. See Mormon 7:5–6; see also John 5:21, 26; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Nephi 9:11–12; Alma 40:2–3; 3 Nephi 27:14.
35. See John 5:22; Jacob 6:9; Alma 11:44; Helaman 14:15–18. The Atonement of Christ overcomes all the effects of the Fall of Adam, including both physical and spiritual death, which both must be overcome to allow us to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. Those who have repented of their sins will dwell with the Father and the Son in eternity. However, those who have failed to repent will suffer the second death, which is brought about by their own sins (see Helaman 14:15–18).
36. 2 Nephi 2:8.
37. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:56; 88:28–29.
38. Mosiah 2:41.
39. See Revelation 7:17.
40. See Moses 7:30. Heavenly Father even continues to watch over and provide for those in the terrestrial kingdom through the ministrations of Jesus Christ and other celestial beings (see Doctrine and Covenants 76:77, 87) and those in the telestial kingdom through the ministrations of the Holy Ghost and angels (see Doctrine and Covenants 76:86, 88).
41. Moses 7:35; see also Psalm 90:2.
42. See Psalm 103:6–8; Luke 6:36; Moses 7:30.
43. See 1 John 4:16.
44. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:40.
45. See James 1:17.
46. See Numbers 23:19.
47. See Acts 10:34–35.
48. See 1 Nephi 9:6; Doctrine and Covenants 130:7.
49. Dictionary.com defines *intelligence* as the “capacity for learning, reasoning, understanding, and similar forms of mental activity; aptitude in grasping truths, relationships, facts, meanings, etc.” and “knowledge.”
50. See Abraham 3:19. Jesus Christ as a glorified, perfected being is also more intelligent than us all.
51. See Revelation 21:22.
52. See Abraham 3:17.
53. See Moses 1:39.
54. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17.
55. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” 17.
56. See John 5:22; Moses 1:39. It is Satan and we ourselves who condemn us (see Revelation 12:10; Alma 12:14).
57. See John 4:23; Doctrine and Covenants 18:40; 20:29.
58. See 3 Nephi 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 93:11–19.
59. Repentance is the process by which we change our very nature so that we become like God. Thus, we should be continually repenting, not just repenting when we “do something wrong.”
60. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:19–20.
61. *Lectures on Faith*, 38; see also Moroni 7:48; 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 76:56, 94–95; 84:33–38.
62. Doctrine and Covenants 93:20; emphasis added.
63. See Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 76:69, 94–95.
64. Why can’t or won’t God reveal more about the process of becoming like Him? I don’t honestly know all the reasons. But there are at least two that I do understand. The first is that some things are simply incomprehensible in our mortal estate (see Doctrine and Covenants 78:17). It might be akin to trying to explain the internet to someone who lived in the Middle Ages. The context and perspective are just not there. And the second is that gifts of grace often come to us precisely because we must agonize and struggle through not knowing.
65. The sacrifices we are asked to make may be essential to achieving perfection (see Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:40 [in Hebrews 11:40, footnote a]).
66. See Romans 8:18.
67. Doctrine and Covenants 78:17–18.



By Elder Robert C. Gay
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Taking upon Ourselves the Name of Jesus Christ

May we faithfully take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ—by seeing as He sees, by serving as He served, and by trusting that His grace is sufficient.

My fellow brothers and sisters, recently, as I was pondering President Russell M. Nelson’s charge to call the Church by its revealed name, I turned to where the Savior instructed the Nephites about the name of the Church.¹ As I read the Savior’s words, I was struck by how He also told the people that “ye must take upon you the name of Christ.”² This caused me to look at myself and ask, “Am I taking upon myself the Savior’s name as He would have me do so?”³ Today I would like to share some of the impressions I have received in answer to my question.

First, to take upon ourselves the name of Christ means we faithfully strive to see as God sees.⁴ How does God see? Joseph Smith said, “While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard,” for “His love [is] unfathomable.”⁵

A few years ago my older sister passed away. She had a challenging life. She struggled with the gospel and was never really active. Her husband abandoned their marriage and left her

with four young children to raise. On the evening of her passing, in a room with her children present, I gave her a blessing to peacefully return home. At that moment I realized I had too often defined my sister’s life in terms of her trials and inactivity. As I placed my hands on her head that evening, I received a severe rebuke from the Spirit. I was made acutely aware of her goodness and allowed to see her as God saw her—not as someone who struggled with the gospel and life but as someone who had to deal with difficult issues I did not have. I saw her as a magnificent mother who, despite great obstacles, had raised four beautiful, amazing children. I saw her as the friend to our mother who took time to watch over and be a companion to her after our father passed away.

During that final evening with my sister, I believe God was asking me, “Can’t you see that everyone around you is a sacred being?”

Brigham Young taught:





Savior asked us, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?”¹⁹

I recently learned about an experience in the life of Elder James E. Talmage that caused me to pause and consider how I love and serve those around me. As a young professor, before he became an Apostle, in the height of the deadly diphtheria epidemic of 1892, Elder Talmage discovered a family of strangers, not members of the Church, who lived near him and who were stricken by the disease. No one wanted to put themselves at risk by going inside the infected home. Elder Talmage, however, immediately proceeded to the home. He found four children: a two-and-a-half-year-old dead on the bed, a five-year-old and ten-year-old in great pain, and a weakened thirteen-year-old. The parents were suffering with grief and fatigue.

Elder Talmage dressed the dead and the living, swept the rooms, carried out the soiled clothing, and burned filthy rags covered with the disease. He worked all day and then returned the next morning. The ten-year-old died during the night. He lifted and held the five-year-old. She coughed bloody mucus all over his face and clothes. He wrote, “I could not put her from me,” and he held her until she died in his arms. He helped bury all three children and arranged for food and clean clothing for the grieving family. Upon returning home, Brother Talmage disposed of his clothes, bathed in a zinc solution, quarantined himself from his family, and suffered through a mild attack of the disease.²⁰

So many lives around us are at stake. Saints take the Savior’s name upon themselves by becoming holy and ministering to all regardless of where or how they stand—lives are saved as we do so.²¹

“I wish to urge upon the Saints . . . to understand men and women as they are, and not understand them as you are.”⁶

“How often it is said—‘Such a person has done wrong, and he cannot be a Saint.’ . . . We hear some swear and lie . . . [or] break the Sabbath. . . . Do not judge such persons, for you do not know the design of the Lord concerning them. . . . [Rather,] bear with them.”⁷

Can any one of you imagine our Savior letting you and your burdens go unnoticed by Him? The Savior looked upon the Samaritan, the adulterer, the tax collector, the leper, the mentally ill, and the sinner with the same eyes. All were children of His Father. All were redeemable.

Can you imagine Him turning away from someone with doubts about their place in God’s kingdom or from anyone afflicted in any manner?⁸ I cannot. In the eyes of Christ, each soul is of infinite worth. No one is preordained to fail. Eternal life is possible for all.⁹

From the Spirit’s rebuke at my sister’s bedside, I learned a great lesson: that as we see as He sees, ours will be a double victory—redemption of those we touch and redemption of ourselves.

Second, to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we must not only see as God sees, but we must do His work and serve as He served. We live the two great commandments, submit to God’s will, gather Israel, and let our light “shine before men.”¹⁰ We receive and live the covenants and ordinances of His restored Church.¹¹ As we do this, God endows us with power to bless ourselves, our families, and the lives of others.¹² Ask yourself, “Do I know anyone who does not need the powers of heaven in their lives?”

God will work wonders among us as we sanctify ourselves.¹³ We sanctify ourselves by purifying our hearts.¹⁴ We purify our hearts as we hear Him,¹⁵ repent of our sins,¹⁶ become converted,¹⁷ and love as He loves.¹⁸ The

Finally, I believe that to take upon ourselves His name, we must trust Him. At a meeting I attended one Sunday, a young woman asked something like the following: “My boyfriend and I recently broke up, and he chose to leave the Church. He tells me he has never been happier. How can this be?”

The Savior answered this question when He said to the Nephites, “But if [your life is] not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you [you will] have joy in [your] works for a season, and by and by the end cometh.”²² There simply is no enduring joy outside the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At that meeting, however, I thought about the many good people I know who struggle with great burdens and commandments that are daunting at best for them. I asked myself, “What else might the Savior say to them?”²³ I believe He would ask, “Do you trust me?”²⁴ To the woman with the issue of blood, He said, “Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”²⁵

One of my favorite scriptures is John 4:4, which reads, “And he must needs go through Samaria.”

Why do I love that scripture? Because Jesus did not *need* to go to Samaria. The Jews of His day despised the Samaritans and traveled a road around Samaria. But Jesus chose to go there to declare before all the world for the first time that He was the promised Messiah. For this message, He chose not only an outcast group but also a woman—and not just any woman but a woman living in sin—someone considered at that time to be the least of the least. I believe Jesus did this so that each of us may always understand that His love is greater than our fears, our wounds, our addictions, our doubts, our temptations, our sins, our broken families, our depression and anxieties, our chronic illness, our poverty, our abuse, our despair, and our loneliness.²⁶ He wants all to know there is nothing and no one He is unable to heal and deliver to enduring joy.²⁷

His grace is sufficient.²⁸ He alone descended below all things. The power

of His Atonement is the power to overcome any burden in our life.²⁹ The message of the woman at the well is that He knows our life situations³⁰ and that we can always walk with Him no matter where we stand. To her and to each of us, He says, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but [shall have] a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”³¹

In any of life’s travels, why would you ever turn away from the only Savior who has all power to heal and deliver you? Whatever the price you must pay to trust Him is worth it. My brothers and sisters, let us choose to increase our faith in Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

From the very depths of my soul, I bear testimony that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior’s Church, directed by the living Christ through a true prophet. My prayer is that we will faithfully take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ—by seeing as He sees, by serving as He served, and by trusting that His grace is sufficient to deliver us home and to enduring joy. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See 3 Nephi 27:3–8.
2. See 3 Nephi 27:5–6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:77 and the covenant of the sacrament.
3. See Dallin H. Oaks, *His Holy Name* (1998) for a comprehensive study about taking upon ourselves and being a witness of the name of Jesus Christ.
4. See Mosiah 5:2–3. Part of the mighty change of heart among the people of King Benjamin who took upon themselves the name of Christ was that their eyes were opened to “great views.” Those who inherit the celestial kingdom are individuals who “see as they are seen” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:94).
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 39.
6. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:37.
7. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 278.





8. See 3 Nephi 17:7.
9. See John 3:14–17; Acts 10:34; 1 Nephi 17:35; 2 Nephi 26:33; Doctrine and Covenants 50:41–42; Moses 1:39. Elder D. Todd Christofferson also taught: “With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children” (“Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 52).
10. See Matthew 5:14–16; 22:35–40; Mosiah 3:19; Doctrine and Covenants 50:13–14; 133:5; see also Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 79–81.
11. See Leviticus 18:4; 2 Nephi 31:5–12; Doctrine and Covenants 1:12–16; 136:4; Articles of Faith 1:3–4.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20–21; 110:9.
13. See Joshua 3:5; Doctrine and Covenants 43:16; see also John 17:19. The Savior sanctified Himself to have the power to bless us.
14. See Helaman 3:35; Doctrine and Covenants 12:6–9; 88:74.
15. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17, the first command given by God in vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith; see also 2 Nephi 9:29; 3 Nephi 28:34.
16. See Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; Alma 5:33; 42:22–23; Doctrine and Covenants 19:4–20. Also ponder these two meditations on sin. First, Hugh Nibley writes: “Sin is waste. It is doing one thing when you should be doing other and better things for which you have the capacity” (*Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton [1989], 66). Mother of John Wesley, Susanna Wesley, wrote her son: “Take this rule. Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; . . . whatever increases the . . . authority of your

body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself” (*Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Wallace Jr. [1997], 109).

17. See Luke 22:32; 3 Nephi 9:11, 20.
18. See John 13:2–15, 34. On the eve of His Atonement, the Savior washed the feet of one who betrayed Him, of another who denied Him, and of still others who fell asleep in His most needed hour. He then taught, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you.”
19. Matthew 5:46.
20. See John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (1972), 112–14.
21. See Alma 10:22–23; 62:40.
22. 3 Nephi 27:11.
23. In Matthew 11:28, 30, the Lord says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Also consider 2 Corinthians 12:7–9: Paul describes suffering a very powerful “thorn in the flesh,” which he prayed to have removed. Christ said to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” See also Ether 12:27.
24. See Mosiah 7:33; 29:20; Helaman 12:1; Doctrine and Covenants 124:87.
25. See Luke 8:43–48; Mark 5:25–34. The woman with the issue of blood was in desperate need and out of options. She had suffered for 12 years, had spent all her resources on physicians, and was getting worse. Cast out from her people and family, she purposefully made her way through a large crowd and plunged herself at the Savior. She had complete trust and faith in the Savior, and He felt her touch on the hem of His garment. From that faith He instantly and completely healed her. He then called her “daughter.” She was no longer an outcast but a member of God’s family. Her healing was physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. Challenges may

stretch out for years or a lifetime, but His promise of healing is sure and absolute.

26. See Luke 4:21; John 4:6–26. Luke, not John, records that early in Jesus’s ministry, He went to His own synagogue in Nazareth, read a passage from Isaiah prophesying of the Messiah, and then declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” This is the first recorded time the Savior speaks of Himself as the Messiah. However, at Jacob’s well, John records the first time that Jesus declares His Messiahship in an open forum. In this setting, since the Samaritans were considered non-Jews, Jesus also taught that His gospel was for all, both Jew and Gentile. This declaration occurs at the “sixth hour,” or at noon, when the earth receives its fullest light from the sun. Jacob’s well is also in the valley near the exact spot where ancient Israel ceremonially covenanted with the Lord after entering into the land of promise. Interestingly, on one side of the valley is a dry mountain and on the other side is a mountain full of springs of life-giving water.
27. Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “When in situations of stress we wonder if there is any more in us to give, we can be comforted to know that God, who knows our capacity perfectly, placed us here to succeed. No one was foreordained to fail or to be wicked. . . . When we feel overwhelmed, let us recall the assurance that God will not overprogram us” (“Meeting the Challenges of Today” [Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 10, 1978], 9, speeches.byu.edu).
28. President Russell M. Nelson has taught:

“In a coming day, you will present yourself before the Savior. You will be overwhelmed to the point of tears to be in His holy presence. You will struggle to find words to thank Him for paying for your sins, for forgiving you of any unkindness toward others, for healing you from the injuries and injustices of this life.

“You will thank Him for strengthening you to do the impossible, for turning your weaknesses into strengths, and for making it possible for you to live with Him and your family forever. His identity, His Atonement, and His attributes will become personal and real to you” (“Prophets, Leadership, and Divine Law” [worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 8, 2017], broadcasts.lds.org).
29. See Isaiah 53:3–5; Alma 7:11–13; Doctrine and Covenants 122:5–9.
30. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17; Elaine S. Dalton, “He Knows You by Name,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 109–11.
31. John 4:14.



By Elder Matthew L. Carpenter
Of the Seventy

Wilt Thou Be Made Whole?

Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, if we choose to repent and turn our hearts fully to the Savior, He will heal us spiritually.

A few months into his mission, our youngest son and his missionary companion were completing their study when our son felt a dull pain in his head. He felt very strange; at first he lost control of his left arm; then his tongue went numb. The left side of his face began to droop. He had difficulty speaking. He knew something was wrong. What he didn't know was that he was in the middle of a massive stroke in three areas of his brain. Fear began to set in as he became partially paralyzed. How quickly a stroke victim receives care can have a dramatic effect on the extent of his healing. His faithful missionary companion acted decisively. After calling 911, he gave him a blessing. Miraculously, the ambulance was only five minutes away.

After our son was rushed to the hospital, the medical personnel quickly assessed the situation and determined they should administer a medicine to our son that could potentially reverse the stroke's paralyzing effects over time.¹ However, if our son was not having a stroke, the medicine could have severe consequences, such as bleeding in the brain. Our son had to choose.

He chose to accept the medication. While full recovery required more operations and many months, our son eventually returned and completed his mission after the effects of the stroke were substantially reversed.

Our Heavenly Father is all-powerful and all-knowing. He knows our physical struggles. He is aware of our physical pains due to illness, disease, aging, accidents, or birth disorders. He is

aware of emotional struggles associated with anxiety, loneliness, depression, or mental illness. He knows each person who has suffered injustice or who has been abused. He knows our weaknesses and the propensities and temptations we struggle with.

During mortality we are tested to see if we will choose good over evil. For those who keep His commandments, they will live with Him "in a state of never-ending happiness."² To help us in our progression to become like Him, Heavenly Father has given all power and knowledge to His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no physical, emotional, or spiritual ailment that Christ cannot heal.³

From the mortal ministry of the Savior, the scriptures recount many miraculous events where Jesus Christ used His divine power to heal those who suffered physically.

The Gospel of John recounts the story of a certain man who had endured a debilitating infirmity for 38 years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in





that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?"

The impotent man responded that no one was around to help him when he needed it most.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And *immediately* the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."⁴

Please note the juxtaposition of how long this man suffered on his own—38 years—and how quickly the healing came once the Savior became involved. The healing was "*immediate*."

In another instance, a woman with an issue of blood 12 years, who "had spent all [of] her living upon physicians, . . . came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and *immediately* her issue of blood [ceased]. . . .

"And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she . . . declared unto him before all the people . . . how she was healed *immediately*."⁵

Through His ministry, Christ taught that He had power over the physical body. We cannot control the timing of when Christ's healing of our physical ailments will occur. Healing occurs according to His will and wisdom. In the scriptures, some suffered for decades; others, their entire mortal lives. Mortal infirmities can refine

us and deepen our reliance upon God. But when we allow Christ to be involved, He will always strengthen us spiritually so we can have greater capacity to endure our burdens.

Ultimately, we know that every physical ailment, malady, or imperfection will be healed in the Resurrection. That is a gift to all mankind through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.⁶

Jesus Christ can heal more than just our physical bodies. He can heal our spirits as well. Throughout scripture we learn how Christ helped those whose spirits were weak and made them whole.⁷ As we ponder these experiences, our hope and faith in the Savior's power to bless our lives increases. Jesus Christ can change our hearts, heal us from the effects of injustice or abuse we may experience, and strengthen our capacity to bear loss and heartache, bringing us peace to help us endure the trials of our lives, healing us emotionally.

Christ can also heal us when we sin. We sin when we knowingly break one of God's laws.⁸ When we sin, our soul becomes unclean. No unclean thing can dwell in God's presence.⁹ "Becoming clean from sin is [to be] healed spiritually."¹⁰

God the Father knows we will sin, but He has prepared a way for us to be redeemed. Elder Lynn G. Robbins taught: "Repentance isn't [God's] backup plan in the event we might fail. Repentance *is* His plan, knowing that

we will."¹¹ When we sin, we have the opportunity to choose the good from the evil. We choose the good when we repent after we have sinned. Through Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, we can be redeemed from our sins and brought back to the presence of God the Father if we repent. Spiritual healing is not one-sided—it requires the Savior's redemptive power and sincere repentance on the part of the sinner. For those who choose not to repent, they are rejecting the healing Christ offers. For them, it is as though no redemption was made.¹²

As I have counseled with others seeking to repent, I have marveled that people who were living in sin had difficulty making correct decisions. The Holy Ghost would leave them, and they often struggled to make choices that would bring them closer to God. They would wrestle for months or even years, embarrassed or frightened of the consequences of their sins. Often they felt that they could never change or be forgiven. I have often heard them share their fear that if their loved ones knew what they had done, they would stop loving them or leave them. When they followed this line of thinking, they resolved to just keep quiet and delay their repentance. They incorrectly felt that it was better not to repent now so that they would not further hurt those they loved. In their minds it was better to suffer after this life than go through the repentance process now. Brothers and sisters, it is *never* a good idea to procrastinate your repentance. The adversary often uses fear to prevent us from acting immediately upon our faith in Jesus Christ.

When loved ones are confronted with the truth about sinful behavior, while they may feel deeply wounded, they often want to help the sincerely

repentant sinner to change and to reconcile with God. Indeed, spiritual healing accelerates when the sinner confesses and is surrounded by those who love them and help them to forsake their sins. Please remember that Jesus Christ is mighty in how He also heals the innocent victims of sin who turn to Him.¹³

President Boyd K. Packer stated: “Our spirits are damaged when we make mistakes and commit sins. But unlike the case of our mortal bodies, when the repentance process is complete, no scars remain because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The promise is: ‘Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more’ [Doctrine and Covenants 58:42].”¹⁴

When we repent “with full purpose of heart,”¹⁵ “*immediately* shall the great plan of redemption be brought about” in our lives.¹⁶ The Savior will heal us.

The missionary companion and the medical professionals who helped our stroke-afflicted son in the mission field acted quickly. Our son chose to receive the stroke-reversing medicine. The paralyzing effects of his stroke that could have followed him for the remainder of his mortal life were reversed. Likewise, the faster we repent and bring the Atonement of Jesus Christ into our lives, the sooner we can be healed from the effects of sin.

President Russell M. Nelson offered this invitation: “If you have stepped off the path, . . . I invite you . . . to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord’s Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path.”¹⁷

Our spiritual healing requires us to submit ourselves to the conditions our Savior has outlined. We must not

delay! We must act today! Act now so that spiritual paralysis does not prevent your eternal progression. While I have been speaking, if you have felt the need to ask forgiveness of someone you have wronged, I invite you to act. Tell them what you have done. Ask for their forgiveness. If you have committed a sin that impacts your temple worthiness, I invite you to counsel with your bishop—today. Do not delay.

My brothers and sisters, God is our loving Father in Heaven. He has given all power and knowledge to His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Because of Him, all mankind will one day be healed of every physical ailment forever. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, if we choose to repent and turn our hearts fully to the Savior, He will heal us spiritually. That healing can begin immediately. The choice is ours. *Will we be made whole?*

I testify that Jesus Christ paid the price so that we can be made whole. But we must choose to take that healing medicine He offers. Take it today. Do not delay. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. The medicine is called tPA (tissue plasminogen activator).
2. Mosiah 2:41.
3. See Matthew 4:24. Christ went about healing all sick people, even those with

“divers diseases,” “torments,” “possessed with devils,” and “those which were lunatic.”

4. See John 5:5–9; emphasis added.
5. See Luke 8:43–47; emphasis added.
6. See Alma 40:23; Helaman 14:17.
7. See Luke 5:20, 23–25; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 5:23 (in Luke 5:23, footnote a): “Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise up and walk?”
8. See 1 John 3:4.
9. See 3 Nephi 27:19.
10. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, rev. ed. (2018), lds.org/manual/missionary.
11. Lynn G. Robbins, “Until Seventy Times Seven,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 22.
12. See Mosiah 16:5.
13. On many occasions I have witnessed the accelerated healing of individuals when family members have rallied around one who has broken vows of fidelity and trust, helping them to turn to the Savior more completely for His healing power in their lives. If the truly repentant soul sincerely seeks to change, family members who help them in gospel study, sincere prayer, and Christlike service not only help the sinner change but also open the door for increased healing from the Savior in their lives. When appropriate, innocent victims can help the errant sinner by seeking heavenly guidance on what to study together, how to serve, and how to involve family members to support and strengthen the repentant soul to change and benefit from the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.
14. Boyd K. Packer, “The Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 28.
15. 3 Nephi 18:32.
16. Alma 34:31; emphasis added.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.





By Elder Dale G. Renlund
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Choose You This Day

The magnitude of our eternal happiness depends on choosing the living God and joining Him in His work.

The fictional character Mary Poppins is a typical English nanny—who happens to be magical.¹ She blows in on the east wind to help the troubled Banks family of Number 17, Cherry Tree Lane, in Edwardian London. She is given charge of the children, Jane and Michael. In a firm but kind manner, she begins to teach them valuable lessons with an enchanting touch.

Jane and Michael make considerable progress, but Mary decides that it is time for her to move on. In the stage production, Mary's chimney sweep friend, Bert, tries to dissuade her from leaving. He argues, "But they're good kids, Mary."

Mary replies, "Would I be bothering with them if they weren't? But I can't help them if they won't let me, and there's no one so hard to teach as the child who knows everything."

Bert asks, "So?"

Mary answers, "So they've got to do the next bit on their own."²

Brothers and sisters, like Jane and Michael Banks, we are "good kids" who are worth bothering about. Our Heavenly Father wants to help and bless us, but we do not always let Him. Sometimes, we even act as if we already know everything. And we too

need to do "the next bit" on our own. That is why we came to earth from a premortal, heavenly home. Our "bit" involves making choices.

Our Heavenly Father's goal in parenting is not to have His children *do* what is right; it is to have His children *choose* to do what is right and ultimately become like Him. If He simply wanted us to be obedient, He would use immediate rewards and punishments to influence our behaviors.



But God is not interested in His children just becoming trained and obedient "pets" who will not chew on His slippers in the celestial living room.³ No, God wants His children to grow up spiritually and join Him in the family business.

God established a plan whereby we can become heirs in His kingdom, a covenant path that leads us to become like Him, have the kind of life He has, and live forever as families in His presence.⁴ Personal choice was—and is—vital to this plan, which we learned about in our premortal existence. We accepted the plan and chose to come to earth.

To ensure that we would exercise faith and learn to use our agency properly, a veil of forgetfulness was drawn over our minds so we would not remember God's plan. Without that veil, God's purposes would not be achieved because we could not progress and become the trusted inheritors He wants us to be.

The prophet Lehi said: "Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other."⁵ At a fundamental level, one option is represented by Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of the Father. The other option is represented by Satan, Lucifer, who wants to destroy agency and usurp power.⁶

In Jesus Christ, "we have an advocate with the Father."⁷ After completing His atoning sacrifice, Jesus "ascended into heaven . . . to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men." And, having claimed the rights of mercy, "he advocateth the cause of the children of men."⁸

Christ's advocacy with the Father in our behalf is not adversarial. Jesus



Christ, who allowed His will to be swallowed up in the will of the Father,⁹ would not champion anything other than what the Father has wanted all along. Heavenly Father undoubtedly cheers for and applauds our successes.

Christ's advocacy is, at least in part, to remind us that He has paid for our sins and that no one is excluded from the reach of God's mercy.¹⁰ For those who believe in Jesus Christ, repent, are baptized, and endure to the end—a process that leads to reconciliation¹¹—the Savior forgives, heals, and advocates. He is our helper, consoler, and intercessor—attesting to and vouching for our reconciliation with God.¹²

In stark contrast, Lucifer is an accuser or prosecutor. John the Revelator described Lucifer's ultimate defeat: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." Why? Because "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony."¹³

Lucifer is this accuser. He spoke against us in the premortal existence, and he continues to denounce us in

this life. He seeks to drag us down. He wants us to experience endless woe. He is the one who tells us we are not adequate, the one who tells us we are not good enough, the one who tells us there is no recovery from a mistake. He is the ultimate bully, the one who kicks us when we are down.

If Lucifer were teaching a child to walk and the child stumbled, he would scream at the child, punish him, and tell him to quit trying. Lucifer's ways bring discouragement and despair—eventually and always. This father of lies is the ultimate purveyor of falsehood¹⁴ and cunningly works to deceive and distract us, "for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."¹⁵

If Christ were teaching a child to walk and the child stumbled, He would help the child get up and encourage the next steps.¹⁶ Christ is the helper and consoler. His ways bring joy and hope—eventually and always.

God's plan includes directions for us, referred to in the scriptures as commandments. These commandments are neither a whimsical set nor an arbitrary collection of imposed rules meant only to train us to be obedient. They are linked to our developing the attributes of godliness, returning to our Heavenly

Father, and receiving enduring joy. Obedience to His commandments is not blind; we knowingly choose God and His pathway home. The pattern for us is the same as it was for Adam and Eve, wherein "God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption."¹⁷ Though God wants us to be on the covenant path, He gives us the dignity of choosing.

Indeed, God desires, expects, and directs that each of His children choose for himself or herself. He will not force us. Through the gift of agency, God permits His children "to act for themselves and not to be acted upon."¹⁸ Agency allows us to choose to get on the path, or not. It allows us to get off, or not. Just as we cannot be forced to obey, we cannot be forced to disobey. No one can, without our cooperation, take us off the path. (Now, this is not to be confused with those whose agency is violated. They are not off the path; they are victims. They receive God's understanding, love, and compassion.)

But when we get off the path, God is saddened because He knows that this eventually, but invariably, leads to diminished happiness and forfeited blessings. In the scriptures, getting off the path is referred to as sin, and the



resultant decrease in happiness and forfeited blessings is called punishment. In this sense, God is not punishing us; punishment is a consequence of our own choices, not His.

When we discover that we are off the path, we can stay off, or because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can choose to reverse our steps and get back on. In the scriptures, the process of deciding to change and return to the path is referred to as repentance. Failure to repent means that we choose to disqualify ourselves from the blessings God desires to give. If we are “not willing to enjoy that which [we] might have received,” we will “return . . . to [our] own place, to enjoy that which [we] are willing to receive”¹⁹—our choice, not God’s.

No matter how long we have been off the path or how far away we have wandered, the moment we decide to change, God helps us return.²⁰ From God’s perspective, through sincere repentance and pressing forward with a steadfastness in Christ, once back on the path, it will be as if we were never off.²¹ The Savior pays for our sins and frees us from the looming decrease in happiness and blessings. This is referred to in the scriptures as

forgiveness. After baptism, all members slip off the path—some of us even dive off. Therefore, exercising faith in Jesus Christ, repenting, receiving help from Him, and being forgiven are not onetime events but lifelong processes, processes that are repetitive and iterative. This is how we “endure to the end.”²²

We need to choose whom we will serve.²³ The magnitude of our eternal happiness depends on choosing the living God and joining Him in His work. As we strive to “do the next bit” on our own, we practice using our agency correctly. As two former Relief Society General Presidents said, we should not be “babies that need petting and correction all the time.”²⁴ No, God wants us to become mature adults and govern ourselves.

Choosing to follow the Father’s plan is the only way we can become inheritors in His kingdom; only then can He trust us to not even ask for that which is contrary to His will.²⁵ But we need to remember that “there’s no one so hard to teach as the child who knows everything.” So we need to be willing to be tutored in the Lord’s ways by the Lord and His servants. We can trust that we are beloved children of Heavenly

Parents²⁶ and worth “bothering about” and be assured that “on our own” will never mean “alone.”

As the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said, I say with him:

“Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren [and sisters], reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil . . . ; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.”²⁷

So, choose faith in Christ; choose repentance; choose to be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost; choose to conscientiously prepare for and worthily partake of the sacrament; choose to make covenants in the temple; and choose to serve the living God and His children. Our choices determine who we are and who we will become.

I conclude with the rest of Jacob’s blessing: “Wherefore, may God raise you from . . . everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God.”²⁸ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. The fictional character Mary Poppins was brought to life through the writings of P. L. Travers. Her books provided the basis for a 1964 musical-fantasy movie, produced by Walt Disney, and for a later stage adaptation of the movie.
2. The stage play contains the scene described. See *Libretto to Mary Poppins: The Broadway Musical*, 70.
3. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Brisbane Area Conference 1976, 19. President Kimball conjectured: “The very first thing before beginning our world here, the Lord said, ‘I’m going to give you your free agency. I want men and women that are strong because it is right to be strong. I don’t want weaklings who are righteous only because they have to be righteous.’”

4. See, for instance, Russell M. Nelson, "As We Go Forward Together," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7. The covenant path is also referred to as a plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16) and a plan of redemption (see Alma 12:25–35).
5. 2 Nephi 2:16.
6. See Moses 4:3.
7. 1 John 2:1; see also Joseph Smith Translation, 1 John 2:1 (in 1 John 2:1, footnote *a*).
8. Moroni 7:27, 28.
9. See Mosiah 15:7.
10. See 1 John 2:2.
11. See 2 Corinthians 5:16–21; Colossians 1:19–23; 2 Nephi 10:24.
12. The Greek word for advocate (*paraklētos*) means intercessor, helper, comforter, or consoler (see 1 John 2:1, footnote *b*; *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [1984], Greek dictionary section, 55; 2 Nephi 10:23–25; Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5).
13. Revelation 12:10–11.
14. See Ether 8:25.
15. 2 Nephi 2:27; see also 2 Nephi 2:6–8, 16, 26.
16. See Fiona and Terryl Givens, *The Christ Who Heals* (2017), 29, 124. For original citation, see Anthony Zimmerman, *Evolution and the Sin in Eden* (1998), 160, citing Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (2010), 61.
17. Alma 12:32.
18. 2 Nephi 2:26; see also 2 Nephi 2:16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 88:32.
20. See Alma 34:31.
21. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Mosiah 26:29–30; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43; Boyd K. Packer, "The Plan of Happiness," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 28. President Packer said, "When the repentance process is complete, no scars remain because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ."
22. 2 Nephi 31:20.
23. See Joshua 24:15.
24. Julie B. Beck, "And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 12; Sister Beck was quoting Eliza R. Snow, address to Lehi Ward Relief Society, Oct. 27, 1869, Lehi Ward, Alpine (Utah) Stake, in Relief Society, Minute Book, 1868–79, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 26–27.
25. See 2 Nephi 4:35; Helaman 10:5.
26. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
27. 2 Nephi 10:23–24.
28. 2 Nephi 10:25.



By Elder Jack N. Gerard
Of the Seventy

Now Is the Time

If there is anything in your life you need to consider, now is the time.

Several years ago, while preparing for a business trip, I began to experience chest pain. Out of concern, my wife decided to accompany me. On the first leg of our flight, the pain intensified to the point that it was difficult for me to breathe. When we landed, we left the airport and went to the local hospital, where, after multiple tests, the attending physician declared us safe to continue our travel.

We returned to the airport and boarded a flight to our final destination. As we were descending, the pilot came on the intercom and asked me to identify myself. The flight attendant

approached, said they had just received an emergency call, and told me there was an ambulance waiting at the airport to take me to the hospital.

We boarded the ambulance and were rushed to the local emergency room. There we were met by two anxious doctors who explained that I had been misdiagnosed and actually had a serious pulmonary embolism, or blood clot, in my lung, which required immediate medical attention. The doctors informed us that many patients do not survive this condition. Knowing we were far from home and not sure if we were prepared for such





life-altering events, the doctors said that if there was anything in our lives that we needed to consider, now was the time.

I remember well how almost instantaneously in that anxious moment, my entire perspective changed. What seemed so important just moments earlier was now of little interest. My mind raced away from the comfort and cares of this life to an eternal perspective—thoughts of family, children, my wife, and ultimately an assessment of my own life.

How were we doing as a family and individually? Were we living our lives consistent with the covenants we had made and the Lord's expectations, or had we perhaps unintentionally allowed the cares of the world to distract us from those things which matter most?

I would invite you to consider an important lesson learned from this experience: to step back from the world and assess your life. Or in the words of the doctor, if there is anything in your life you need to consider, now is the time.

Assessing Our Lives

We live in a world of information overload, dominated by ever-increasing distractions that make it more and more difficult to sort through the commotion of this life and focus on things of eternal worth. Our daily lives are bombarded with attention-grabbing headlines, served up by rapidly changing technologies.

Unless we take the time to reflect, we may not realize the impact of this fast-paced environment on our daily lives and the choices we make. We may find our lives consumed with bursts of information packaged in memes, videos, and glaring headlines. Although interesting and entertaining, most of these have little to do with our eternal progress, and yet they shape the way we view our mortal experience.

These worldly distractions could be likened to those in Lehi's dream. As we progress down the covenant path with our hand firmly affixed on the iron rod, we hear and see those "mocking and pointing their fingers" from the great and spacious building (1 Nephi 8:27). We may not consciously intend to do

so, but sometimes we pause and shift our gaze to see what all the commotion is. Some of us may even let go of the iron rod and move closer for a better view. Others may fall away entirely "because of those that were scoffing at them" (1 Nephi 8:28).

The Savior cautioned us to "take heed . . . lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with . . . cares of this life" (Luke 21:34). Modern revelation reminds us that many are called, but few are chosen. They are not chosen "because their hearts are set . . . upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:35; see also verse 34). Assessing our lives gives us an opportunity to step back from the world, reflect on where we stand on the covenant path, and, if necessary, make adjustments to ensure a firm grip and a forward gaze.

Recently, in a worldwide youth devotional, President Russell M. Nelson invited the youth to step back from the world, disengaging from social media by holding a seven-day fast. And just last evening, he made a similar invitation to the sisters as part of the women's session of conference. He then asked the youth to notice any differences in how they feel, what they think, or even how they think. He then invited them "to do a thorough life assessment with the Lord . . . to ensure that your feet are firmly planted on the covenant path." He encouraged them that if there were things in their lives that needed changing, "today is the perfect time to change."¹

In assessing things in our lives that need to change, we might ask ourselves a practical question: How do we rise above the distractions of this world and stay fixed on the vision of eternity before us?



In a 2007 conference address entitled “Good, Better, Best,” President Dallin H. Oaks taught how to prioritize choices among our many conflicting worldly demands. He counseled, “We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.”²

May I suggest that the best things in this life are centered on Jesus Christ and understanding the eternal truths of who He is and who we are in our relationship with Him.

Seek Truth

As we seek to know the Savior, we should not overlook the fundamental truth of who we are and why we are here. Amulek reminds us that “this life is the time . . . to prepare to meet God,” the time “which is given us to prepare for eternity” (Alma 34:32–33). As the well-known axiom reminds us, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”³

Understanding our divine origins is essential to our eternal progress and can free us from the distractions of this life. The Savior taught:

“If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed;

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31–32).

President Joseph F. Smith proclaimed, “The greatest achievement mankind can make in this world is to familiarize themselves with divine truth, so thoroughly, so perfectly, that the example or conduct of no creature living in the world can ever turn them away from the knowledge that they have obtained.”⁴

In the world today, the debate over truth has reached a fevered pitch, with all sides claiming truth as if it were a relative concept open to individual interpretation. The young boy Joseph Smith found that “so great were the confusion and strife” in his life “that it was impossible . . . to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong” (Joseph Smith—History 1:8). It was “in the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions” that he sought divine guidance by seeking truth (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

In April conference, President Nelson taught, “If we are to have any hope of sifting through the myriad of voices and the philosophies of men that attack truth, we must learn to receive revelation.”⁵ We must learn to rely on the Spirit of Truth, which “the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him” (John 14:17).

As this world moves swiftly to alternative realities, we must remember the words of Jacob that “the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls” (Jacob 4:13).

As we step back from the world and assess our lives, now is the time to consider what changes we need to make. We can take great hope in knowing that our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, has once again led the way. Prior to His death and Resurrection, as He was laboring to help those around Him understand His divine role, He reminded them “that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Of Him I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeofIsrael.org](https://www.hopeofisrael.org).
2. Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 107.
3. Often attributed to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 42.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.



By Elder Gary E. Stevenson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Shepherding Souls

We reach out in love to others because it is what our Savior commanded us to do.

In a recent conversation with a friend of mine, he told me that when he was a young, newly baptized member of the Church, he suddenly felt like somehow he did not fit in anymore in his ward. The missionaries who taught him had been transferred away, and he felt like he was on the periphery. Without friends in the ward, he found his old friends and with them engaged in activities that took him away from participating at church—so much so that he began to stray from the flock. With tears in his eyes, he described how deeply grateful he was when a fellow ward member extended a ministering hand to him and, in a warm and inclusive way, invited him to return. Within months, he was back in the safety of the flock, strengthening others as well as himself. Aren't we grateful for the shepherd in Brazil who sought after this young man, Elder Carlos A. Godoy, who now sits behind me as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy?

Isn't it remarkable how such small efforts can have eternal consequences? This truth is at the heart of the Church's ministering efforts. Heavenly Father can take our simple, daily efforts and turn them into something miraculous. It has been only six months since President Russell M. Nelson announced

that "the Lord has made important adjustments in the way we care for each other,"¹ explaining, "We will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others. We will refer to these efforts simply as 'ministering.'"²

President Nelson also explained: "A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families. Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did. We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness."³



Since the announcement, your response has been incredible! We have received reports of the great success in implementing these changes in nearly every stake in the world as directed by our living prophet. For example, ministering brothers and sisters have been assigned to families, companionships—including young men and young women—have been organized, and ministering interviews are taking place.

I don't think it is a coincidence that six months prior to the revelatory announcement of yesterday—"a new balance and connection between gospel instruction in the home and in the Church"⁴—the revelatory announcement on ministering was given. Beginning January, as we spend one less hour in our church worship, all that we have learned in ministering will help us rebalance that void in a higher and holier, home-centered Sabbath day experience with family and loved ones.

With these organizational structures in place, we might ask, "How do we know we are ministering in the Lord's way? Are we assisting the Good Shepherd in the way He intends?"

In a recent discussion, President Henry B. Eyring commended the Saints in adjusting to these notable changes but also expressed his sincere hope that members recognize that ministering is more than "just being nice." That is not to say that being nice is inconsequential, but those who understand the true spirit of ministering realize that it goes far beyond merely being nice. Done in the Lord's way, ministering can have a far-reaching influence for good that ripples throughout all eternity, as it has for Elder Godoy.

"The Savior showed by example what it means to minister as He served out of love. . . . He . . . taught, prayed

for, comforted, and blessed those around Him, inviting all to follow Him. . . . As Church members minister [in a higher and holier way], they prayerfully seek to serve as He would—to . . . ‘watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them,’ ‘visit the house of each member,’ and help each become a true disciple of Jesus Christ.”⁵

We understand that a true shepherd loves his sheep, knows each one by name, and “has personal interest in” them.⁶

My friend of many years spent his life as a rancher, doing the hard work of raising cattle and sheep in the rugged Rocky Mountains. He once shared with me the challenges and hazards associated with raising sheep. He described that in early spring, when snow on the expansive mountain range had mostly melted, he placed the family herd of approximately 2,000 sheep in the mountains for the summer. There, he watched over the sheep until late fall, when they were moved from the summer range to a winter range in the desert. He described how tending a large flock of sheep was difficult, requiring early days and late nights—waking well before sunrise and finishing long after dark. He could not possibly do it alone.

Others helped tend the flock, including a mix of experienced ranch hands assisted by younger hands who were benefiting from the wisdom of their companions. He also relied on two old horses, two colts in training, two old sheepdogs, and two or three sheepdog pups. Over the course of the summer, my friend and his sheep faced wind and rainstorms, sickness, injuries, drought, and just about every other hardship one can imagine. Some years they had to haul water all summer just to keep the sheep alive. Then, every year in late fall,



when winter weather threatened and the sheep were taken off the mountain and counted, there were usually more than 200 that were lost.

The flock of 2,000 sheep placed in the mountains in early spring was reduced to less than 1,800. Most of the missing sheep were *not* lost to sickness or natural death but to predators such as mountain lions or coyotes. These predators usually found the lambs that had strayed from the safety of the flock, withdrawing themselves from the protection of their shepherd. Would you consider for a moment what I have just described in a spiritual context? Who is the shepherd? Who is the flock? Who are those who assist the shepherd?

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep.”⁷

The prophet Nephi likewise taught that Jesus “shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.”⁸ I find abiding peace in knowing that “the Lord is *my* shepherd”⁹ and that each of us is known by Him and under His care. When we confront life’s wind and rainstorms, sickness, injuries, and drought, the Lord—our Shepherd—will minister to us. He will restore our souls.

In the same way that my friend tended his sheep with the assistance of young and old ranch hands, horses, and sheepdogs, the Lord also requires assistance in the challenging labor of

caring for the sheep in *His* flock.

As children of a loving Heavenly Father and as sheep in His flock, we enjoy the blessing of being individually ministered to by Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, we have a responsibility to provide ministering assistance to others around us as shepherds ourselves. We heed the words of the Lord to “serve me and go forth in my name, and . . . gather together my sheep.”¹⁰

Who is a shepherd? Every man, woman, and child in the kingdom of God is a shepherd. No calling is required. From the moment we emerge from the waters of baptism, we are commissioned to this work. We reach out in love to others because it is what our Savior commanded us to do. Alma emphasized: “For what shepherd . . . having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? . . . Doth he not drive him out?”¹¹ Whenever our neighbors are in distress temporally or spiritually, we run to their aid. We bear one another’s burdens that they may be light. We mourn with those who mourn. We comfort those who stand in need of comfort.¹² The Lord lovingly expects this of us. And the day will come when we will be held accountable for the care we take in ministering to His flock.¹³

My shepherd friend shared another important element in the watchcare of sheep on the range. He described that lost sheep were particularly vulnerable



A determined sheepdog leads lost sheep back to the safety of their shepherd and flock.

to the dangers of predators. In fact, up to 15 percent of his and his team's total time was devoted to finding lost sheep. The sooner they found lost sheep, before the sheep drifted too far from the flock, the less likely the sheep were to be harmed. Recovering lost sheep required much patience and discipline.

Some years ago, I found an article in a local newspaper so intriguing that I saved it. The front-page headline read, "Determined Dog Won't Abandon Lost Sheep."¹⁴ This article describes a small number of sheep belonging to an operation not far from my friend's property that were somehow left behind in their summer range. Two or three months later, they became stranded and snowbound in the mountains. When the sheep were left behind, the sheepdog stayed with them, for it was his duty to look after and protect the sheep. He would not go off watch! There he remained—circling about the lost sheep for months in the cold and snowy weather, serving as a protection

against coyotes, mountain lions, or any other predator that would harm the sheep. He stayed there until he was able to lead or herd the sheep back to the safety of the shepherd and the flock. The image captured on the front page of this article allows one to see character in the eyes and demeanor of this sheepdog.

In the New Testament, we find a parable and instruction from the Savior that provide further insight pertaining to our responsibility as shepherds, ministering sisters and brothers, of lost sheep:

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."¹⁵

As we summarize the lesson taught in the parable, we find this valuable counsel:

1. We are to identify the lost sheep.
2. We search after them until they are found.
3. When they are found, we may have to lay them on our shoulders to bring them home.
4. We surround them with friends upon their return.

Brothers and sisters, our greatest challenges and our greatest rewards may come as we minister to lost sheep. The members of the Church in the Book of Mormon "watch[ed] over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness."¹⁶ We can follow their examples and remember that ministering is to be "led by the Spirit, . . . flexible, and . . . customized to the needs of each member." It is also critical that we "seek to help individuals and families prepare for their next ordinance, keep [their] covenants . . . , and become self-reliant."¹⁷

Every soul is precious to our Heavenly Father. His personal invitation to minister is of greatest value and importance to Him, for it is His work and glory. It is quite literally the work of eternity. Each one of His children has immeasurable potential in His sight. He loves *you* with a love you cannot even begin to comprehend. Like the devoted sheepdog, the Lord will stay on the mountain to protect *you* through the wind, rainstorms, snow, and *more*.

President Russell M. Nelson taught us last conference: "Our message to the world [and, may I add, "to our ministering flock"] is simple and sincere: we invite all of God's children on *both sides of the veil* to come unto their

Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life.”¹⁸

May we raise our sights to this prophetic vision so we can shepherd souls to the temple and ultimately to our Savior, Jesus Christ. He does not expect us to perform miracles. He asks only that we bring our brothers and sisters unto Him, for *He* has the power to redeem souls. As we do so, we can and will secure this promise: “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”¹⁹ Of this I testify—and of Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Redeemer—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 118.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 100.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering with the Power and Authority of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 69.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 8.
5. “Ministering with Strengthened Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums and Relief Societies,” enclosure to the First Presidency letter dated Apr. 2, 2018, 3, ministering.lds.org; Mosiah 18:9; Doctrine and Covenants 20:51, 53; see also John 13:35.
6. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (1916), 417.
7. John 10:14–15.
8. 1 Nephi 22:25.
9. Psalm 23:1; emphasis added.
10. Mosiah 26:20.
11. Alma 5:59.
12. See Mosiah 18:8–9.
13. See Matthew 25:31–46.
14. See John Wright, “Safe or Stranded? Determined Dog Won’t Abandon Lost Sheep,” *Logan Herald Journal*, Jan. 10, 2004, hjnews.com.
15. Luke 15:4–6.
16. Mosiah 23:18.
17. “Ministering with Strengthened Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums and Relief Societies,” 4, 5, ministering.lds.org.
18. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” 118–19; emphasis added.
19. 1 Peter 5:4.



By President Russell M. Nelson

Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints

I leave my love and blessing upon you, that you may feast upon the word of the Lord and apply His teachings in your personal lives.

This has been an inspirational and historic conference. We look to the future with enthusiasm. We have been motivated to *do* better and to *be* better. The marvelous messages delivered from this pulpit by our General Authorities and General Officers and the music have been sublime! I urge you to study these messages, commencing this week.¹ They express the mind and the will of the Lord for His people, today.

The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of

families, as each family follows through conscientiously and carefully to transform their home into a sanctuary of faith. I promise that as you diligently work to remodel your home into a center of gospel learning, over time *your* Sabbath days will truly be a delight. *Your* children will be excited to learn and to live the Savior’s teachings, and the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in *your* home will decrease. Changes in your family will be dramatic and sustaining.

During this conference we have strengthened our resolve to execute





the essential effort to honor the Lord Jesus Christ *every* time we refer to His Church. I promise you that our rigorous attention to use the correct name of the Savior's Church and its members will lead to increased faith and access to greater spiritual power for members of His Church.

Now let's turn to the topic of temples. We know that our time in the temple is crucial to our salvation and exaltation and to that of our families.

After we receive our own temple ordinances and make sacred covenants with God, each one of us needs the ongoing spiritual strengthening and tutoring that is possible *only* in the house of the Lord. And our ancestors need us to serve as proxy for them.

Consider the great mercy and fairness of God, who, before the foundation of the world, provided a way to give temple blessings to those who died without a knowledge of the gospel. These sacred temple rites are ancient. To me that antiquity is thrilling and another evidence of their authenticity.²

My dear brothers and sisters, the assaults of the adversary are increasing exponentially, in intensity and in variety.³ Our need to be in the temple on a regular basis has never been greater.

I plead with you to take a prayerful look at how you spend your time. Invest time in your future and in that of your family. If you have reasonable access to a temple, I urge you to find a way to make an appointment regularly with the Lord—to be in His holy house—then keep that appointment with exactness and joy. I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples.

Currently we have 159 dedicated temples. The proper care and maintenance of those temples is very important to us. With the passage of time, temples are inevitably in need of refreshing and renewal. To that end, plans are now being made to renovate and update the Salt Lake Temple and other pioneer-generation temples. Details on these projects will be shared as they are developed.

Today we are pleased to announce plans to construct 12 more temples. Those temples will be built in the following locations: Mendoza, Argentina; Salvador, Brazil; Yuba City, California; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Praia, Cape Verde; Yigo, Guam; Puebla, Mexico; Auckland, New Zealand; Lagos, Nigeria; Davao, Philippines; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Washington County, Utah.

Building and maintaining temples may not change your life, but spending your time in the temple surely will. To those who have long been absent from the temple, I encourage you to prepare and return as soon as possible. Then I invite you to worship in the temple and pray to feel deeply the Savior's infinite love for you, that each of you may gain your own testimony that He directs this sacred and ageless work.⁴

Brothers and sisters, I thank you for your faith and sustaining efforts. I leave my love and blessing upon you, that you may feast upon the word of the Lord and apply His teachings in your personal lives. I assure you that revelation continues in the Church and will continue until "the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done."⁵

I bless you with increased faith in Him and in His holy work, with faith and patience to endure your personal challenges in life. I bless you to become exemplary Latter-day Saints. I so bless you and bear my testimony that God lives! Jesus is the Christ! This is His Church. We are His people, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See general conference messages online at LDS.org and on the Gospel Library app. They will be printed in the *Ensign* and *Liahona*. The Church magazines, including the *New Era* and the *Friend*, delivered through the mail or downloaded online, are an important part of your home-centered gospel curriculum.
2. See, for example, Exodus 28; 29; Leviticus 8.
3. See Mosiah 4:29.
4. See Wilford Woodruff, "The Law of Adoption," discourse delivered at the general conference of the Church, Apr. 8, 1894. President Woodruff said: "We have not got through [with] revelation. We have not got through [with] the work of God. . . . There will be no end to this work until it is perfected" (*Deseret Evening News*, Apr. 14, 1894, 9).
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 142.

The following list of selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

Speaker	Story
Neil L. Andersen	(83) Perceiving that the Savior knows his suffering, a faithful missionary overcomes disappointment while recovering from wounds suffered in a terrorist bombing. Following his daughter's death, Russell M. Nelson confides that Jesus Christ will use the keys of resurrection in behalf of all who die. Russell M. Nelson testifies to Puerto Rican Saints that "we can find joy even in the midst of our worst circumstances."
Brian K. Ashton	(93) The wife of Brian K. Ashton comes to better understand God's nature and His love and gratitude for His children.
M. Russell Ballard	(71) After experiencing intense sorrow over the deaths of family members and millions who died of war and disease, Joseph F. Smith receives "the vision of the redemption of the dead."
Steven R. Bangerter	(15) The grandchildren of Steven R. Bangerter bury stones representing Jesus Christ as the foundation of a happy life. President Russell M. Nelson reminds parents of their responsibility to teach their children. Steven R. Bangerter's son offers to help his parents prepare to serve a mission. The Holy Ghost guides an older man back to the Church and the spiritual safety of his childhood.
Shayne M. Bowen	(80) A man's conversion to the Church through the power of the Book of Mormon makes a great impression on Shayne M. Bowen.
M. Joseph Brough	(12) On an adventure in Alaska, USA, M. Joseph Brough learns that with God, nothing is impossible. A stake president learns that peace comes with forgiveness through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Through her desire to serve a mission, M. Joseph Brough's daughter teaches him to do hard things.
Matthew L. Carpenter	(101) The son of Matthew L. Carpenter completes his full-time mission after recovering from a stroke.
D. Todd Christofferson	(30) Despite tribulation, four members of the Church remain firm in their faith in Christ and receive His sustaining support.
Quentin L. Cook	(8) <i>Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families</i> strengthens the faith, testimony, and gospel understanding of a family in Brazil.
Bonnie H. Cordon	(74) A young woman and an older sister forge a friendship that blesses their lives. Bonnie H. Cordon and her ministering companion develop an instant bond of love with a sister they visit. A ministering brother develops a closeness and trust with a brother whose wife attempted suicide.
Michelle D. Craig	(52) Camilla Kimball teaches a ward member to "never suppress a generous thought." Michelle D. Craig toughens her feet walking barefoot.
Dean M. Davies	(34) President Gordon B. Hinckley envisions where the Vancouver British Columbia Temple should be built.
Henry B. Eyring	(58) Henry B. Eyring wonders how his mother found time and energy to make a map of the travels of the Apostle Paul. (90) Henry B. Eyring learns to treat people as if they "were in serious trouble." The Savior carries the wife of Henry B. Eyring through her troubles.
Cristina B. Franco	(55) Cristina B. Franco learns that love and sacrifice are the secret ingredients in her Primary teacher's chocolate cake.
Robert C. Gay	(97) The Holy Ghost helps Robert C. Gay see his older sister as God sees her. James E. Talmage ministers to a family stricken with diphtheria.
Jack N. Gerard	(107) After Jack N. Gerard is diagnosed with a serious medical condition, he sees life from an eternal perspective.
Gerrit W. Gong	(40) Elder Richard G. Scott and Gerrit W. Gong discuss faith as they paint a campfire watercolor. A priesthood holder helps a less-active couple return to Church.
Jeffrey R. Holland	(77) A ministering plea from his children helps a father forgive and return to the Church, bringing blessings to his family.
Joy D. Jones	(50) Joy D. Jones and her husband develop a long-lasting friendship with a less-active family after learning to serve out of love for the Lord.
Russell M. Nelson	(6) A mother likes holding church in her home because blessing the sacrament at home each Sunday prompts her husband to use better language. (68) Russell M. Nelson accidentally refers to himself as a mother. A son thanks his mother after the Holy Ghost guides her to exchange his smartphone for a flip phone. (87) Benjamin De Hoyos explains to a radio program director that the Church's long name was chosen by the Savior.
Dallin H. Oaks	(61) A young male refugee goes to jail after retaliating against youth who provoke him.
Paul B. Pieper	(43) A young girl preparing to be baptized says that taking the name of Jesus Christ means, "I can have the Holy Ghost."
Ronald A. Rasband	(18) Ronald A. Rasband's daughter and son-in-law overcome their fear of bringing children into the world.
Gary E. Stevenson	(110) A ward member extends a ministering hand to a straying Carlos A. Godoy. A rancher loses 200 sheep to predators. A sheepdog leads lost sheep to safety.



President Nelson Leads the Way

President Russell M. Nelson has counseled each of us to be more kind, Christlike, and spiritual as we minister to others, and he has set an example of what that means in the way he has ministered since the last general conference.

Shortly after the April 2018 general conference, President Nelson left on a tour that took him and his wife, Wendy, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Patricia, to England, Israel, Kenya, Zimbabwe, India, Thailand, China, and Hawaii, USA.

In subsequent travel, President Nelson met with members, missionaries, leaders, and friends of the Church in western, central, and eastern Canada; Seattle, Washington, USA; and the Dominican Republic—where he spoke at length in Spanish, the first time a Church President has given an extended discourse in a language other than English.

In meetings and at firesides, President Nelson taught about the correct name of the Church; sharing the gospel with others; cherishing the Book of Mormon; how living

the gospel makes life better; how Christ's way is the way of joy and happiness, now and in the eternities; prayer; making homes a sanctuary for children; using agency to overcome temptation and follow the Savior; caring for others; and preparing for and receiving the blessings that come from the temple.

President and Sister Nelson also spoke in a worldwide youth devotional on June 3, 2018, where President Nelson said that youth who enlist in the "Lord's battalion" and help gather Israel have the opportunity to be "part of something big, something grand, something majestic!" He encouraged youth to disengage from a constant reliance on social media, sacrifice some time to the Lord, do a thorough life assessment with the Lord, pray daily that all of God's children might receive the gospel, and be a light to the world. ■

For additional information about the ministry of President Russell M. Nelson, go to prophets.lds.org. Watch the entire youth broadcast at HopeofIsrael.lds.org.

Temple News

The Church plans to build 12 new temples, President Russell M. Nelson announced in his concluding remarks at general conference (see page 113). He also announced plans to renovate the Salt Lake Temple and other "pioneer-generation" temples, adding that details will be provided later.

Temples will be built in Mendoza, Argentina; Salvador, Brazil; Yuba City, California, USA; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Praia, Cape Verde; Yigo, Guam; Puebla, Mexico; Auckland, New Zealand; Lagos, Nigeria; Davao, Philippines; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Washington County, Utah, USA.

Four temples will soon be dedicated: the Concepción Chile Temple on October 28; the Barranquilla Colombia Temple on December 9; the Rome Italy Temple the week of March 10 to March 17, 2019; and the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple on April 14, 2019.

And two temples were recently rededicated: the Houston Texas Temple was rededicated on April 22, 2018, and the Jordan River Utah Temple was rededicated on May 20, 2018. ■

Learn more at temples.lds.org.

Changes Help Balance Gospel Instruction at Home and at Church

As part of ongoing efforts to help Latter-day Saints “learn doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship,” President Russell M. Nelson announced adjustments to help balance and connect the unique and essential ways members worship and learn and live the Savior’s gospel both at church and at home.

Church leaders have announced changes to the Sunday meeting schedule, beginning in January 2019, in connection with the release of a new home-centered, Church-supported curriculum. These changes and others

build upon several prior initiatives the Church has set in motion in recent years, meant to help members focus their lives more fully on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and deepen faith in Them. These initiatives include a focus on more meaningful study of the gospel at home, honoring the Lord by keeping the Sabbath day holy, and caring for one another as the Savior would and as directed by the Spirit.

Meant to prepare the Lord’s people for His return, these changes are aimed at deepening individual conversion, explained Elder Quentin L. Cook of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as he outlined the changes in the Saturday morning session of general conference.

“We know the spiritual impact and the deep and lasting conversion that can be achieved in the home setting . . .,” he said. “Our purpose is to balance the Church and the home experiences in a way that will greatly increase faith and spirituality and deepen conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Adjustments at Home

Church leaders are inviting a greater focus on increased participation in personal and family religious observance in the home, including gospel study at home on Sunday and throughout the week and adjustments to home evening.

As both classroom and lab, the home is an essential center of gospel learning and living. Individual and family gospel study at home on Sunday and throughout the week provides opportunities to find spiritual strength on a daily basis and allows greater flexibility for personalized study and revelation. Relying solely on limited time at church for gospel instruction creates an imbalance that is unlikely to achieve the deep and lasting conversion necessary.

“We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth,” said President Nelson. “And scriptures make it clear that parents have the primary responsibility to teach the doctrine to their children.”

Changes include the introduction of a new gospel study resource for individuals and families at home. Individuals and families can use the new *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*, if they desire, to guide their gospel study



experience outside of church. The new resource works with companion resources for Sunday School and Primary teachers to align Sunday lessons with home scripture study and suggestions for home evening.

In addition to encouraging gospel study, Church leaders renewed their invitation for all to participate on the Sabbath day—and throughout the week—in family councils, home evening, family history and temple work, ministering, personal worship, and joyful family time.

Materials sent to members and leaders explain that Church leaders encourage members to hold a home evening and gospel study on the Sabbath—or at other times as individuals and families choose. A family activity night could be held on Monday or at other times. To this end, leaders should continue to keep Monday evenings free from Church meetings and activities. However, time spent in home gospel study and activities for families and individuals is scheduled according to individual circumstances.

Worshipping God at church, participating in sacred ordinances there, and gathering together to teach one another and strengthen and serve each other are essential elements of deepening faith and personal conversion. Reducing the amount of time spent at church could be counterproductive unless individuals and families are intentional in strengthening their homes.

President Nelson taught: “As Latter-day Saints, we have become accustomed to thinking of ‘church’ as something that happens in our meetinghouses, supported by what happens at home. We need an adjustment to this pattern. It is time for a *home-centered*

Church, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.”

Adjustments at Church

Adjustments to the Church experience are intended to support increased gospel learning and living at home. These changes include adjusting the weekly Sunday schedule to include:

- A 60-minute sacrament meeting,
- A 10-minute transition time,
- And a 50-minute class period, as outlined in the sample schedule below:

SUNDAY SCHEDULE BEGINNING JANUARY 2019	
60 minutes	Sacrament meeting
10 minutes	Transition to classes
50 minutes	Classes for adults; classes for youth; Primary

The 50-minute class period will include weekly Primary for children and will alternate weekly for youth and adults as follows:

- First and third Sundays: Sunday School.
- Second and fourth Sundays: priesthood quorums, Relief Society, and Young Women.
- Fifth Sundays: youth and adult meetings under the direction of the bishop.

If a Primary is large enough to separate into junior and senior Primary, leaders should reverse the following schedule for half of the children and adjust the time as necessary.

PRIMARY SCHEDULE BEGINNING JANUARY 2019	
25 minutes	Prayer, scripture or article of faith, talk (5 minutes). Singing time: Music that supports the scriptures studied in class (20 minutes)
5 minutes	Transition to classes
20 minutes	Classes: lesson from <i>Come, Follow Me—For Primary</i>

Curriculum Changes

This adjustment to meeting schedules works hand in hand with the newest addition to the Church’s *Come, Follow Me* curriculum. Beginning in January, this home-centered, Church-supported curriculum will harmonize what adult, youth, and children are learning in Sunday School and Primary classes, making it easier for families to study together at home during the week.

Instructions, lesson outlines, and resources can be found in:

- *Come, Follow Me—For Elders Quorum and Relief Society* (found in the November 2018 *Ensign* and *Liahona*)
- *Come, Follow Me—For Aaronic Priesthood Quorums*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Young Women*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Sunday School*
- *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*

Visit comefollowme.lds.org for more information.

Other key changes include the following:

- Teacher council meetings will be held quarterly rather than monthly.
- Elders quorum and Relief Society lesson schedules will no longer include a first-Sunday council meeting or a fourth-Sunday special topic. Lessons will focus on recent general conference messages.
- Singing time will replace sharing time. The *Outline for Sharing Time* will be discontinued.
- The Gospel Principles course will be discontinued. All members and interested friends will be invited to attend their respective adult or youth Sunday School class.
- Optional courses—such as those for strengthening marriage and family, temple preparation, missionary preparation, and family history—will not be held during Sunday class time. These courses may be taught at other times for individuals, families, or groups based on local needs and at the bishop's discretion.

Purposes of These Changes

Church leaders are seeking to create a new balance and a greater connection between the unique strengths of the home and Church experiences with specific purposes in mind.

“There is so much more to this adjustment than just shortening the Sunday meetinghouse schedule . . . ,” said Elder Cook. “The purposes and blessings associated with this adjustment and other recent changes include the following:

- “Strengthening individuals and families through home-centered, Church-supported curriculum that contributes to joyful gospel living.
- “Honoring the Sabbath day, with a focus on the ordinance of the sacrament.
- “Helping all of Heavenly Father’s children on both sides of the veil through missionary work and receiving ordinances and covenants and blessings of the temple.”

For the announcement of these adjustments, see Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” on page 6 of this

magazine; Quentin L. Cook, “Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” on page 8. For more information about these adjustments, visit sabbath.lds.org to find a letter from the First Presidency, answers to frequently asked questions, and additional resources that can help individuals and families honor the Sabbath. ■





Be Involved in New Hymnbook, Songbook

The Church is preparing new editions of both *Hymns* and the *Children's Songbook* and is seeking suggestions and submissions from Church members everywhere.

At newmusic.lds.org, you can:

Give suggestions—your favorite current hymns or children's songs, Latter-day Saint or non-Latter-day Saint hymns or children's songs to include, current hymns or songs not to include, difficulties with the current music books, and other feedback.

Submit original material—hymns, hymn texts, children's songs, or children's song lyrics. Music needs to be appropriate for worship services. All languages and cultural styles will be considered. Those under age 18 can submit if they provide parent or guardian permission. Submissions must be received by July 1, 2019. ■



Elder Brook P. Hales

General Authority Seventy

When Elder Brook P. Hales was eight or nine, he was in a fast and testimony meeting where his father was presiding as bishop. His father invited the congregation to bear testimonies, and nearly everyone present bore testimony. "It was perhaps the first time I felt the Spirit bearing witness to me of the truthfulness of the gospel," Elder Hales recalls.

He has felt that witness many times since, particularly while serving as secretary to the First Presidency since 2008. When President Thomas S. Monson was sustained as prophet and President of the Church, and again when President Russell M. Nelson was sustained, he witnessed "the mantle of prophet fall on each of these men, and I knew without a doubt that they had been chosen and called to be the President of the Church for their particular time."

Elder Hales was called as a General Authority Seventy on May 17, 2018, and sustained on October 6, 2018. He will continue as secretary to the First Presidency.

Born in Ogden, Utah, USA, on April 7, 1956, to Klea and Glenn Phillip Hales, Elder Hales received a banking and finance degree from Weber State College (now Weber State University) in 1980. After graduating, he worked in commercial bank operations and in the Church's Finance and Records Division. He married Denise Imlay Hales in 1981, and they are the parents of four children. Elder Hales has served as a full-time missionary in the France Paris Mission, counselor in a bishopric, high priests group leader, bishop, stake president, priesthood organist, Sunday School teacher, and temple sealer.

That day when he was a young boy, Elder Hales didn't bear his testimony. But it has grown stronger ever since. "The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon is true, God loves us perfectly and is eager to bless us, Jesus is our Savior, and we are blessed to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost as we are worthy of it," he says. ■



COME, FOLLOW ME

For Elders Quorum
and Relief Society

October 2018

Find these resources on the Gospel Library
app and at comefollowme.lds.org.

Why Do We Have Quorum and Relief Society Meetings?

In these latter days, God has restored the priesthood and organized priesthood quorums and the Relief Society to help accomplish His work of salvation. Because of this, each Sunday when we gather in elders quorum and Relief Society meetings, we discuss and plan what we will do to help accomplish God's work. To be effective, these meetings need to be more than classes. They are opportunities to counsel about the work of salvation, learn together about that work from the teachings of Church leaders, and plan and organize ourselves to accomplish it.



Schedule for October–December 2018

In 2018, Sunday elders quorum and Relief Society meetings follow this monthly schedule:

First Sunday: Counsel together about local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges, and make plans to act.

Second and Third Sundays: Study recent general conference messages as chosen by presidency members or, on occasion, by the bishop or stake president.

Fourth Sunday: Discuss a special topic chosen by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. From October through December 2018, the topic is personal and family scripture study.

Fifth Sunday: Under the direction of the bishopric.



"We trust you to counsel together and to seek revelation for implementing these adjustments. . . . [The new Sunday schedule] will result in profound blessings for those who enthusiastically embrace [it] and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost. We will become closer to our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

New Schedule for 2019

Beginning in January 2019, elders quorum and Relief Society meetings will be held only on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. These meetings will focus on messages from the most recent general conference. Teaching suggestions for these meetings are found in the May and November general conference issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* and in the Gospel Library app.

Other changes beginning in 2019 include the following:

- First-Sunday council meetings will be discontinued. However, as needed, elders quorums and Relief Societies may use part of a second- or fourth-Sunday meeting to counsel about an important topic.
- Opening exercises, in which Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums meet together or Relief Society sisters and young women meet together, will not be held.
- Elders quorum and Relief Society meetings will not begin with an opening hymn or prayer but will conclude with a closing prayer.



Learning from General Conference Messages (2018 and 2019)

The teachings of living prophets, seers, and revelators can provide inspired guidance for the work of elders quorums and Relief Societies. For the weeks when conference messages will be studied, the elders quorum or Relief Society presidency will select a conference message to use, based on the needs of the members. On occasion, the bishop or stake president may also suggest a message. Leaders should emphasize messages from members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. However, presidency members may select any message from the most recent conference, based on the needs of local Saints and inspiration from the Spirit.

Leaders and teachers should find ways to encourage members to read the selected message in advance. They should encourage members to come to meetings prepared to share gospel truths they have learned and their ideas about how to act on those truths. The suggested learning activities below, which are based on principles taught in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, can help members learn from general conference messages.



Consider bringing a rope and a checklist to display. Invite members to discuss the difference between viewing gospel truths and Church programs as a rope and viewing them as a checklist of individual topics and tasks. Encourage members to look for insights in the examples in Elder Bednar's message. What does it mean to "gather together in one all things in Christ"? (Ephesians 1:10). What can we do to receive the promise at the conclusion of Elder Bednar's message?

Quentin L. Cook, *"Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"*

Members might be interested to hear from each other what their first reactions were when they heard about the changes described in Elder Cook's message. If a friend of another faith were to ask them why the Church is making these adjustments, what would they say? Encourage them to look for possible answers in Elder Cook's message. What can we do as individuals and families, and as a quorum or Relief Society, to ensure that the changes accomplish what the Lord intends? As part of this discussion, you could also share insights from President Nelson's opening remarks that inspire members to

"enthusiastically embrace" these changes.

Ronald A. Rasband, *"Be Not Troubled"*

Elder Rasband's message highlights several scriptures that can help us dispel any fears we may have about the perilous times we live in. Ask members to search these scriptures for counsel that they could share with someone who is fearful about the future. What else could they share from Elder Rasband's message? How can fear "[limit] the perspective of God's children"? Invite members to share how they have learned to overcome their fears and live with faith.

David A. Bednar, *"Gather Together in One All Things in Christ"*

Dallin H. Oaks, *"Truth and the Plan"*

How does understanding "restored gospel truths" help us when we face opposition to our beliefs and practices? To answer this question, members could review examples of fundamental truths in section II of President Oaks's message. They could also review examples of how these truths are applied (see section III). It might be helpful for members to role-play how they would use some of these fundamental truths to respond to criticisms of a Church teaching or practice.

D. Todd Christofferson, *"Firm and Steadfast in the Faith of Christ"*

You could begin a discussion of this message by drawing a line on the board with *Socially Motivated* on one end and *Christlike*

Commitment on the other. Invite members to read the paragraph that begins “Most of us find ourselves at this moment on a continuum . . .” and ponder where they feel they are on this continuum. What do we learn from the examples in Elder Christofferson’s message that inspires us to be firm and steadfast in affliction? (see also Alma 36:27–28). Encourage members to share examples of people they know who have shown Christlike commitment to the gospel, even when facing affliction.

Ulisses Soares, “One in Christ”

According to Elder Soares, how does the Amazon River represent members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ? What does this comparison teach us about the influence new members can have on the Church? How can we as a quorum or Relief Society follow Elder Soares’s counsel to encourage, support, and love new converts? (see Moroni 6:4–5). Perhaps a few members could share some challenges they faced as new members of the Church and how other members helped them. You could also discuss ways that new members have strengthened your ward or branch.

Gerrit W. Gong, “Our Campfire of Faith”

Consider displaying a picture of a campfire and inviting someone to share an experience

when he or she was grateful to have a campfire. Ask members to discuss what Elder Gong meant when he talked about a “campfire of faith.” Then you could divide members into groups and invite each group to review and share one of the five ways that Elder Gong suggests a “campfire of faith” can encourage us. Give members time to ponder how they might strengthen their own faith or the faith of someone they know.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Believe, Love, Do”

You could begin a discussion of this message by writing on the board *Hopelessness* and *Happiness*. Invite members to search the message for attitudes and beliefs that lead to hopelessness and happiness and list them on the board. Invite members to share ways they’ve experienced the happiness that comes from believing, loving, and doing, as Elder Uchtdorf teaches. Encourage members to find an encouraging quotation from the message to display in their home or share with a friend.

Joy D. Jones, “For Him”

Consider sharing the story at the beginning of Sister Jones’s message and asking members to think about times when their service and ministering efforts may have seemed “unnoticed or . . . unappreciated

or even unwanted.” After discussing the story, consider writing on the board *Why should we serve?* Invite members to answer this question by reviewing the rest of Sister Jones’s message, looking for insights (see also Doctrine and Covenants 59:5). How can Sister Jones’s counsel change the way we care for and minister to each other?

Michelle D. Craig, “Divine Discontent”

Sister Craig speaks of “a gap between where and who we are, and where and who we want to become.” How does God want us to feel about this gap? How does Satan want us to feel about it? Each member could search one of the three sections in Sister Craig’s message to find answers to these questions. What can we do to ensure that our “divine discontent” does not become “paralyzing discouragement”?

Cristina B. Franco, “The Joy of Unselfish Service”

To teach that “love is made sacred through sacrifice,” Sister Franco shares two stories—one about Victoria and one about a widow. You might invite two members to come prepared to share what they learn about love and sacrifice from these stories. What other experiences can we share that teach the same principle? Showing a video that depicts the Savior serving others (such as “Light the World—Follow the Example of Jesus Christ” on LDS.org) could lead to a discussion about how we can follow His example of “service coupled with love and sacrifice.”

Henry B. Eyring, “Women and Gospel Learning in the Home”

Scripture passages and quotations from “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” that President Eyring uses in his message provide insights about the importance of women’s influence in the home. Members could work together to find these passages and quotations and discuss what they learn. What invitations does President Eyring extend?



What promises does he make? Consider how singing or reading a hymn about the home, such as “Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth” (*Hymns*, no. 298), could enhance the discussion.

Dallin H. Oaks, *“Parents and Children”*

As you prepare to teach, consider which section of President Oaks’s message is most relevant to the people in your quorum or Relief Society. Here are possible questions you could ask to encourage discussion about his message: How do the modern trends mentioned in President Oaks’s message in section I work against Heavenly Father’s plan? What examples of faithful women can we share that exemplify the statements about women in section II? How can we encourage the young women we know to follow President Oaks’s specific counsel to them in section III?

Russell M. Nelson, *“Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel”*

If you teach Relief Society, consider dividing the sisters into four groups and asking each group to read about one of the four invitations in President Nelson’s message. The groups could discuss what impresses them

about the invitation, experiences they’ve had acting on it, and ideas about how to act on it in the future. Then each group could share with everyone what they talked about. If you teach priesthood holders, you might ask them to find statements in President Nelson’s message that indicate how Heavenly Father feels about His daughters. What can we do to support and encourage the sisters’ participation in the gathering of Israel?

M. Russell Ballard, *“The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead”*

You could invite members to accept President Ballard’s invitation and read Doctrine and Covenants 138 before your discussion. Ask members to share their experiences with and insights from this section during the meeting. Questions like these could help members understand the importance of this revelation: How does this revelation bring us comfort? What truths does this revelation contain that can affect “the way we live our lives each day”?

Bonnie H. Cordon, *“Becoming a Shepherd”*

To help members consider ways they might improve in their ministering efforts, you

could divide them into three groups and ask each group to read one of the three titled sections of Sister Cordon’s message. Invite them to share the principles of ministering that they learned. How can striving to follow these principles help us “become the shepherds the Lord needs us to become”? Invite members to share experiences when another person’s ministering helped them feel known and loved by the Savior.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *“The Ministry of Reconciliation”*

You could begin a discussion about Elder Holland’s message by inviting members to think of a relationship in their lives that needs healing or reconciliation. Then they could search Elder Holland’s message, looking for how Brad and Pam Bowen were able to help their father heal. What blessings came from this effort? What insights do members gain that can help them heal their own relationships?

Neil L. Andersen, *“Wounded”*

To introduce Elder Andersen’s message, you could read together Luke 10:30–35 or watch the video “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (LDS.org). How are we all like the man who fell among thieves? According to Elder Andersen, in what sense is Jesus Christ “our Good Samaritan”? How can we accept His healing? Perhaps you could invite members to share ways in which the Savior has healed their wounds or the wounds of loved ones. They could also search Elder Andersen’s words to find an encouraging message that they could share with someone who is wounded.

Russell M. Nelson, *“The Correct Name of the Church”*

Jesus Christ has commanded that the Church be called after His name. You can help members increase their desire to follow this direction by inviting them to search President Nelson’s message, looking for reasons why



"the name of the Church is not negotiable." Then, invite them to search the end of President Nelson's message for the promises he said will come as we work to "restore the correct name of the Lord's Church." What can we do to help in this effort?

Henry B. Eyring, *"Try, Try, Try"*

President Eyring poses "two crucial questions": "What must I be doing to take [the Savior's] name upon me?" and "How will I know when I am making progress?" Perhaps you could write these questions on the board and invite members to share insights they gain about these questions from President Eyring's message and Sister Eyring's example. President Eyring also refers to the song "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus" (*Children's Songbook*, 78–79). What do the words of this song add to the discussion?

Dale G. Renlund, *"Choose You This Day"*

Members could think of someone they would like to encourage to follow Heavenly Father's plan, such as a family member or someone to whom they minister. Then they could review Elder Renlund's message to discover how Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ feel about us. How do They help us choose obedience? What does Their example suggest about how we can improve our efforts in our families and our ministering?

Gary E. Stevenson, *"Shepherding Souls"*

Those you teach may have asked a question like this one from Elder Stevenson's message: "How do we know we are ministering in the Lord's way?" They might benefit from discussing possible answers to this question that they find in this message. Alternatively, you could bring a picture of the Savior as a shepherd (see *Gospel Art Book* [2009], no. 64) and invite members to share a truth from Elder Stevenson's message that the picture represents. Members could then share things they have been impressed to do as a result of the discussion.



Fourth-Sunday Meetings (October–December 2018)

PERSONAL AND FAMILY SCRIPTURE STUDY

On fourth Sundays in 2018, elders quorums and Relief Societies will discuss personal and family scripture study. Leaders or teachers may choose to lead discussions on any of the following principles.

Personal Scripture Study

To help inspire members to study the scriptures regularly, consider inviting each member to select one of the following passages to read: Joshua 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 1 Nephi 15:23–25; 2 Nephi 32:3; Doctrine and Covenants 11:22–23; 33:16–18. After they have had time to read and ponder, they could share with someone else in the room what their passage teaches them about scripture study.

You could also invite members to share their testimonies of the blessings they receive as they study the scriptures. Members may also benefit from hearing

each other share what they do to make personal scripture study meaningful (see some examples in "Ideas to Improve Your Personal Scripture Study" in *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families*). You could also share with members what Elder Quentin L. Cook taught about "the purposes and blessings associated with [the adjustment in the Sunday schedule] and other recent changes" (see "Deep and Lasting Conversion to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 9). Members could discuss how our efforts to improve our scripture study can help accomplish these

purposes. The following videos on LDS.org may also inspire members: “Words with Friends,” “The Blessings of Scripture,” “Daily Bread: Pattern,” and “What Scriptures Mean to Me.”

Consistency in Gospel Study

Elder David A. Bednar compared consistent family scripture study and other righteous habits to small brushstrokes that make up a beautiful painting. To help members understand what Elder Bednar taught, perhaps you could display a painting in which the artist’s brushstrokes are visible. Members could then read Elder Bednar’s analogy, found in “More Diligent and Concerned at Home” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 19–20), and discuss how the brushstrokes in this painting are like scripture study. What has helped us overcome the obstacles to consistent gospel study, whether we are studying as individuals or with our families? What did President Russell M. Nelson promise to those who “diligently work to remodel [their homes] into a center of gospel learning”? (see “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113). Provide time for members to ponder and share what they are inspired to do because of what they learned today.

Gospel Discussions at Home and at Church

One way to help members understand the importance of gospel discussions at home and church could be to invite a child and a parent to sing “Teach Me to Walk in the Light” (*Hymns*, no. 304). What does the interaction between the child and the parent in the lyrics of this song teach us about learning the gospel? Perhaps some members would be willing to share their thoughts on how to make gospel discussions a natural and regular part of family life. The following scriptures may provide insights: Deuteronomy 11:18–20; 1 Peter 3:15; Mosiah 18:9; Moroni 6:4–5, 9; Doctrine and Covenants 88:122. How can our discussions at home and at church bring us closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?

IDEAS FOR SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE STUDY AT HOME IN 2019

During 2019, all ward members will be studying the New Testament—at home and in Sunday School and Primary. In quorum and Relief Society meetings, leaders and teachers should remind members about the scriptures scheduled for the coming week in *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* that they can study at home. This simple reminder can be shared in writing, verbally, or both.

Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders and teachers can encourage this scripture study by finding opportunities to bring New Testament insights into elders quorum and Relief Society meetings. For example, elders quorum and Relief Society leaders and teachers might:

- Notice how stories or doctrine from their scripture study apply to an elders quorum or Relief Society lesson. Leaders and teachers might share this insight in a Sunday meeting.
- Share with members how stories or doctrine from the New Testament apply to their responsibilities in the elders quorum or Relief Society.
- Share with members positive experiences they have had with studying the New Testament at home and encourage members to share these experiences as well.



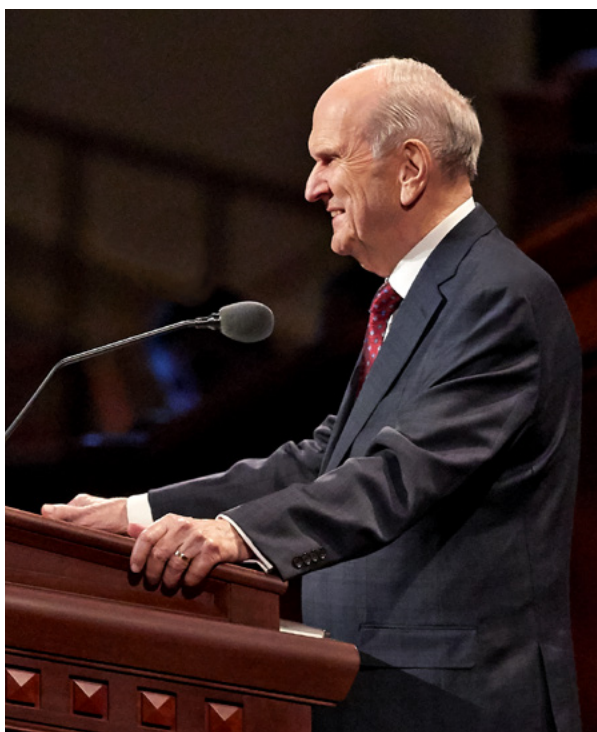


"Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the incalculable gift of His Atonement, not only saves us from death and offers us, through repentance, forgiveness for our sins, but He also stands ready to save us from the sorrows and pains of our wounded souls.

"The Savior is our Good Samaritan, sent 'to heal the brokenhearted' [Luke 4:18]. He comes to us when others pass us by. With compassion, He places His healing balm on our wounds and binds them up. He carries us. He cares for us. He bids us, 'Come unto me . . . and I shall heal [you]' [3 Nephi 18:32]."

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Wounded," 85.

Good Samaritan,
by Annie Henrie Nader



"The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of families, as each family follows through conscientiously and carefully to transform their home into a sanctuary of faith," said President Russell M. Nelson during the closing session of the 188th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. "I promise that as you diligently work to remodel your home into a center of gospel learning, over time *your* Sabbath days will truly be a delight. *Your* children will be excited to learn and to live the Savior's teachings, and the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in *your* home will decrease. Changes in your family will be dramatic and sustaining."

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